



Cambodia

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**“Prime Minister, you promised
that no more journalists
would go to prison”**

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Prime Minister Hun Sen said in early 2006 that Cambodian journalists would no longer be jailed because of what they wrote. But four years later and after legislative reform, a newspaper editor is enduring harsh conditions in prison. The one-year sentence imposed on Hang Chakra, the editor of the daily *Khmer Machas Srok*, was seen by all the Cambodian press as a warning. A small-circulation newspaper that supports the opposition Sam Rainsy Party (SRP), it is one of the few remaining publications to be very critical of the government. As a result of threats, financial problems and tempting offers from the authorities, the opposition press has been whittled down in the past two years to *Khmer Machas Srok* and *Sereiypheap Thmey* (New Freedom).



Why did Hun Sun break his word? And what impact will the imminent introduction of a new criminal code have on media legislation? A Reporters Without Borders representative went to Cambodia last December to evaluate the press freedom situation and try to persuade the kingdom's authorities to decriminalise press offences. He met the information minister, diplomats, newspaper publishers, journalists, opposition politicians and representatives of human rights organisations.

The information minister, Khieu Kanharith, insisted that he was personally in favour of releasing Hang Chakra. “I fight hard for journalists not to be imprisoned but some media do not respect the law and media ethics,” he said.

The presence of independent and critical media, especially radio stations, is one of the guarantees against the regime becoming dictatorial. “Journalists are not sitting idly by,” said Pen Samitthy, the head of the Club of Cambodian Journalists. “Modernisation of the media is being accompanied by progress in the quality of news reporting. But obviously, some of us have been subjected to physical threats and harassment.”

In report released in May 2009, the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defence of Human Rights (LICADHO) said all ten of the TV stations existing at the time of publication were linked to the ruling party and only four of the dozens of radio stations were independent or pro-opposition.

Read the report: <http://www.licadho-cambodia.org/reports.php?perm=130&pagenb=0&filter=-1&topic=1>

Around ten legal actions have been brought against opposition and independent journalists since January 2009. Senior officials do not hesitate to go to court to seek revenge for outspoken articles, exposing their critics to the risk of heavy fines or jail sentences. The harassment of government opponents, lawyers and journalists has been condemned by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. “These actions threaten the constitutional principles of freedom of expression and opinion,” the UNHCHR office in Cambodia warned in a June 2009 release. The local press has also voiced concern about the avalanche of lawsuits. *Cambodia Daily* has run several editorials sounding the alarm while a headline in *Le Cambodge Soir* asked: “Can you still criticise the government?”

Hun Sen has been prime minister since 1985, which makes him the world's longest-serving head of government. The ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) has an absolute majority in parliament, with 90 seats against the opposition's 29. Most of the media treat Hun Sen with great deference, prefixing his name with the honorific “Samdech” (a royal title). Given the strength of its position, the CPP will not be easily ousted in an election. Strengthening press freedom and access to information is therefore all the more important in order to ensure that all views are able to make themselves heard in Cambodia.

Editor's imprisonment – a serious step backwards

“A Thai citizen accused by the government of spying was given a royal pardon in a matter of days but Hang Chakra has not been shown the same clemency and is still in prison,” said Pen Samitthy of the Club of Cambodian Journalists. “This is very serious,” he added. Detained since 26 June 2009, *Khmer Machas Srok's* editor is serving a one-year sentence that was imposed as a result of complaint that came directly from the Cabinet in response to an article about tension between Hun Sen and his No. 2. Ordered to name his sources for the article, the editor refused.

from high blood pressure and eczema, and his health is deteriorating fast. A bout of flu in December revived the pneumonia that he caught during a previous spell in prison.



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It seems that Deputy Prime Minister Sok An, who bears the entire responsibility for Hang Chakra's imprisonment on a charge of disinformation, did not appreciate the publication of a series of articles in April and May 2009 accusing some of his aides of corruption. “Hun Sen has dismantled a nest of corruption around Sok An” and “Sok An aides face dismissal,” the newspaper's headlines said.

Speaking to Reporters Without Borders in Prey Sar prison, where he shares a cell with 48 ordinary offenders, Hang Chakra insisted on his innocence. “My case is directly linked to our articles,” he said. “It reflects the decline in the state of press freedom, which is being pared away to almost nothing in this country. Why wasn't I tried under the press law? And what does this disinformation charge mean? It is unjust and illegal. But I will continue fighting for free expression.”

Hang Chakra condemned the conditions in which he is being held. “Living in prison is an ordeal. The tension, the violence, the lack of proper food. I get weak very quickly.” He suffers

His daughter, Hang Chan Pisey, spoke to Reporters Without Borders of her concerns. “We go and see him in prison as often as possible and take him food and medicine, but he is nonetheless getting weaker and weaker,” she said. “We wrote to the deputy prime minister but we got no answer. It is true that the information minister received us and even supported us, but we feel the request for a pardon is not getting real support.” Hang Chakra received a visit in September from a government spokesman who offered him early release in exchange for adopting a pro-government line. He refused.

His colleagues, who continue to produce the newspaper despite obvious financial difficulties, are concerned for the future of the critical press in Cambodia. Acting editor Chum Sophal acknowledged that the newspaper is now less outspoken for fear of holding up Hang Chakra's release. In the absence of any advertising, the print run is now only 500 copies. Another *Khmer Machas Srok* journalist, Boay Roey, said Hang Chakra's imprisonment was designed to “silence opposition mouthpieces.”

Hang Chakra's trial was conducted in a deplorable manner by judge Din Sivuthy. “The court accelerated the proceedings in order to issue a verdict (...) without my client being present and after rejecting my request for an adjournment,”

the editor’s lawyer told Reporters Without Borders.

This is the first time a journalist has been in prison since June 2008 when Dam Sith, the editor of *Moneaksekar Khmer* (Khmer Conscience), an opposition daily that no longer exists, spent a week in jail as a result of a legal action by the foreign minister accusing him of “publishing false information.” French ambassador Jean-François Desmazières said Hang Chakra’s case needed to be raised with the authorities as press freedom was clearly involved.

Pen Samitthy of the Club of Cambodian Journalists said more journalists could be convicted if government officials at all levels continue to use government lawyers to bring lawsuits. “Judges are unable to resist the pressure when the legal action comes straight from the government,” said Um Sarin of the Cambodian Association for the Protection of Journalists (CAPJ). “This becomes a powerful weapon in the hands of corrupt officials who want to fend off press revelations.”

New criminal code, new freedoms?

Cambodia has overhauled its criminal code. The final text was adopted by the national assembly and the senate in October 2009 but has not yet been promulgated by the government. Its deep-seated changes to the legal system will necessarily have repercussions for free expression and media freedom. But the lack of transparency surrounding the final draft is worrying the press and human rights activists.

The 1995 press law contains several safeguards for journalists including the right to the confidentiality of sources (article 2) and a ban on censorship. But it also says “the press must not publish reports that could affect national security and political stability” and it forbids the publication of false information harming “honour or dignity”. The law’s failure to define such concepts as “national security,” “political stability,” “honour” and “dignity” means that these articles can easily be used against journalists. But the 1995 law stipulates that people who think they have been defa-

med should seek redress under civil (not criminal) law.

While falling short of the international standards, the press law is on the whole protective of press freedom and should have prevented journalists from being jailed for press offences. But government lawyers and individual plaintiffs have circumvented it by bringing legal actions under the criminal code that was inherited from the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), which punishes defamation, disinformation and incitement.

Although article 20 of the UNTAC criminal code says “no one can be arrested or imprisoned for expressing opinions,” several other articles provide for heavy fines or jail sentences for poorly defined offences. Article 62, for example, says that sentences of up to three years in prison can be imposed for the publication of “wrong, fabricated or falsified” information or information liable to pose a threat to public order.

Another clause in the UNTAC code that is sometimes used against the press and opposition is the one concerning incitement. Under this clause, a person can be charged with incitement to commit a crime even if no crime was committed.

At the request of journalists and civil society groups, Hun Sen called for the elimination of prison sentences for defamation in 2006 but it continues to be a crime. As a result, journalists convicted of defamation can be jailed if they cannot pay the fine imposed by the court. “It was a welcome decision but certain members of the government began quite quickly to get round this de facto decriminalisation by using the charge of disinformation,” press freedom activist Um Sarin said. “No one knows if the new criminal code will prevent journalists from being sent to prison, especially as the parliamentary opposition was absent when the commission worked on it.”

The information minister was aware of these concerns, and tried to be reassuring. “The press law is good and if a journalist who is the target of a legal action has a good lawyer, he can get off without a problem,” he said. “The

new criminal code will also be an improvement. And most of the government’s members have agreed not to use the criminal code in press cases. It is up to journalists not to go too far.”

But opposition parliamentarian Mu Sochua of the SRP complained to Reporters Without Borders that the opposition and the public had no part in drafting and adopting the new criminal code. “Our party submitted amendments to 43 articles but they were all rejected without any form of debate,” he said.

Drafted with the support of a French assistance project, the new criminal code is based on the so-called Romano-Germanic system, which strictly defines what the judge can and cannot do. According to an analysis by a French researcher, this was done to “protect defendants against abuses of executive authority and to improve the judicial system’s independence.” As things stand, government lawyers win almost all the cases they initiate and the rampant corruption within the judicial system has been repeatedly denounced.

In the initial draft, defamation and insult by the press were no longer punishable by imprisonment. Decriminalisation of press offences would bring the law into line with the 1993 constitution, which incorporated an article from the 1947 constitution (article 9): “Every Cambodian is free to speak, write, print and publish. He may, by means of the press or in any other way, express, disseminate and defend any opinion insofar as he does not abuse this right and is not liable to disrupt public order.”

Cambodia’s monarch, on the other hand, who is already protected by articles 7 and 8 of the constitution, would be shielded from any debate or criticism.

Although Cambodian human rights activists told Reporters Without Borders they had hoped the new criminal code would reduce the number of offences directly or indirectly linked to freedom of expression, new charges were added to the original draft: “false information” (article 48), “public insult” (article 307) “slander” (article 311) and “publishing comments liable to put pressure on a court”

(article 523). They are all punishable by imprisonment. Those who drafted these articles nonetheless insist that they do not involve freedom of expression.

To what degree will the new legislation allow journalists to tackle sensitive subjects such as corruption within the ruling elite and abusive private sector practices? “The recent series of lawsuits has placed further limitations on the ability of local journalists to name offenders in their coverage of corruption or deforestation,” said Stéphanie Gee, a correspondent for several French news media. “This phenomenon, which is particularly marked in the provinces, undermines the media’s possibilities of fulfilling their role as a fourth estate.”

In one of the drafts of the new criminal code obtained by Reporters Without Borders, article 306 clearly states that defamation and insults via the news media are subject to the press law. But will government lawyers, prosecutors and judges respect this principle? Isn’t there a danger that the new law will be used to silence the most outspoken media and critics?



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After pointing out that only the ruling party is represented in the parliamentary commissions, opposition parliamentarian Kem Sokha of the Human Rights Party voiced concern about certain aspects of the new criminal code. “Fear of imprisonment could reinforce self-censorship on dangerous subjects such as relations with neighbouring Vietnam and the army’s influence on political and economic activities,” he said.

And everything will depend on how prosecutors and judges implement the law.

Media under tight control

Except for CTN, which is owned by a businessman, the TV stations are all controlled by the ruling party and Hun Sen’s family. “CTN can express a degree of criticism on certain social issues and corruption,” said Kong Sothananarith of *Voice of America’s* Khmer-lan-

guage service. “It is encouraging but very limited.” The state television station, TVK, has been modernised in recent years with foreign assistance. “It is the TV stations owned by Hun Sen’s family and friends, especially *Apsara*, that are under the most political control,” said a foreign journalist based in Cambodia. “No alternative news can make itself heard.”

The information minister insists that efforts are being made to open up television. “With UNESCO, we have created a programme called Equity that gives civil society a chance to speak on the air and we have broadcast national assembly debates on the public channel,” he said. Ke Sokha, the opposition parliamentarian, responded: “Equity quotes us from time to time but that never happens on the other national TV stations. There is a boycott organised at the highest level. How can we promote our ideas when the authorities give themselves such an advantage?” A LICADHO representative noted: “When government opponents speak, the most interesting passages are edited out.”

The print media are dominated by newspapers that tend to support the government. Around 300 are registered with the information ministry but only 30 or so appear regularly. Several opposition dailies, including some directly financed by the Sam Rainsy Party, have stopped publishing. *Moneaksakar Khmer* shut down in 2009 after the authorities threatened to bring a libel action against its editor, Dam Sith.

He told Reporters Without Borders: “I closed because the government lawyer brought an action against me over 18 articles about problems within the PPC. I decided to apologise to Hun Sen and stop publishing. The lawsuits were then withdrawn (...) The opposition newspapers are disappearing one by one because the people in power are threatening them with lawsuits.”

The publisher of *Samleng Yuvachon Khmer* (Voice of the Khmer Youth) changed sides before the last parliamentary elections. He was subsequently appointed undersecretary for information. Similarly, Thach Ket, the editor of another opposition newspaper, also

obtained a post in the information ministry after joining the ruling PPC.

The opposition press is slowly dying because it is completely boycotted by advertisers. A traditional medicine retailer was subjected to a sudden tax control after placing ads in an opposition newspaper. “There is a real feeling of fear among opposition journalists,” said Um Sarin of the CAPJ. “They never put their by-lines on their articles, for example. This is all linked to the arrests and murders of the past.”

In an encouraging development, the leading daily *Rasmei Kampuchea* often publishes opposition comments on national issues. “I get more requests for clarification than threats of legal action,” editor Pen Samitthy said. “An official announced in 2009 that he was going to sue us over an article about the lighting installed at Angkor Wat. We defended ourselves and the lawsuit was withdrawn.”



Some journalists such as Soy Sopheap, a star presenter on *CTN* and owner of a media group called the DAP Media Centre, insisted that a “process of professionalization and modernisation of the media” is under way thanks to a favourable environment created by the government. “The SRP criticises us for supporting Hun Sen but at the same time it boycotts us,” he said.

The editors of the local English and French-language publications (*Cambodia Daily*, *Phnom Penh Post* and *Cambodge Soir*) say they have never encountered major difficulties in the course of covering the news. “The pressure is focused on the Khmer journalists on our staff,” an English-speaking journalist said. “I have seen colleagues refuse to cover a story because they feared it would lead to a libel suit.” *Cambodge Soir* editor Jérôme Morinière said: “We are one of the democratic guarantees that the government often cites. But it must be acknowledged that the Khmer press may have real difficulties in covering something that we cover without any worries.”

Some radio stations are openly opposed to the government. “They regret giving me a

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licence and they have tried to make me fold, but this station is essential for freedom of expression,” said Mam Sonando, whose station, *Sombok Khmum* (*Beehive FM 105*), rents air

time to NGOs and opposition parties. But the authorities are capable of getting tough when local radio stations go too far. *Angkor Ratha*, a radio station in Kratié province, was suspended in the middle of an election campaign in 2008 after it agreed to rent air time to an opposition party.

Local FM retransmission of international radio stations also offers a guarantee of access to independent news and information. *Radio France Internationale*’s Khmer-language service broadcasts on two local frequencies, 102 FM and 92 FM, for which *RFI* holds a licence. Based in Paris, *RFI* has seven stringers in Cambodia. “*RFI* obtained a licence to install radio relays at the start of the 1990s but it was only in 2005 that Khmer-language programmes were broadcast,” Jean-François Tain, the head of *RFI*’s service, said. “It was Hun Sen himself who gave the go-ahead.”

Voice of America employs eight people in Cambodia while *Radio Free Asia*’s Khmer service employs about 20 journalists. *RFI*, *VOA* and *RFA* reporters told Reporters Without Borders they were able to cover most of the subjects without any problem. “Our status obviously protects us but the fact that our programmes are listened to by millions of Cambodians is an encouraging sign,” an *RFI* reporter said.

Information minister Khieu Kanharith told Reporters Without Borders that the FM band was already “saturated” in the capital and that it was therefore hard to grant licences to new operators. “We have more than 40 radio stations, including 30 in Phnom Penh, and 11 TV stations,” he said. “Everything is saturated. And we don’t apply any pressure as regards renewing licences. On the contrary, the opposition rents programme hours in order to attack us.”

The government refuses to grant radio or TV licences to opposition or independent figures. A request by Mam Sonando of *Sombok Khmum* for permission to install relays in the provinces was rejected in 2006. “The information ministry gives licences to the government’s allies in order to take up the entire FM waveband,” he said. “The SRP opposition party is unable to obtain a TV station licence but Soy Sopheap, a journalist who supports the prime minister, got a radio station licence in 2009.”

Online media are developing. The websites of international radio stations such as *RFA* (www.rfa.org/khmer) have such local competitors as *Deum Apil News* (dap-news.com), which is run by Soy Sopheap, and *Cambodia Express News* (www.cen.com.kh). An exile journalist has launched *Free Press Magazine* (www.fpmonline.net) while opposition views are expressed on www.ki-media.blogspot.com.

Journalism undermined by lack of funds, corruption

The social and economic background of most media employees and widespread corruption leave journalists very exposed. Low pay, bribes, blackmail, direct and indirect corruption – the press suffers from all of these ills, as it does in many developing countries. An advertising market that is very limited for the print media and a readership that is low because of high illiteracy levels deny publications enough income to pay their employees well.



“Publishers treat journalists as manual workers not intellectuals,” Kong Sothanarith said.

“Only the English and French-language publications offer them some protection. For the most part, journalists are paid little and have no contracts or paid holidays.” Pen Samitthy said: “Most journalists have no savings, which leaves them very exposed as regards employers and officials. You cannot ignore the fact that financial insecurity encourages self-censorship on sensitive subjects. A libel suit or loss of one’s job can mean disaster for one’s entire family.”

Poorly-paid press photographers and TV cameramen trying to make ends meet often operate on the “no money, no picture” principle in order to get commissions from public figures seeking a high profile in the media.

Such corrupt practices are widespread and give journalism a bad image. Journalists’ organisations are trying to address the problem, in some cases with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation’s support.

The media are not equipped for covering sensitive stories in depth. “It is not easy for our newspaper to do really detailed coverage because we lack the resources,” a journalist with a national daily said. “On such stories as corruption and deforestation, we have to limit ourselves to quoting the opposition.” The local media restrict their coverage of questionable practices by banks and phone companies because they are the biggest advertisers, one editor said.

The fact that most Cambodian journalists have had no professional training is another problem. According to a Club of Cambodian Journalists representative, 80 per cent of media employees have no notion of professional ethics. And a reporter who received university-level training in journalism said only a minority of trained journalists actually work in the media.

The absence of any journalists’ union makes it harder for the profession to start mobilising around such crucial issues.

The Ross Sokhet case

Reporters Without Borders investigated the case of freelance journalist Ross Sokhet, who

is serving a two-year jail sentence on a “disinformation” charge as a result of a complaint by Soy Sopheap, the media owner. Soy Sopheap told Reporters Without Borders he called the police after receiving threats by SMS and email. “If I had known it was a journalist, I would not have brought a complaint,” he said. This was disputed by Ross Sokhet, who said Soy Sopheap knew his phone number because they had talked in connection with a story published in *Globe*, an English-language magazine based in Cambodia.

Held in appalling conditions, Ross Sokhet insisted on his innocence: “I contacted Soy Sopheap to verify information I had obtained about various media corruption cases. I never threatened him.” Remarkably, the court ignored threatening emails that were sent from abroad. Ross Sokhet, who has worked for many Cambodian publications since 1993, said: “I did not kill anyone. All I did was try to interview people about racketeering within the media. If I had been tried in an impartial manner under the press law, I would not be in prison now.”

A journalist with *Cambodia Daily* (one of the publications Ross Sokhet has worked for) pointed out that the “disinformation” charge on which he was convicted did not correspond to what he was alleged to have done. *Globe* editor Tassilo Brinzer confirmed that Ross Sokhet wrote piece on media corruption for the magazine, and that it quoted Soy Sopheap. Brinzer did however deplore the fact that Ross Sokhet made himself a *Globe* business card which, as a freelancer, he was not qualified to have.

Reporters Without Borders hopes that more importance is paid to the defence’s arguments when the appeal is heard. Given that Soy Sopheap told Reporters Without Borders that he would not have filed a complaint if he had known it was a journalist, the organisation thinks the prosecution should drop the charges and limit itself to giving Ross Sokhet a formal reprimand.

The unpunished murders of the past

The most recent murder of a journalist was that of Moneakseka Khmer reporter Khim Sambo. He and his 21-year-old son were gun-

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ned down in Phnom Penh on 11 July 2008, two weeks before a general election. The case has not been solved, but according to a LICADHO investigator, “evidence has accumulated indicating that this contract killing was linked to articles about former police chief Hok Lundy.”

Less than two weeks before the double murder, Moneakseka Khmer ran a story about a “senior police official” described as “one of the country’s most dangerous men.” He was not named but he was easily identifiable as Hok Lundy. Written by Khim Sambo but published under a pseudonym, the report said the police officer went to a casino in Bavat, near the Vietnamese border, on 25 June 2008, lost all his money, used threats to obtain credit, lost more money and then had a casino official arrested for refusing to give him an additional advance.

Hok Lundy subsequently died in a helicopter crash and the investigation went nowhere. The FBI initially participated in the investigation but suddenly withdrew after press revelations about the background to the case. Former Moneakseka Khmer editor Dam Sith regards the murder as an attack on his newspaper, which is now closed.

Khim Sambo was not the first opposition journalist to be murdered without any suspect ever being arrested. Previous cases include those of Chour Chetharith of radio *Ta Prohm* in 2003 and four reporters killed during political violence in 1997.



The police have also failed to identify those responsible for the serious threats made against journalists who have covered illegal logging and the suspected involvement of senior government officials in this trade. One of these journalists, Lem Piseth, has been living in exile since receiving death threats over his reporting on deforestation in the central province of Kompong Thom in 2007, when he was a *Radio Free Asia* correspondent.

Although the press has not been forced to avoid the subject of illegal logging altogether, it finds it hard to report detailed information, including names of the people and networks involved. “We publish reports on this subject almost every day but we need international support because reporting in the field and providing our reporters with protection is a financial burden for our newspaper,” Pen Samitthy said. A military officer in Kratié province, for example, has brought a libel suit against *Meatophum*’s editor for naming him in story about illegal logging.

Conclusion and recommendations

The Cambodian government’s pledge to abolish prison sentences for press offences was hailed by Reporters Without Borders as an encouraging advance in a region fraught with problems for press freedom. But the jailing of several opposition journalists has cruelly shown that the promise has not been kept. It has been compounded by judicial harassment of government opponents and the journalists who interview them. The international community has strongly condemned these reversals and there is still time for Hun Sen’s government to make lasting improvements to respect for press freedom.

In an encouraging development, the Cambodian media have been free to cover the trial of former leading members of the Pol Pot regime. “Aside from a few logistic problems and the court’s distance from the centre of Phnom Penh, the Cambodian media have been able to cover the trial without any difficulties, but the involvement of certain officials in the Khmer Rouge regime continues to be a sensitive topic,” said Thierry Cruvellier, who has trained Cambodian journalists on international justice issues.

“The media were warned at a very early stage they could be punished severely if they published documents which the international court regarded as confidential,” Cruvellier added. “This gave rise to incidents in 2007 and 2008, and an international news agency was threatened with prosecution or banishment from the courtroom if it published a confidential document. Sadly, this is general tendency with international courts.”

There have been other positive developments such as the provision of training to ministry spokesmen and the fact that, for the time being at least, there have been no cases of online censorship. Nonetheless, several sources said the government was working on a bill to regulate Internet content that could include sanctions for insulting the monarchy and traditions.

Bolstered by the latest elections and China’s support, Hun Sen and his allies are trying to intimidate and deter journalists, opposition politicians and human rights activists from raising sensitive issues including border tension. This runs counter to the recommendations made by the United Nations and its special rapporteur for freedom of expression and opinion, who recently reminded government officials that they should not be bringing legal actions against journalists.

Reporters Without Borders recommends that:

The Cambodian government should:

1. Immediately release the newspaper editor Hang Chakra and ensure that the journalist Ross Sokhet’s appeal is heard as soon as possible.
2. Reinforce the editorial freedom of the state broadcast media (TVK, AM 918 and FM 96) by making them independent of the information ministry.
3. Stop pressuring companies that want to place advertising with the opposition media.
4. Relaunch the police investigations into Khim Sambo’s murder and the death threats against Piseth Lem.
5. Stop tapping journalists’ telephones.

The Ministry of Justice should:

6. Ensure that the new criminal code contains no provision for prison sentences or exorbitant damages awards for press offences.
7. Ensure that charges of “disinformation” and “incitement” in legal actions brought against

journalists by government lawyers are replaced by other charges so that they are tried under the press law.

8. Initiate legislative proceedings for the amendment of article 12 of the press law, which uses defence of national security and political stability as justifications for restricting basic freedoms.

The Ministry of Information should:

9. Create an independent media regulatory body with responsibility for allocating licences to radio and TV stations.

10. Take account of the recommendations made by the Club of Cambodian Journalists regarding the issuing of press cards.

11. Release the first draft of the bill for regulating Internet content.

12. Give *Sombok Khmum (Beehive FM 105)* permission to establish relays in the provinces.

Journalists' organisations should:

13. Promote awareness of the need to improve employment conditions for journalists, including contracts and better pay.

The Cambodian media should:

14. Respect journalistic ethics by ensuring that political coverage is as balanced as possible and by not pandering to ethnic prejudices.

The international community should:

15. Advocate Hang Chakra's immediate release and the withdrawal of abusive legal actions against the news media.

16. Grant material and financial support to independent news media and journalists' organisations.