



**2011 a critical year for Khmer Rouge Tribunal: spokesman
Kong Sothnarith
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The past year was “very important” for the UN-backed Khmer Rouge tribunal, a court spokesman said last week, in which the court took crucial steps toward a trial of jailed regime leaders.

The trial of Nuon Chea, Khieu Samphan and Ieng Sary for atrocity crimes, including genocide, is now under way.

The final Supreme Court sentencing is expected for the completed trial of Kaing Kek Iev, the Tuol Sleng prison commandant better known as Duch.

A fourth suspect, Ieng Thirith has been found mentally unfit to stand trial, though she remains in detention.

Speaking as a guest on “Hello VOA,” court spokesman Huy Vannak looked back on a year of the court’s work as it prepared for a major trial of three leaders.

“We have worked quickly and efficiently,” he said, but he conceded that time and financial constraints still loom for the UN-backed court.

Over the year, nearly 110,000 people sat in on court proceedings to observe the trial process, Huy Vannak said. Public participation and national reconciliation are key mandates for the hybrid court.

Meanwhile, the tribunal is still plagued with the looming question of cases 003 and 004, which are before the office of investigating judges.

Senior government officials object to both cases, and the Cambodian government has failed to approve an international replacement for the former UN investigating judge, who resigned earlier this year amid widespread worries of government interference in the court’s work.