



**Cambodia Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
concerned over press freedoms
October 15, 1998**

Cambodia Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (COHCHR) is concerned by recent signs of increasing pressure being applied against local media and foreign and local journalists since the July 26 election.

Actions taken since then on the part of the authorities have resulted in the closure of the independent radio station Sambok Khmum (Beehive), the suspension of one opposition newspaper (Oudom Kati Khmer) and court action against it, warnings of similar action against another (Samleng Youvachun Khmer), and the suspension (subsequently lifted) of the opposition Moneaksekar Khmer newspaper. Over the same period a summons has been issued against the editor of the Chareth Khmer newspaper over changes to the paper's logo, threats have been made against foreign journalists in the form of a warning that the authorities cannot guarantee their safety.

In the cases of the Oudom Kati Khmer (Khmer Conscience) and Samleng Youvachun Khmer (Voice of Khmer Youth) newspapers, the editors were asked to hand over documents or other evidence relating to their sources of information.

These actions are serious and have negative implications for press freedoms in Cambodia. It is essential that journalistic principles regarding non-disclosure of sources are respected. In the interests of freedom of the press and freedom of expression it is equally essential that journalists are allowed to operate without threat or pressure against them.

The COHCHR calls on the authorities to ensure that press freedoms are upheld, and to refrain from actions that might be seen as infringing on the environment in which journalists operate. Responsible journalism is important, but a free press remains a cornerstone of genuine democratic societies.