

DC-Cam Motivations Defended by Director

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Defence lawyers yesterday attacked the methodology of the Khmer Rouge tribunal's biggest source of archival documents, quizzing Document Centre of Cambodia director Youk Chhang, who they have accused of bias against Case 002 defendants.

Jasper Pauw, co-defence counsel for former Khmer Rouge Brother No. 2 Nuon Chea, read an excerpt from the organisation's description of its "accountability project", which states that the project helped to "illuminate chains of command" during the Democratic Kampuchea regime.

"Why is it important to DC-Cam to illuminate chains of command?" Pauw enquired.

"Because we want to know who actually killed two million Cambodians," Youk Chhang replied.

"We want to know what happened in our history."

Pauw asked if, through the project, the organisation had actively sought evidence implicating senior leaders in the Democratic Kampuchea government in "alleged atrocities".

The witness responded that the project's purpose was to "gather historical information for the court in order to find the culprits who committed crimes during that period".

Pauw also referred to the word "evidence" in the organisation's strategic plan, to which Youk Chhang responded that the law did not have a monopoly on the term "evidence".

"For historians, this [word] can be used in order to seek the events that happened in history," Youk Chhang said.

The questioning was punctuated by objections from the prosecution, including an objection to enquiries by Pauw about an email sent to Youk Chhang and several researchers.

In reference to the email, Pauw asked whether DC-Cam had been "involved with or consulted on" determining who the tribunal should prosecute.

The Trial Chamber ruled that the witness did not have to answer the question.

Judge Silvia Cartwright then said the chamber understood the defence was “sceptical” of DC-Cam’s motivations, before telling the defence it needed to proceed with a “completely new phase” of questioning.

Earlier, Arthur Vercken, co-defence counsel for Khieu Samphan, questioned Youk Chhang about the potential fabrication of documents, including one document deemed by DC-Cam to have been fabricated.

The witness said it would be “virtually impossible” for a person to fabricate a million documents, and that DC-Cam considered several factors when verifying them.

In hearings last month, defence teams suggested DC-Cam was not neutral, with defence lawyers for Nuon Chea stating that Youk Chhang was a “partisan researcher”.

At the time, Youk Chhang said the comments were “pitiful”.