



Australia Urges No Meddling in KRouge Court March 26, 2012

Australia, a major supporter of Cambodia's Khmer Rouge war crimes tribunal, called Monday for the court to be allowed to work freely as it pledged a new round of funding.

"The independence of the judiciary is paramount and the (court) must be allowed to operate free from any external interference," Australian Foreign Minister Bob Carr said in a statement during a visit to Phnom Penh.

The UN-backed court, long dogged by claims of political interference, was last week rocked by the second resignation of a judge in six months over strong government opposition to new Khmer Rouge prosecutions.

Australia is the second largest donor after Japan to the court, which was set up to find justice for the deaths of up to two million people under the Khmer Rouge's reign in the late 1970s and has cost around \$150 million so far.

Australia will contribute a further \$1.69 million (AU\$1.61 million) to the tribunal, Carr announced as he concluded the first leg of a regional tour, his first since taking office earlier this month.

The fresh donation brings Australia's total contribution to the tribunal to just over \$19 million (AU\$18.3 million) since 2006, Carr said.

Carr, who took over from Kevin Rudd, will travel to Vietnam and Singapore next as part of efforts to strengthen Australia's ties with its regional neighbours.