



**Joint Media Release by the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR) and  
the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)**

**Phnom Penh, 22 April 2009  
For Immediate Release**

**Joint submission for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Cambodia's  
Human Rights record - Freedom of expression and assembly seriously  
undermined**

The Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR) and Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) are pleased to announce that a coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) - coordinated by the Alliance for Freedom of Expression in Cambodia (AFEC) and assisted by the Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC) - has made a joint submission on freedom of expression and assembly in Cambodia to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva, for inclusion in its summary of stakeholder information for the purposes of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Cambodia's Human Rights record.

The submission shows that the last four years have seen freedom of expression and assembly in Cambodia seriously undermined, with opinion restricted, parliamentarians silenced, the media controlled, access to information blocked, and assembly and public demonstration prevented. The Royal Government of Cambodia has breached its international and constitutional human rights obligations, and has relied on national legislation which itself breaches these obligations.

In order to improve this situation, the coalition of NGOs urges the Government to properly respect freedom of expression and assembly and to implement a series of recommendations, including:

- i. Ratify the First Optional Protocol of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to enable Cambodians to submit complaints to the Human Rights Committee relating to violations of their freedom to expression and assembly, and other human rights.
- ii. Invite the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression to visit and assess the situation in Cambodia, and to make recommendations.
- iii. Work with other ASEAN member states to create an ASEAN Human Rights body in 2009.
- iv. Establish an independent National Human Rights Commission in 2009, in keeping with the Paris Principles.

- v. Publicly endorse the Johannesburg Principles and work with NGOs to formulate a freedom of expression and assembly strategy as part of a wider human rights action plan.
- vi. Decriminalize disinformation and defamation in the course of reforming the criminal law.
- vii. Invite experts including the international NGO Article 19 and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to assess and recommend amendments to the 1995 Press Law and 1991 Law on Demonstrations. Implement these newly amended laws.

The coalition of NGOs includes: Advocacy and Policy Institution (API); Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC); Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC); Cambodian Association for Protection for Journalists (CAPJ); Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR); Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM); Cambodian Center for the Protection of Children's Rights (CCPCR); Cambodian Independent Teachers Association (CITA); Cambodian Independent Civil Servants Association (CICA); Cambodian League for the Protection and Defence of Human Rights (LICADHO); Center for Social Development (CSD); Center for Civil and Political Rights (CCPR); Coalition of Cambodian Apparel W.D.U. (C-CAWDU); Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL); Community Legal Education Center (CLEC); Free Trade Union of Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia (FTUWKC); Independent Democratic of Informal Economic Association (IDEA); International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH); Khmer Kampuchea Krom Human Rights Association (KKKHRA); Khmer Youth Association (KYA); Legal Aid of Cambodia (LAC); Neutral & Impartial Committee for Free and Fair Election in Cambodia (NECFEC); People Center for Development and Peace (PDP-Center); Project Against Domestic Violence (PADV); Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA); and Star Kampuchea.

The full submission is available at [www.cchrcambodia.org](http://www.cchrcambodia.org).