



Cambodian genocide judge to stay on at his job despite new appointment

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A Cambodian judge said Thursday his recent appointment as head of the country's Appeals Court will not prevent him from taking part in a much-delayed U.N.-backed genocide tribunal.

You Bun Leng, one of the tribunal's two co-investigating judges, said he is not taking up his new post right away to avoid "interruption or delay in the process" of investigating cases against former Khmer Rouge leaders.

"I will continue my mission at the (tribunal) until such time as an appropriate and smooth transition can be made," he said in a statement received Thursday.

The United Nations, however, said in a statement Thursday that it remains concerned about the impact of You Bun Leng's appointment "on the efficiency of the proceedings" currently before the tribunal and on its "perceived independence."

The statement said the U.N. is seeking further clarification on the matter from the Cambodian authorities.

You Bun Leng's new appointment has also prompted observers to fear of a further delay in the trial of former Khmer Rouge leaders.

After countless delays, You Bun Leng and Marcel Lemonde, the U.N.-appointed co-investigating judge, have only recently initiated investigations into former Khmer Rouge leaders accused of crimes against humanity, genocide and other atrocities that caused the death of some 1.7 million people in the late 1970s.

The judges have so far indicted one of five suspects recommended by prosecutors. Duch, whose real name is Kaing Guek Eav, headed the former Khmer Rouge S-21 prison. The other four have not been publicly named and still remain free in Cambodia.

The tribunal was established last year following many years of negotiations between Cambodia and the United Nations. Disagreements about tribunal rules had kept the judges' investigations from being launched until last month.

Trials are expected to take place next year.