

Survivor Sees Khmer Rouge Trials As Catalyst For Accountability
Tejinder Singh
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Washington, DC, United States (AHN) - The Cambodian killing fields took her parents but Theory Seng is a survivor and sees the trial of former Khmer Rouge leaders as a great opportunity, calling it a "court of public opinion."

Seng, a Cambodian-born U.S.-trained lawyer, addressed a Newsmaker event at the National Press Club on Friday.

She expressed hope that the Khmer Rouge tribunal, formally the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), could be "a powerful catalyst for social accountability--the constructive engagement of Killing Fields survivors and other Cambodians and their transformation into informed, empowered citizens."

Seng accepted the fact that the ECCC or KRT does not have much to offer as a court of law for legal accountability. However, she said the trial is breaking legal ground by having victims of the Khmer Rouge participate as civil parties in a criminal proceeding.

She was the first such legal identity to be recognized by the ECCC, and in 2008 testified against the most senior surviving Khmer Rouge leader, Nuon Chea, known as "Brother No. 2."

The eventual legacy of the tribunal "is still being written," she said. "Let's have another conversation five years from now, when the ECCC has closed shop."