



UN calls for Cambodia to fulfil war crimes court obligation
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Phnom Penh - The United Nations said Wednesday that Cambodia is obliged to appoint a judge to the Khmer Rouge war crimes tribunal despite the government's insistence that it has a choice on whether to approve such a move.

Martin Nesirky, spokesman for UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, said Cambodia is 'under an obligation' to appoint the tribunal's reserve international co-investigating judge as the international co-investigating judge if there is a vacancy.

The post is currently open after German judge Siegfried Blunk stepped down in October, citing perceived political interference in two cases currently under investigation, the third and fourth to be taken up by the tribunal.

Senior Cambodian officials have repeatedly said the government would not permit either case to reach trial.

The UN-nominated replacement is reserve international co-investigating judge Laurent Kasper-Ansermet, who voiced a determination Sunday on the micro-blogging site Twitter to investigate cases three and four.

Kasper-Ansermet's role has been left in limbo as Cambodia has yet to officially approve his appointment. Unconfirmed local media reports said his appointment was not endorsed at a meeting Friday of Cambodia's Supreme Council of Magistracy.

Government spokesman Phay Siphon said Monday that the judiciary has the power to decide whether to approve a judge or not. 'We continue to call upon Cambodia to fulfil its obligation,' Nesirky said.

The tribunal is investigating crimes against humanity during the Maoist Khmer Rouge's 1975-79 rule, during which 1.7 million to 2.2 million people died, according to tribunal estimates.