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Asia - Cambodia

Unclear resignation

CCIM, RSF call for more details in TVK resignation

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The Cambodian Center for Independent Media and Reporters Without Borders call on the Ministry of Information to release full details regarding the resignation of *TVK* Director-general Kem Gunawadh. The timing of Gunawadh's resignation, just days after *TVK* ran a CNRP political ad showing footage of government crackdowns on protestors, is highly suspect and points to a potential political motivation behind Gunawadh's departure from *TVK*. CCIM and RSF call on the Ministry of Information to proceed with transparency in Gunawadh's case, making public the details of his resignation.

As the state-funded national television station, *TVK* has a duty to act in a neutral manner, providing equal access to all political parties and giving Cambodian citizens an unbiased picture of national news. However, *TVK* has a long history of showing the ruling party in a highly positive light, and its recent decision to air CNRP ads that deviated from that pattern may have played a role in Gunawadh's resignation. Politically motivated decision making is unacceptable for a news outlet that operates using public funds and must be stopped immediately, said CCIM Executive Director Pa Ngoun Teang.

"*TVK* and the Ministry of Information are breaching the public trust by providing news coverage that is so politically one-sided," Teang said. "We fear that Gunawadh's resignation, coming so soon after a decision to air the controversial CNRP ads on *TVK*, will further entrench politically biased decision making at *TVK* in the future, denying Cambodian citizens of their right to independent information.

Reporters Without Borders is likewise concerned about the situation's effect for the country's press. "The resignation of the director of *TVK* is another sign of deterioration of press freedom in Cambodia. If there are tensions between the Ministry of Information and *TVK*, it means that no media in the country is safe from the pressure of the ruling party. The Cambodian government must stop to interfere abusively into editorial policy as it encourages self-censorship" said Benjamin Ismail, head of the press freedom organization's Asia-Pacific desk.

CCIM and RSF call on the Ministry of Information to publicly divulge the details of Gunawadh's resignation and to take steps to ensure future personnel decisions are not politically influenced.
