



Special Representative of the Secretary-General  
for Human Rights in Cambodia

តំណាងពិសេសរបស់លោកអគ្គលេខាធិការទទួលបន្ទុកសិទ្ធិមនុស្សប្រចាំកម្ពុជា



**The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Human Rights in Cambodia appeals for a new review of the media situation  
25 June 1998**

Ambassador Thomas Hammarberg published today a report on access to press, radio and television by political parties and candidates in the run-up to the elections.

During an election campaign, it is particularly important that freedom of expression is respected. For elections to be genuinely free and fair, the political parties must have equitable access to the media. The report illustrates that conditions for access to electronic media for the Cambodian opposition are far from fair, Ambassador Hammarberg said.

Regulations issued by the National Election Committee require private radio, television and print media to refrain from disseminating political statements during the election campaign, which starts on June 25, one month before the July 26 elections. All 39 registered parties will be given opportunities for daily five-minute spots on state-owned radio and television. These measures even if effectively implemented, however, do not solve the problem of equitable access and do not correct the impact of the previous imbalance.

One reason for the imbalance is the structure of ownership of radio and television. Procedures for the licensing and allocation of radio and television frequencies from the media are apparently not impartial, and the evidence indicates that decisions are made on a party political basis.

An analysis of the news programmes on state-owned radio and television reveals another kind of imbalance. News about opposition politicians and their views are virtually excluded from the media to an extent which cannot be justified by arguments about different news values. Ambassador Hammarberg called on the producers of news programmes to ensure full and fair coverage of the activities of politicians of all parties.

Ambassador Hammarberg also referred to the violent attack on 8 June against editor Thong Uy Pang of “Koh Santepheap” newspaper. This shooting must be condemned. It is important that the culprits be arrested, tried and convicted. He deplores that no one has been apprehended in connection with the grenade attack on 15 October 1997 against the same newspaper.

At the same time, he appealed to the media to avoid the use of language or images which might incite violence against political rivals or members of ethnic communities, such as ethnic Vietnamese. A good journalist must never try to provoke hatred, he said.