

DC-Cam Director Vouches for Docs

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Youk Chhang, director of the Documentation Centre of Cambodia, testified at the Khmer Rouge tribunal yesterday that the organisation's archives were accessible to all parties at the court, including defence teams that have recently claimed the organisation is biased.

Under questioning from senior assistant co-prosecutor Tarik Abdhulhak, Youk Chhang said that since 2006, prosecution, defence and civil party lawyers had been allocated days during which they could conduct research at DC-Cam.

"They may ask questions or sometimes they hold their internal discussions and if they have any questions for us, then they will put questions to me," he said.

"The documents that we have indicate that they are the documents belonging to the Democratic Kampuchea period, based on the content, the physical appearance, the source of the document."

Under earlier questioning from the prosecution, Youk Chhang said he could immediately identify a "Khmer Rouge document".

"The language is so specific, it is not that difficult to distinguish, or to have to have a doctoral degree, to distinguish this type of document," he said.

"Reading documents is like having breakfast for me."

In recent evidence hearings, defence teams have suggested that DC-Cam's research is biased against the defendants in Case 002, and have requested that Youk Chhang be called to testify.

Civil party lead co-lawyer Elisabeth Simmoneau Fort later questioned Youk Chhang about a statement he gave to investigators in 2009, in which he said he had received "veiled threats" in 1999 that led him to "put a pause" on his research.

Michael Karnavas, co-defence counsel for Ieng Sary, objected that the question was "non-relevant".

The Trial Chamber, however, allowed Youk Chhang to answer the question, to which he responded that his sister was told to inform him to stop "conducting these activities", but that he had refused.

DC-Cam was established as an independent NGO in 1997 and has provided about 500,000 documents to parties at the ECCC. Defence teams will begin questioning Youk Chhang in court today.