

## Letters

April 27, 2013

### Justice for Cambodia

SIR – Your obituary on Ieng Sary, the foreign minister in Cambodia's Khmer Rouge regime, concluded that the UN-backed tribunal in Cambodia has "convicted only one person, and moved so achingly slowly that it was never going to catch him" (April 6th). I strongly disagree with this conclusion.



The fact that Ieng Sary will never be finally judged has little to do with the pace of the proceedings and much more to do with the fact that the tribunal was not established until 27 years after the Khmer Rouge regime fell. When the court opened for business in 2006 Ieng Sary was 81 years old. The government of Cambodia and the UN were well aware when they agreed to establish the court that with such elderly defendants on trial it would be a race against time.

Moreover, the projected length of the current trial against Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan, which up until a month ago included Ieng Sary, is expected to be one of the shortest trials against former senior leaders in the recent history of international criminal law. The trial has been in progress for one year and four months, with the hearing of evidence expected to finish within the next five months. Trials of the most senior leaders at the international criminal tribunals for Yugoslavia and Rwanda, the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the International Criminal Court have on average taken approximately three years.

Justice administered at a very rapid pace, although superficially attractive, undermines the enduring impact that a judicial process with a level of integrity can have on a developing country. To say that the Cambodian process is "achingly" slow is not only inaccurate but also fails to appreciate the broader positive impact that this court is having on Cambodian society and its institutions.

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