

**Did Twitter Cost a Judge His Job at a UN War Crimes Tribunal?****Faine Greenwood****February 6, 2012**

The future of the Khmer Rouge War Tribunal in Cambodia is currently in danger, as is the outcome of ongoing and important Case 002, where the highest-ranking Khmer rouge cadres still alive are being tried—and much of the controversy is swirling around a newly-appointed investigating judge’s fondness for Twitter.

After the resignation of German Judge Siegfried Blunk in October, the UN submitted Swiss Judge Kasper-Ansermet as a candidate for the role. The court is a “hybrid” meaning that a combination of international judges and Cambodians serve the court. But things soon turned sour when the new judge got into a public row with Cambodian trial president You Bunleng, who censured the Swiss judge and refused to recognize him or work with him at the KRT. Mr Bunleng’s opinions echoed an official statement out of Phnom Penh, which claimed Kasper-Ansermet’s Tweets put both his impartiality and his judicial ethics in question.

Prime Minister Hun Sen and Cambodia’s Supreme Council of Magistracy refused to recognize Kasper-Ansermet too, directly against the wishes of the UN. The court’s investigations process has now ground to a halt, and seems likely to stay that way until something is worked out.

According to Kasper-Ansermet’s Twitter feed, he believes that the final two planned cases of the internationally-backed and UN sponsored Khmer Rouge War Tribunal should go through. The problem is the, Cambodian government begs to disagree, as some former Khmer Rouge cadres who might be called to trial in these last cases—former cadres who just happen to be current supporters of Prime Minister Hun Sen. Cambodia hasn’t minced words on this one: Prime Minister Hun Sen has said Cases 003 and 004 “won’t be allowed.”

This didn’t seem to faze Kasper-Ansermet, whose Twitter feed shows his robust support for the continuation of these last two cases.

Here are some of the Tweets in question:

[bit.ly/sfeicZ](http://bit.ly/sfeicZ) #KhmerRouge For the second time in two weeks a dichotomy of opinion paralyses the Pre-Trial Chamber judges  
5 Nov

<http://bit.ly/muuaeg> "UN had failed to address major questions requesting the credibility of the court"  
#KhmerRouge #HumanRights #Cambodia  
17 Jun Favorite Retweet Reply

#KhmerRougeTribunal in fresh allegations over 'toxic atmosphere' and professional disfunction  
<http://ow.ly/5h72q>  
14 Jun  
Retweeted by [LKasperAnsermet](#)

Kasper-Ansermet has even Tweeted about Cambodia's obvious dislike of him. In a French post on Jan 15 he wrote: "Does my known determination to investigate cases three and four explain the opposition by some to my official nomination?"

The UN isn't taking the Cambodian government's outright refusal of their favored candidate over allegations of poor ethics and improper Twitter use lying down: UN officials last week sent in-house KRT expert David Scheffer to Cambodia to meet with officials on the matter. Schaffer is holding fast to his and the UN's stance that Kasper-Ansermet should and will be allowed to serve as an investigating judge in the Khmer Rouge Tribunal—whether Cambodia gives official approval or not.

Unfortunately, the UN has found itself in a sticky situation thanks to Kasper-Ansermet's perhaps poorly advised Tweeted opinions. After all: the UN can't appear weak and withdraw its support for Kasper-Ansermet just because the Cambodian government says so. And Kasper-Ansermet's outspoken behavior, as many have pointed out, has given Hun Sen and the Cambodian government an even better excuse for blocking the progress of Cases 003 and 004.

At the moment, the UN's only real move in this matter is pulling funding from the infamously pricy court and handing the reins over to Cambodia. It's a move that could, in a worst case scenario, end Case 002 and put infamous Khmer Rouge leaders Ieng Sary, Nuon Chea, and Khieu Samphan back on the street.

The "offending" tweets seem to be the excuse that the Cambodian government was looking for to pull the reins on these trials. Ultimately, its the victims of the Khmer Rouge that will lose out.