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Cambodian Center for Human Rights

MEDIA ALERT

Revocation of License of Voice of Democracy (VoD)

Phnom Penh, 13 February, 2023

Date : 13 February 2023

Type of Institution: Media Institution

Venue: Phnom Penh

Type of Threat: Press Freedom

On 9 February 2023, the Voice of Democracy (VoD) released an article quoting government spokesperson Mr. Phay Siphon stating that Mr. Hun Manet, deputy commander-in-chief of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces and the son of Prime Minister Hun Sen, who recently took the role of his father, had signed a budget contribution of \$100,000 to support Turkey after the recent earthquake in the country and its neighbor Syria. According to Mr. Siphon, it was consistent to have Mr. Manet signing on the aid agreement because the premier was on a mission; however, Mr. Hun Manet denied the information reported in the article released by VoD saying he did not sign any budget contribution for Turkey. On 11 February 2023, after Mr. Manet's reaction, the premier explained the process of the national budget management in order to clarify the confusion among the public. Moreover, the premier demanded VoD to publicly apologize to the government and his son within 24 hours, in response to a comment on the case made by one user on its Facebook page. He had previously given 72 hours to VoD to verify the facts and sources, and to apologize for the false report.

On 12 February 2023, VoD, held a discussion with the Ministry of Information working group, and then released a letter regretting any confusion the article may have caused, explaining that the media outlet had quoted spokesman Phay Siphon, and asking for leniency from the premier; however, Prime Minister Hun Sen was not satisfied with the statement, saying that this answer was "*unacceptable*", and ordering the Ministry of Information to revoke VoD's license to protect the government's honor, ending its broadcast for spreading "*slandorous*" information, although VoD issued another letter apologizing for these events on the same date.

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