

Cambodia: In Solidarity with The Cambodia Daily, Stop Silencing Dissenting Voices

(Bangkok, 4 September 2017) - The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) expresses deep concern on the forced closure of the independent newspaper the Cambodia Daily, which has published its final edition today after 24 years of unbiased and fearless news reporting. The Cambodia Daily's shut down by the Cambodian Government constitutes a flagrant attack on press freedom in the country. It is also part of a broader campaign aimed at silencing critical voices in the country ahead of next year's general elections.

In a statement published on 3 September 2017, the Cambodia Daily announced the ceasing of operations as of 4 September 2017. The decision came after the request by the General Department of Taxation Cambodia (GDTC) to pay US\$6.3 million in taxes, combined with several public announcements made by the GDTC threatening to freeze the accounts and prosecute the newspaper's owner. According to the Cambodia Daily's deputy publisher, Deborah Krisher-Steele, the newspaper did not receive any warnings before receiving the tax bill, which was not based on an audit of the newspaper's books.

Today, the human rights community and the Cambodian people have lost a precious ally and unique source of stories and information. The Cambodia Daily has played a crucial role in reporting on human rights violations in Cambodia, covering extensively on stories such as the legal harassment case against land rights activist Tep Vanny and the arbitrary detention of five human rights defenders, just to mention two of the main examples of crackdowns on fundamental freedoms by the Cambodian authorities. In its last 24 hours, the Cambodia Daily also had the chance to cover the most recent attempt by the government to silence the opposition with the arrest of Kem Sokha, President of Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) accused of treason.

An independent and vibrant press is an essential component of a healthy democratic society. The recent government-led clampdown on other independent news outlets such as Radio Free Asia, Voice of America, and Voice of Democracy is paving the way for the 2018 general election to be anything but free and fair. FORUM-ASIA calls on the Government of Cambodia to halt the harassment of independent media outlets, civil society organisations, and opposition parties, and abide fully by its international human rights obligations. Finally, FORUM-ASIA would like to express its solidarity to all the personnel of the Cambodia Daily and extend its gratitude for the newspaper's crucial contribution to the advancement of human rights in Cambodia.

About FORUM-ASIA:

FORUM-ASIA is a regional human rights group with 58 member organisations in 19 countries across Asia. FORUM-ASIA has offices in Bangkok, Jakarta, Geneva and Kathmandu. FORUM-ASIA addresses key areas of human rights violations in the region, including freedoms of expression, assembly and association, human rights defenders, and democratization.

For further information, please contact:

- East Asia Programme, easia@forum-asia.org

Regional Office: S.P.D Building 3rd Floor, 79/2 Krungthoburi Road, Khlongtong Sai, Khlongsan, Bangkok 10600, Thailand

International Office: Rue de Varembe 1, 2nd Floor, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland

Tel: +41 (0)22 740 2947 Fax: +41 (0)22 740 2948

Jakarta Office: c/o KontraS - Jalan Kramat 2 no.7, Senen, Jakarta Pusat
10420 Indonesia +62(0)213919006

Kathmandu Office: c/o INSEC – Syuchatar, Kalanki, Kathmandu, Nepal, +9779(0)14278770

Website: www.forum-asia.org, Email: info@forum-asia.org