

3.4. Cambodia

After 30 years of war, civil war and genocide Cambodia has enjoyed a stable and peaceful time despite some minor conflicts since 1999. With considerable help from the international donor community, the country has made improvements in many sectors. However, more than a third of all Cambodians live below the national poverty line and development is still hindered by an inefficient bureaucracy as well as endemic corruption. While the results of general elections have become more and more valid in recent years¹ the consolidation of democracy has been set back by the lack of checks and balances and of government accountability, the absence of the rule of law and the violation of human rights. It is surprising that despite this environment Cambodia has a relatively high level of freedom of the press. Indeed, on the one hand today's Cambodia is known as the country with one of the freest and most plural press in the whole of Southeast Asia. On the other hand, however, the electronic media are still firmly controlled by several governmental institutions and therefore far removed from western standards.

I. General Conditions

As a result of the political and social problems, the level of literacy in Cambodia is 69.4 per cent,² a rate which is low, particularly in rural areas, where about 80 per cent of the population are farmers.

Illiteracy
and education

Since 1991, the international community has spent quite a large amount of money on training local journalists in communication skills and encouraging freedom of expression in Cambodia. Even so, the local media could be more professional. Many of the newspapers are affiliated to political parties or individuals and, with few exceptions, radio and television have been retained in the hands of various government institutions. (For example, three of the seven TV stations belong to the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Defence and the municipality of Phnom Penh.)

Local media

In the past and still today, the lack of professionalism has led to many insulting headlines that have incurred the wrath of

¹ Albritton, Robert B.: 'Cambodia in 2003', in: *Asian Survey* 44 (1) 2004, p. 102.

² United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): *Human Development Report Cambodia 2003*, Phnom Penh 2003.

the government, politicians, business people and certain individuals. These headlines compare human beings to animals such as dogs, or use pejorative expressions such as 'crook' and 'tools of the Vietnamese' to describe the actions of politicians. In general, the written press gives prominence to small crimes, daily traffic accidents, street fights and domestic violence. These subjects constantly appear on the front page with colour photos of the events and people describing the nature of the event down to the last detail. These pictures are repeatedly explicit and would not be deemed suitable for publication by many editorial houses around the world. Generally, the faces of victims and criminals are not covered or altered, which could be regarded, in some cases as a violation of the right to privacy. Also, robbers, murderers and major criminals are pictured by most newspapers in their underwear. Altogether, police reports are the source of one out of four stories in Cambodia.³

As far as the electronic media is concerned, broadcasting remains under government control. Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen exercises control over the electronic media with his own agenda, for example preferring to give licences to the friends of the government, while withholding licences from its opponents. However, as democracy has become gradually rooted, the government under the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) has also changed its strategy to allowing greater freedom of expression and being more open with the media, although such freedom is still limited. This openness has been evident in the last decade in the way which several radio stations and transmission services have been allowed to operate even though they are considered critical of the government. Those stations are:

- The Women's Media Centre (FM 92)
- The Beehive Radio Station run by businessman Mam Sonando (FM 105)
- And the transmission services of the US-sponsored and funded Radio Free Asia and Voice of America (through FM 105), both of which have their headquarters in Washington DC, USA.

³ Media Consulting and Development: *The Cambodian Press Monitoring*. Phnom Penh 2004, p. 5.

By the 1980s, the state totally controlled the printed and electronic media and regulated their contents. And until late 1987, Cambodia still had no daily newspaper.

After the fall of the Khmer Rouge genocidal regime in 1979, the Vietnamese installed a government with Heng Samrin as Prime Minister and encouraged people to read official journals and to listen to the radio every day. It is worth noting that during the Khmer Rouge regime from 1975 to 1979, in which at least 1.7 million Cambodians were reportedly dead and killed, there was no freedom of information, and no media receivers such as radios and TV sets were openly owned by people.

The free press was introduced in Cambodia in 1993, when the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) was present, working for peace, national reconciliation, and democracy. Cambodia's press is still one of the freest in the region, but also one of the most unregulated. Professionalism, political affiliation, non-neutrality, and the government's use of threats and intimidation to influence the media – are all of great concern both among the media and outside watchers. It seems that the media in Cambodia do not regard themselves as merely a platform for political debate but as political players themselves. This self-image impedes the media's contribution to the consolidation of Cambodian democracy, as happens in western states.⁴

Many of local journalists, who work for the 209 registered media companies in Cambodia, receive salaries between US\$ 30 and US\$ 100 per month, while those who are working for foreign media earn between US\$ 200 and US\$ 1,000. Compared to other jobs the salary of Cambodian journalists is not very low because most civil servants – including soldiers, police officers, teachers and even judges – earn less than US\$ 30 per month. But for journalists working for local newspapers these wages are often not enough for daily life and hence they depend on earnings from other sources, i.e. taking gifts, asking for 'gas money' or for 'coffee'. Journalists also often take direct payments for covering news events; usually this comes in envelopes containing some 5,000–20,000 riels (US\$ 1.25–5).

Notably, the local media is heavily dependent on entrenched political leaders, who are generally divided into two main

⁴ Roberts, David W.: *Political Transition in Cambodia 1991-99. Power, Elitism and Democracy*, Richmond 2001, pp. 124, 180.

but very unequal groups: either pro-CPP (the majority) or against the leading party (only a few). Almost none of the 209 registered media groups is really independent of political influence except a few that are run by foreign owners such as the French *Cambodge Soir* as well as the English papers *The Cambodia Daily* (that even offers a part of its paper in the Khmer language) and the biweekly *Phnom Penh Post*. These are examples of professional journalism.

For the rest, there is little middle ground between the media which support the two political groups, and coverage in each group is often distorted beyond the reach of reason. It is rare for these papers to attempt to reach out and educate their readers in a meaningful or constructive way; instead, they are often critical and defamatory in a negative way. The government, on the other hand, is usually indifferent to the media reports even when those reports are positive and constructive.

Besides the economic difficulties, Cambodian journalists also face physical danger. At least six reporters have been gunned down in the past 12 years; others have been injured or jailed. The most important cases were:

- Tou Chhum Mongkul, editor of *Antarakum* newspaper (Intervention). He was shot dead on 11 June 1994.
- Non Chan, editor of *Samleng Yuvachun Khmer* (Voice of Khmer Youth). His paper was critical to the ruling CPP and the government. He was gunned down on 16 September 1994.
- Chan Dara, reporter of *Koh Santepheap* (Island of Peace). He was killed on 8 December 1994.
- Thun Bunly, editor-in-chief of *Undomkate Khmer* (Khmer Ideal) was murdered on 18 May 1996.
- Michael Sokhon Sr, a Cambodian-Canadian journalist, was shot dead during the factional fighting in central Phnom Penh in July 1997 when he was trying to snap photos of soldiers stationed near the villa of the police chief in Phnom Penh.
- Chou Chetharith, deputy editor of Ta Prohm radio station, was gunned down by two men on a motorcycle in front of his office on 18 October 2003. Four days

before, Prime Minister Hun Sen had warned the station that it should 'control its programmes' better.⁵

To this day, newspapers are closed; reporters are threatened or sued in the courts. In 2002, there were 9 cases of lawsuits, suspensions and arrests, 13 cases in 2003, and 19 similar cases occurred in 2004.⁶ However, like many other countries in the region, Cambodian leaders generally accept press criticism. Prime Minister Hun Sen, who is known as Cambodia's strongman and often reviled as an iron-fisted autocrat,⁷ has become a model of new leaders who tolerate even irresponsible attacks by opposition newspapers and politicians. Cambodia's media, however, remain deeply politicised, largely due to the enduring legacy of civil war and factionalism within the whole society.⁸

Including regional community-based stations and cable TV stations, there are a total of 38 radio and 66 TV stations in the country. And there are 209 local newspapers which are registered at the Ministry of Information. However, not more than 10 newspapers publish regularly.

Radio, TV,
Print

People might wonder what happens with the rest of the media companies if they do not work on a regular base. It would not be untrue to say that many local media are only activated on New Year's day, the birthdays of government's leaders, public ceremonies, and other big and important events, or when the publishers believe they can earn money by publishing a paper.

There are political parties that directly and indirectly run their own radio and TV stations and newspapers. These are the ruling CPP and the royalist FUNCINPEC party, who together form the coalition government. The CPP runs and controls, directly or indirectly, all seven TV stations, and most radio stations and newspapers, while the rest are shared by FUNCINPEC. Only a few newspapers support the opposition Sam Rainsy Party.

Media
ownership

⁵ Reporters sans frontières: *Cambodia 2004 Annual Report*, Paris 2005.

⁶ Club of Cambodian Journalists: *Annual report of 2004, Final Census Results*. Phnom Penh 2005.

⁷ Peou (2000 and 2001) offers a good overview of Hun Sen's influence on Cambodian politics in the 1990s.

⁸ Downie, Sue and Kingsbury, Damien: 'Political Development and the Re-emergence of Civil Society in Cambodia', in: *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 23/2001, p. 49.

- Internet media
- Currently, there are three top Internet service providers, two of which are independent, while the other one is partially run by the government:
- Bigpond, subsidiary of Australian Company Telstra (private)
 - Camnet, subsidiary of Ministry of Posts, and Telecommunication of Cambodia (government's affiliate)
 - Telesurf, service expansion of MobiTel Company (private).

The state authorities never censor the Internet newspapers. The local Internet newspapers are not yet popular because there are limited numbers of clients (only several hundred) who have access to and read Internet newspapers, and those Internet newspapers are usually short of budget and capital. There is only one outstanding Internet newspaper, entitled *Business Press* under the umbrella of Media Development and Consulting. It must be noted, however, that *Business Press* is not really a newspaper, but a weekly press review with reports from 59 national papers. As technology improves, so do the operating conditions for Internet newspapers.

Media consumption

The overall number of Internet users is still low because of language barriers, poor computer skills and poverty. The brief data made available in 2002 showed some 4,000 Cambodians had access to the Internet. However, there are an increasing number of public Internet access points throughout the country, especially in the capital Phnom Penh. The percentage of people that have access to radio is estimated at about 55 per cent, while about 30 per cent of them have access to TV; more than 70 per cent of the Cambodian population, mainly in rural areas, have no access to newspapers.

Radio, TV, Print

TV often [3], radio occasionally [2], and the press almost never [1] are used as a source of information in Cambodia. Only 6 per cent of all Cambodians get information through newspapers at least three times a week while TV with 54 per cent and radio with 44 per cent have a much higher rate.⁹ The reason for the dominance of electronic media is its spread: 82 per cent of urban and 46 per cent of rural households possess a TV (radio: 81 per cent and 48 per cent).

⁹ Meisburger, Tim: *Democracy in Cambodia. A Survey of the Cambodian Electorate*, Phnom Penh 2001, p. 88.

<p>The Internet <u>almost never</u> [1] serves as a source of information, but information is <u>often</u> [3] verbally exchanged. Radio is the source of information with widest coverage of the countryside because it is cheap, easy to buy, consumes less battery power than TVs, and it is portable.</p>	Internet
<p>The media have <u>rather little influence</u> [2] on the formation of political opinion. The media is not considered very relevant by the government, and therefore, the authorities usually ignore most media reports, even those which are critical of the government's performance. Given this fact, people do not like to express their opinion in the media because they think politicians pay little attention to them. The ordinary citizens think that politics are the job and game of politicians. In the same context, the politicians do not want to use their political platform to consult their people. They would rather go with their own choice. Together, the attitudes and behaviour of both citizens and rulers show that the political culture still poses a big obstacle to democratic consolidation.</p>	Media influence on political opinion
<p>Everyone in Cambodia is aware that the state-owned newspapers, radio and television channels belong to the government. The Minister of Information Khieu Kanharith, with a green light from the Prime Minister, appoints to the leading positions, usually called 'general director' and 'editor-in-chief' in state-owned TV, radio and newspapers. The editorials are influenced by both the government and the ruling party and there are no specific laws or independent committees to control or stop this influence.</p>	State-owned media
<p>The media consumers are very aware of the level of influence in the media that are affiliated to political parties. Many readers either choose to read the pro-government or only the opposition newspapers.</p>	
<p>The extent to which published opinion is determined by the state-owned media depends on the context of the publication and whether it is sensitive to the government or not. However, the government takes the state-owned media more seriously than the private media or, in other words, the <u>private media hold almost no share of published opinion</u>. The coverage of the state-owned media can be evaluated as <u>propaganda for the government</u> [+3]. There is no clear difference between the press, radio and television coverage if they are pro-government.</p>	State-owned media and published opinion
<p>The Cambodian government is very keen to hold press conferences to inform the public about its programmes and</p>	

Government press conferences activities. All journalists have equal access to open press conferences, but not to any information. Normally, only the reporters who are pro-government or close to the ruling parties can easily get access to information, whereas those who are working for opposition parties are usually excluded. Press conferences are normally broadcast by state-owned stations. Therefore, the independent channels rarely or almost never report on government press conferences.

II. Legal Environment

Freedom of expression Freedom of opinion is spelled out in the Cambodian Constitution. Article 41 of the 1993 Constitution says that, 'Khmer citizens shall have freedom of expression, press publication and assembly.' However, the same article says, 'No one shall exercise this right to infringe upon the rights of others, to affect the good traditions of the society, to violate public law and order and national security.' No amendment has been passed to clarify these restrictions, and the government is not willing to pass one.

Media coverage The Constitution, meanwhile, says that press activity must be organised by law, but some articles of the Press Law restrict the freedom of opinion, such as those in Article 12 which says, 'The press shall not publish or reproduce any information that may affect national security and political stability.' The terms 'national security' and 'political stability' are a great concern to free journalists since these security concerns are often used to justify serious punishment and imprisonment. The proposed amendment to the Press Law therefore refers to a clearer definition of national security and political stability. The freedom of the press is guaranteed under the Constitution, and the Press Law certainly gives the country a relatively free press. However, the Cambodian print media enjoy their freedom with little responsibility. Thus, some newspapers have been sued, threatened with suspension or closed by the Ministry of Information.

Regulation of media coverage To sum up: freedom of the press exists on paper while in practice there are a couple of restrictions. And in spite of continued insistence from journalists' associations that the Press Law should be amended, the government, particularly, the Ministry of Information, which monitors the media in Cambodia, has never taken any steps in this direction. (The amendment proposed by the journalists' associations were to Article 12 of the Press Law that alerts reporters of possible

arrests and imprisonment once they are charged with provoking national insecurity and political instability.) It seems that the vague character of the law is in the interests of the government because it allows for huge latitude about media politics. And it at least imposes pressure on the journalists, who certainly in some cases prefer self-censorship to reporting the facts.

As for the punishments applicable to Cambodian journalists, Article 12 of the 1995 Press Law says, 'The press shall not publish or reproduce any information that may cause harm to National Security and Political Stability. Employer, editor and journalists shall be penalised with a fine from 5,000,000 riels to 15,000,000 riels (approx. US\$ 1,250–3,750), without yet taking account of due punishment according to the Criminal Law. The Ministries of Information and of Interior shall have the right to confiscate immediately the offending issue of the press. Moreover, the Ministry of Interior may also have the right to suspend the publication for a period which shall not exceed thirty (30) days and to forward all dossiers to the court.'

With regard to the 1992 criminal law, Article 62 says: 'The director or other party responsible for a publication or other means of communication who took the decision to publish, distribute or reproduce by any means, information which is false, fabricated, falsified or untruthfully attributed to a third person and did so in bad faith and with malicious intent, provided that the publication, distribution or reproduction has disturbed or is likely to disturb the public peace, shall be liable to a punishment of six months to three years in prison, a fine of three hundred thousand (300,000) to three million riels (3,000,000), or both.'

Article 63 of the same law says: 'Any allegation in bad faith or imputation of a given fact which harms the honour or reputation of any individual is defamation. The original publication or reproduction of the allegation or imputation is punishable, even if it refers to a person who is not explicitly named but whose identity is made evident from the defamatory speech, shout, threat, writing, printing, sign, poster, or audiovisual dissemination. Any allegation or imputation against a public figure which the author, the journalist, publisher, editor, or producer knows to be false and nevertheless distributes, publishes, writes or circulates with malicious intent is also defamation.'

There is a law covering defamation status. The law was introduced to Cambodia in 1993, by the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). The law is called the Transitional Penal Code for Defamation and Misinformation. Such provision on defamation generates many lawsuits against reporters as well as opposition politicians. However, it does not pose a barrier for Cambodian reporters accessing information. It is, rather, a good code of conduct for enforcing professionalism on rogue reporters to stop them using the media for distortion or for their own benefit. On the contrary, the barrier to getting good information is not the law, but the conduct of government officials, who will only give out information in exchange for positive coverage. Although this behaviour is similar in even modern democracies it still hinders public transparency and thus the process of democratisation in Cambodia.

There is no clear provision which states that media coverage will be regulated by law or decree. However, censorship has been secretly carried out by state authorities (the Ministry of Information) and by some media that are pro or close to the government. The censorship takes place in advance through 'secret discussions', either in phone calls or meetings between government officials – mainly from the Ministry of Information – and the publishers or editors in chiefs of those newspapers.

There is no law that restricts the free coverage of particular people, groups or institutions. There is no law excluding certain people, groups or organisation from working as journalists or from expressing their opinions. On the contrary, there are some groups and non-governmental organisations that engage in journalism such as human rights organisations, i.e. the Cambodian Centre for Human Rights, which is involved in the daily broadcast Radio Democracy Programme.

No media reports are examined by the state authorities before publication or broadcasting. For open events, celebrations or forums organised by the government, the Ministry of Information or the Office of the Council of Ministers regulate and coordinate media coverage.

Changes in
the past five
years

The legal framework for media coverage has not been modified during the last five years. However, freedom of the media has slightly improved [+1], although journalists still have limited professional skills. The killings and

assassinations that happened in the past have now been replaced by legal action (lawsuits or rather more subtle methods like threats and intimidation). Also, there has been a slight improvement [+1] in the quality of media coverage.

There have been no post-9/11 regulations or laws that have had an impact on the practices of the media. Cambodia is a small country and security is closely monitored by the government.

No international crimes have been reported in Cambodia. The exception has been the prominent case of one of the terrorist leaders known as Riduan Isamuddin alisa Hambali, who leads an Asian network of *Jemaah Islamiyah* that has link to *Al-Qaeda* and who was hiding in Cambodia.

No real censorship is carried out because it is normally done through a hidden deal. If journalists break the law, they are sent to court and, in a few cases, are imprisoned for a short term. Over the past five years, there have been many cases of newspapers being sued by the government, officials, powerful people and businessman. Some reporters have been detained for a while and their cameras seized or they have been barred from gaining access to information.

Censorship
under the
law

All newspapers, radio or TV stations have to be licensed or registered by the Ministry of Information before they are allowed to publish or broadcast. Some media associations have been banned or not been registered due to their open bias towards the opposition party, but it has happened rarely so far. However, the ministry plays the role of the key link between the government and the media.

Media
licences

To register, all journalists need a letter of assignment from their publisher or editor. So far, work permits have almost never been taken away from journalists or been refused to them. Instead, certain 'rogue individuals' illegitimately register as journalists, using this identity to get easy access to the authorities to serve their business interests.

Journalists'
status

Journalists have the legal right to participate in most (although not all) the public meetings of the government and parliament. Those meetings are normally broadcast, except when they deal with sensitive issues, such as critical debates initiated by members of the opposition party or foreign donors. No channels are refused the right to broadcast because all the TV channels are pro-government or belong to the ruling party.

Legally, journalists have the right to challenge state repression, but that has never been regarded as practically relevant in Cambodia. Most of the repression and intimidation against reporters is normally carried out by high-ranking officials from the ruling CPP. Such action is normally directed against anti-CPP journalists. Courts do not have a role in halting or reducing state repression, since they are strongly biased in favour of the government. Usually, the legal authorities support the state and the CPP's senior officials.

Monopolies and cartels There is no information monopoly or cartel among private media companies, nor are there many legal regulations against an information monopoly. However, Article 17 of the 1995 Law on the Press says, 'Any person ... may not be owner or possessor of more than two (2) Khmer language newspapers in the Kingdom of Cambodia.' And Article 18 of the law also stipulates, 'The total number of all Khmer language newspapers owned by foreigners shall not exceed 20 per cent of the total of all Khmer language newspapers that are actually being published in the Kingdom of Cambodia.'

III. Political Conditions

Coverage of marginal groups There are no sectors of the population or particular social strata whose political interests are not given media coverage. Likewise, there are no sections of the population deliberately excluded by state action from their right to freedom of information.

Self-censorship There is self-censorship in media coverage in Cambodia; it usually occurs in all TV, radio and newspapers that are pro-CPP. The owners, publishers, or editors-in-chiefs are normally CPP members. Self-censorship basically applies to political issues. The politically affiliated newspapers must abide by their parties' rules and policies. They criticise, harass, and in their reporting make attacks on their rivals.

Illegal state repression However, self-censorship is considered to be necessary since journalists, media companies or organisations fear state repression. The reporters in opposition newspaper such as *Moneakseka Khmer* (Khmer Conscience Newspaper) have to be alert to the possible consequences if their reports are inaccurate and defamatory, otherwise they face threats, intimidation or immediate law suits from the government. Dam Sith, editor-in-chief of *Moneakseka Khmer* said that he

had often received threats over the phone after certain articles had been printed in his papers, particularly if they were about sensitive issues such as corruption. Given its irrelevance access to the Internet is not obstructed by the state.

Obstacles to Internet access

It should be noted that there have been some positive developments with state repression during the past five years. The reason for this slight improvement [+1] may be found in the greater professionalism of many journalists. This has been encouraged by the active role played by certain media groups and journalists' associations such as the Club of Cambodian Journalists (CCJ), which is sponsored by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, in demanding an improvement in journalistic performance. Finally, the state-owned media does almost never monitor the production and distribution of the print media.

Changes in the past five years

Government control over print media

IV. Economic Pressures

No private media are subsidised by the state either through direct payments or through advertisements. This is not true for the media which are pro-CPP or close to FUNCINPEC. Both parties often give financial or material help to the media companies which support their political aims. However, the media facilities of FUNCINPEC were considerably damaged during the coup d'état by the CPP against the royalist party in 1997. After that event, several FUNCINPEC media institutions were taken over by CPP officials, for example the TV station CTV 9. The private media market is very small so publishers always face the danger of going bankrupt. Generally, running a newspaper in Cambodia is not big business. According to a survey conducted by the Club of Cambodian Journalists, the biggest and most influential journalist association in the country, only some 12,000 to 15,000 readers regularly buy and read a newspaper in Cambodia's capital.

State subsidies

The government does not spend any money on political advertisements on TV and radio or in the print media. Instead, most of those media establishments need the support of the government, so they voluntarily publish or report positively on the government without getting any financial compensation. Media coverage is very friendly towards the government [+2].

Further aspects Some economic factors disadvantage the media houses. These are: high taxation on paper and other imports of printing materials, and high prices of gasoline and electricity.

V. Non-state Repression

Repression by non-state groups Journalists or media companies are not only afraid of state repression, but also of intervention by the ruling political parties, especially the CPP. These parties regularly and often use threats and intimidation against journalists through their members. Non-state repression is normally linked to violence, crimes or defamation cases. The state authorities do prosecute those suspected of attacks against journalists, but often without the fervour necessary to solve a case. It is only if the state has an interest in protecting a journalist that this protection becomes very effective. Instead, the international community plays an increasing role in protecting journalists. The local and international human rights watchdogs and the United States in particular use their influence to support free journalism.

Changes in the past five years There has been no significant change [0] in intimidation through non-state repression over the past five years. However, things have become a little bit easier because reporters' professionalism has improved as a result of the many seminars and further training opportunities made available to them.

VI. Conclusions

Evaluation of media coverage In general, journalism in Cambodia, and in particular the free coverage of events, has slightly improved [+1] during the past five years. Reporters are generally allowed access to any information, although that can depend on the institution holding the information. Quite often, particular ministers or senior officials at certain ministries often deny journalists access to information. However, the media sector in Cambodia has not been extensively researched and there is a general lack of information and reliable statistics regarding owners, patrons and, not least, media consumers. Traditionally, the main source of information in Cambodia has been the grapevine. Oral information through informal channels is generally much more important than written words.

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation supports Cambodian journalists and their work. This support is provided through financial assistance and training courses. Its role is to improve journalists' professional skills to a level closer to established international practices. In this vein, the KAF has substantially supported the journalists' association, better known as the Club of Cambodian Journalists, the biggest and most influential organisation in capacity building in the sector. It deals with local reporters as well, teaching them how to better access information from a variety of sources and how to work together for their common interest. The KAF also supports the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), which established the first academic education programme for future journalists in Cambodia. Since 2001 RUPP, in cooperation with KAF, has offered a four-year BA programme in journalism. Other German institutions have joined this effort, amongst them the DAAD, DED and the weekly *Die Zeit*.

KAF
support

The general situation for the media in Cambodia is freedom with minor restrictions. Press freedom has improved substantially compared to 15 years ago. However, journalism remains a dangerous profession in this country, with journalists facing suspensions, intimidation, threats, arrests and killings. In general, there is no systematic repression of the press, regardless of the titles' political alignment. Over the last five years, there has been a steady increase in media titles, although many local media companies depend financially on patrons or parties (who require loyalty).

Freedom of
the media:
general
situation

The major obstacles to free media coverage are government officials and Article 12 of the Press Law, which deals with national security. There is no clear definition of national security, but that term can be easily used as a pretext to accuse or jail journalists the government does not like. However, laws in almost every sphere of the state are not being implemented and Article 12 not yet been used in an obsessive manner. At present, the major obstacles to free media coverage are:

Major
obstacles

- Government officials are not aware of the significant role played by the media.
- In Cambodia, journalism is still considered to be a low status career although the number of media students has increased in the last few years.

- Threats and intimidation are still used against journalists who report on lapses in the government, especially corruption.
- People are widely uneducated and do not yet demand investigative journalism.

Facts and figures are hard to come by, and most of middle-ranking and even senior officials are inclined to refer policy questions to top leaders rather than elaborate on the answers themselves.

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