



Cambodia KRouge lawyers condemn 'interference' **August 15, 2012**

Lawyers for a former Khmer Rouge leader accused of genocide urged Cambodia's UN-backed court on Wednesday to rebuke the country's foreign minister for allegedly meddling in the trial.

The defence team for "Brother Number Two" Nuon Chea made the request after Hor Namhong issued a statement earlier this month accusing them of trying to "politicise" the trial.

"Any reasonable observer in this country would understand the statement as an attempt to influence further testimony," Nuon Chea's lawyers wrote in a court filing posted online, calling for "a public condemnation".

Nuon Chea and his co-defendants, ex-foreign minister Ieng Sary and former head of state Khieu Samphan, deny charges including crimes against humanity and war crimes for their roles in a regime blamed for up to two million deaths.

His lawyers have long accused the Cambodian government -- which includes many former Khmer Rouge cadres -- of interfering in proceedings.

Hor Namhong commented on the case after a trial witness said the foreign minister had been "in charge" of a Khmer Rouge prison camp in the late 1970s -- a claim Hor Namhong vehemently denies. He says he was a prisoner.

The witness recanted his testimony shortly after the foreign minister's statement, telling reporters he had been confused in court.

Hor Namhong has in the past sued people for claiming that he had links to the blood-soaked movement.

Lawyers for Nuon Chea also say that Hor Namhong was one of several senior government officials who ignored summonses in 2009 to give evidence related to the current case.

"To refuse to appear when summonsed by a judge, and to then proceed to provide substantive comments in the media on the case that is being tried, plainly amounts to interference with the proper administration of justice," they wrote in the court filing.

The 1975-1979 Khmer Rouge regime oversaw one of the worst horrors of the 20th century, wiping out nearly a quarter of Cambodia's population through starvation, overwork and execution in a bid to forge a communist utopia.