

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/cambodia-local-media-still-censored-in-run-26-07-2013,44982.html>

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Asia - Cambodia

Blocking information

## Local media still censored in run-up to general elections

26 July 2013

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Reporters Without Borders regrets that the government has maintained its 21 June ban on local radio stations broadcasting commentaries and opinion polls during the five days prior to the 28 July general elections and on election day itself

The ban, part of a series of censorship directives issued by the National Electoral Committee and endorsed by the information ministry, also includes the broadcasting of any results on election day.

"We strongly condemn the failure to rescind this directive, which tramples on freedom of information," Reporters Without Borders said. "The authorities are clearly trying to restrict voter access to radio programmes that are outspoken and do not toe the government line.

The organization added: "Unobstructed access to independent news and information is the cornerstone of any free election. We remind the Cambodian authorities that, in its absence, these elections cannot be regarded as transparent and democratic."

*Voice of America* is one of several international radio stations that have been the target of censorship in the past. A VOA representative in Washington told Reporters Without Borders:

"We are aware of the media restrictions that have been placed on election coverage prior to the vote in Cambodia. *Voice of America* will continue to provide its audience with reliable, accurate and comprehensive news, and urges the government to lift all restrictions on the free flow of information."

Chris Decherd, the head of VOA Khmer, added: "Cambodia is a challenging environment to practice independent quality journalism at any time, including election and campaign periods. VOA Khmer will continue the important work of delivering accurate and balanced Khmer-language news to citizens of Cambodia."

Reporters Without Borders nonetheless welcomes the decision to lift two bans on local radio stations retransmitting broadcasts by foreign radio stations during the 31 days prior to the elections and [the Khmer-language programmes of foreign radio stations](#).

Last year, local radio stations were [banned](#) from retransmitting programmes broadcast by *Voice of America* and *Radio Free Asia* about the June 2012 local elections. One local station was forced to shut down and another was forced to broadcast nothing but music.

Foreign broadcast media are often the only source of obtain alternative news and information for the public in Cambodia, where most of the local media are closely supervised by the ruling Cambodian People's Party.

The most popular form of news media in Cambodia is television, but no TV stations are able to provide objective news reporting. Radio continues to be the most accessible source of alternative news although, of the approximately 100 stations operating in Cambodia (according to information ministry figures), only three are regarded as independent of the government.

With a view to the forthcoming general elections, Reporters Without Borders and the

Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM) [made the following recommendations](#) to Cambodia's government and politicians on the 3 July. There were urged to:

- ▶ Implement the recommendations that Cambodia accepted at the end of the [2009 UN Human Rights Council session](#).
- ▶ Draft laws on access to information and freedom of information in consultation with civil society, in order to improve media transparency and professionalism.
- ▶ End impunity for physical attacks against journalists and other media personnel and set up a commission to identify those responsible for journalist Heng Serei Oudom's murder in 2012 and other cases of violence.
- ▶ Lift the restrictions on radio and TV broadcasting and reform the frequency allocation process so that independent and community broadcasters can operate.
- ▶ Publish the draft cyber-crime law and allow civil society to suggest changes to the draft.
- ▶ Repeal the law criminalizing denial of the Khmer genocide.

Cambodia is ranked 143rd out of 179 countries in the [2013 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).

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