

Oral Statement submitted to the 48th Regular Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council

Introduction

The purpose of this statement is to recommend the implementation of a data protection and privacy law in Cambodia.

Statement

Research evidence from reports, consultations and surveys show that in the last five years, self-censorship related to political expression has become acute in Cambodia.

Vaguely-worded provisions in the domestic law provide for online surveillance, data collection and sharing of data. These have caused anxiety over monitoring of online communications. Unannounced internet disruptions and concerns over eavesdropping of private communications have additionally unsettled internet users.

As a result, internet users have stepped back from expressing or sharing their political opinions online, resorted to consuming online content privately, ceased to access political content and avoided online political participation for fear of being surveilled and persecuted.

Recommendations

Asia Centre recommends that the Cambodian government

- Undertakes broad consultation on the issue of self-censorship, its causes and concerns.
- Legislate law on data protection and privacy to regulate the monitoring, storage and sharing of personal information.
- Limit the processing of personal data to what is strictly prescribed in the law.
- Establish an independent committee to oversee the handling and sharing of data between ministries and law enforcement agencies.

This statement on Cambodia is based on Asia Centre's report *Internet Freedoms in Cambodia: A Gateway to Control*, launched on 1 September 2021.