

**Kingdom of Cambodia**  
**Nation Religion King**



Phnom Penh, September 11, 2017

**Statement**

**Restoration of a Political Environment of Participation and Freedom during Voter Registration and 2018 National Election Preparation**

Cambodia Associations and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) the undersigned, have are deeply disturbed and concerned over the decision by the authorities of the Royal Government of Cambodia and/or authority to take measures accusing and prosecuting political party leaders, closing independent media outlets, effectively prohibiting a radio program from broadcasting, and banning activities of an international non-governmental organization. The measure will affect rule of law that undermine international and constitutional principles of liberal democracy with pluralism. Such actions have the potential to undermine public perception quality of the political competition, negatively impacting the participation of political parties and eligible voters in the 2017 registration process and the National Assembly election preparation in 2018.

So far, at least two leaders of two political parties are in process of being trial in relation to alleged crimes committed when expressing political views or sensitive information posed in media/social media. Mr. Kem Sokha, a member of parliament with immunity and the President of the opposition party in parliament the Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP), is now being prosecuted for treason meanwhile Sourn Serey Ratha, the president of Khmer Power Party (KPP) has been sentenced five years in prison after being accused of inciting military personnel to disobedience stipulated in article 471 472 494 and 495 of criminal code.

Independent and impartial media outlets, including Radio Free Asia (RFA), Voice of America (VOA), Voice of Democracy (VOD) and radio FM 93.5 MHz which have played a significant role to inform the public about election, democracy, and social issue, have been banned from re-broadcasting all programs on the radio FM channels. The CAMBODIA DAILY newspaper has had to shut down its operation following measures set in place by the authorities of the Royal Government of Cambodia.

Also, an international non-governmental organization, National Democratic Institute (NDI) which has actively worked on its activities for 25 years to promote elections, democracy and good governance in Cambodia had been its registration not approved and its activities have been banned entirely by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

Cambodian Associations and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) the undersigned are issuing the following urgent recommendations to all stakeholders:

- Government authorities should restore a regular and peaceful political environment and allow for the participation of political party leaders, independent media and international non-government organization during the registration period, and also promote freedom of expression and right to access to information for free and fair elections in 2018.
- Strongly encourage eligible voters to get registered and increase confidence of voters to participate in the election.
- The international community, in particular the signatory states of Paris Peace Accord on Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict, should continue to support and promote the process of liberal democracy with pluralism and free and fair elections in Cambodia.

**Cambodia Associations and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) supporting the joint statement:**

1. Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL)
2. Neutral & Impartial Committee for Free & Fair Elections in Cambodia (NICFEC)
3. Coalition of Cambodia Farmer Community (CCFC)
4. Cambodia Center for Independent Media (CCIM)
5. Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT)
6. Cambodian Youth Network (CYN)
7. Women's Media Centre of Cambodia (WMC)
8. Housing Rights Task Force (HRTF)
9. The Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
10. Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA)
11. People Center for Development and Peace (PDP)
12. Center Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL)
13. Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC)

For media request, should you please contact:

093 555 643 / 012 82 22 73 / 016 82 82 11 / 012 94 20 17