



The Khmer Rouge Trial in November 2012

Albeiro Rodas

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The first visit of a head of government to the Court and the first hearing over the Khmer Krom genocide investigation were the main events this month to the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) for the prosecution of top surviving leaders of the Khmer Rouge regime (1975 – 1979).

The Prime Minister of New Zealand, John Key, joined US President Barack Obama, Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao during the ASEAN summit, then the premier paid a visit to the Court and announced a new pledge of NZ\$ 200,000 (US \$ 164,220).

New Zealand has been one of the sponsors of the ECCC since 2006 contributing so far with NZ\$ 1 million (US \$ 821,100.) ‘New Zealand will continue to help the tribunal complete its work prosecuting the senior leaders of the Khmer Rouge, said the Premier, who met Acting Director Tony Kranh and his fellow citizen Judge Silvia Cartwright. She is undertaking a very challenging process. We are trying to physically demonstrate our support for her and the job in hand. It’s important that those that committed war crimes are held to account,’ he said to Stuff.co.nz.

The Court received also in November visits from Swedish Development Aid officials, the U.S. Holocaust Museum, and a German delegation, which announced a new pledge of US \$1.2 million to the ECCC.

Khmer Krom victims in Court

The process to demonstrate that the Khmer Rouge regime persecuted the Khmer Krom ethnic has been troublesome. In late 2011 the request for supplementary investigations regarding Genocide of the Khmer Krom and the Vietnamese ethnic groups in Cambodia during the time of the Democratic Kampuchea was given, especially in mass executions in Bakan District – Pursat Province – and Takeo along the borders.

There is not formal indictment to responsible of these crimes in what is known as case 004 so far, though there is the mention of suspects, which names remain confidential as much as the investigation goes its way.

The ECCC's Defense Support Section assigned a foreign lawyer to represent a suspect in case 004, Dutch criminal defense lawyer Göran Sluiter.

Khmer Krom refers to the Khmer ethnic population living or coming from the Mekong Delta, today the southern part of Vietnam in what is referred by Cambodians as Kampuchea Krom (Lower Cambodia or Lower Kingdom), because it was a Cambodian territory transferred by the French colony to Vietnam. Although Khmer Krom people speak Khmer and follow Theravada Buddhism as other Cambodians, those who were settled in the country during the regimen were seen as Vietnamese spies, then persecuted, tortured and executed.

Other events

The Court reported also the swearing-in of a new Co-Investigating Judge Mark Harmon from US, following the resignation of Judge Siegfried Blunk in October 2011 and his reserve Judge Laurent Kasper-Ansermet in May 2012. Judge Harmon is a veteran at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia for the past 17 years and he will work with cases 003 and 004 with his Cambodian counterpart, Judge You Bunleng.

The ECCC Victims Support Section leads this year the 4th Regional Forum for civil parties in case 002 to inform those who cannot attend the hearings in Phnom Penh over the current process of the Court, to facilitate discussion between lawyers and civil parties and to facilitate the exercise of their rights. On 16 November the Forum met in Sihanoukville with 200 out of 3,864 civil parties, which names remained confidential for security reasons. They came from the coastal provinces of Cambodia and Kampong Speu.