

## **Southeast Asian journo groups unite, vow to work for press freedom, safety, welfare**

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PHNOM PENH, Cambodia -- Journalists' unions from five Southeast Asian countries have banded together and pledged to work together to ensure better welfare and working conditions, and fight for an end to attacks on press freedom and journalists in the region.

The "Phnom Penh Declaration" was signed here Monday by the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, the Indonesian Alliance of Journalists, the Cambodian Association for the Protection of Journalists, the National Union of Journalists Malaysia, the Myanmar Journalists Association and the Federation of Media Independent Unions, which organized themselves into the Southeast Asian Journalist Unions or SEAJU.

All the signatories are affiliates of the International Federation of Journalists, which represents some 600,000 journalists worldwide.

In the declaration, the journalists' unions said they "face common problems of poor welfare and working conditions as evidenced in low wages, violations or outright suppression of our right to organize, and violations of our labor rights."

They also noted that the policies of many states and the impunity with which the murders and other attacks on journalists around the region continue to be carried out "erode press freedom and freedom of expression, and also deprive our people of the right to access to information."

The declaration also acknowledged "the need to promote gender equity and awareness within journalists' unions and media organizations, broaden and improve gender-sensitive reporting within the media, and to implement programs that promote gender awareness and equity."

The SEAJU members pledged to work together to improve the welfare and working conditions of journalists; "build an informed public by advancing press freedom, freedom of expression, access to information and independent media;" fight for the protection and safety of journalists and to end impunity; promote gender equity within media groups; and build their organization's capacities.

The declaration was signed by General Secretary Schave Jerome on behalf of the National Union of Journalists Malaysia.

<http://www.interaksyon.com/article/64384/southeast-asian-journo-groups-unite-vow-to-work-for-press-freedom-safety-welfare>