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Asia - Cambodia

Online Restrictions

Some Internet cafés ordered to close

14 December 2012

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and the Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM) raise their concerns about online freedom in Cambodia as the Minister of Telecommunications, So Khun, signed a circular on November 16th, 2012, to regulate the use of Internet in the country.

According to the decree issued by the ministry, Internet cafes cannot be located within 500 meters of a school or allow their clients to gamble, porn surf, visit websites selling drugs or commit crimes that threaten national security or "traditions". The Minister of Telecommunications also stated that "students can learn new technology as long as [it] is legal".

"The lack of definition of the notions of "entertaining website", "game" or "traditions", leaves a wide interpretation of the decision if applied. This is a step towards a tighter control of the Net in Cambodia", said Christophe Deloire, RSF's Secretary-General and Pa Nguon Teang, CCIM's Director. "It is a decree, meaning that there is a will to impose a decision to Cambodian citizens on their use of the Internet. We have seen this happening in neighboring countries such as Vietnam and Burma and are very concerned about Cambodia ignoring its international human rights obligations. We are therefore encouraging the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Cambodia to investigate further the situation during his stay in the country ", they continued.

The news was published by local media on Friday, December 7th before Dr. Subedi, the United-Nations Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Cambodia arrived in the country where he will stay until December 15th. It is its eighth mission in the Kingdom since he took office in 2009.

The year 2012 is known to have been bad in terms of human rights violations in Cambodia. On December 9th, the local NGO [Licadho](#) published a report in which it states "Recent threats and attacks against HRDs have been overwhelmingly targeted at four main groups: community representatives entangled in land disputes; factory workers and union leaders; NGOs and NGO staff; and journalists". Pa Nguon Teang insisted that Cambodian authorities are aggressively closing all means for freedoms of expression in the country." If this decree is applied, it will help the government to introduce a law to control the internet use", he concluded.

In February 2012, [a decree had already been imposed](#) on Internet and telephone service providers to install surveillance cameras in order to "promote protection of national security, safety and social order for the country".

Translation of the circular:

Circulation on prevention measures related to internet café service

In Cambodia nowadays, advanced telecommunication and information technologies have been used widely for working, economic, diplomatic and everyday-life relation of people, civil servant, arm force, diplomats, investors, monks and foreigners through their advanced telecommunication devices such as: mobile phone, immobile phone, internet, fax, instance messages etc.

Through experiencing in suppression and investigation dozens of offenses, the ministry and relevant authorities has noted that many criminals have used telecommunication mean to commit the offenses such as inter-border criminal, robbery, murder, extortion, illegal drug trafficking, human trafficking, economic crime, illegal running telecommunication service, pornography and other immoral act, which has affected our tradition and social morality.

More importantly, recently, we have founded that many parents or children's guardians complained about their children addiction to internet game and pornography, which cause those children dare to steal money from house, not to attend class, and not follow teachers' advice.

In order to eliminate all negative activities as described above, the ministry of telecommunication would like to inform to all service operators, private-public companies, private companies and other distributing branches all over the country, and all internet café who has run and planned to run that:

1. The internet café which was opened and planned to open its service near educational institution and school must relocate 500 meters distance from educational institution and school avoiding disturbing students.
2. All internet café are not allowed to be used for playing all kinds of game especially football match betting and lottery via internet.
3. All internet café are not allowed to be used for guest to check any pornography websites, which lead to exist of many crimes such as rape, domestic violence etc.
4. All internet café are not allowed to be used for committing crimes such as illegal drug trafficking, human trafficking, money laundry, inter-border sexual exploitation, which has a bad effect to nation's dignity and prestige.

Cambodia telecommunication operator, all provincial departments of telecommunication, provincial-municipal halls, specialist institutions and departments, relevant authorities and all internet café providers must cooperate well to implement this circulation effectively.

In case of any internet café provider don't follow this circulation, ministry cooperation with law enforcement institutions and relevant authorities will suppress and confiscate materials, and also arrest the internet café owner in accordance to law.

Ministry of telecommunication fully hopes that all internet café providers throughout the country will cooperate to implement this circulation with highly responsibility.

Phnom Penh, November 12, 2012

Minister Sor Khun

Original of the circular : see portfolio

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