

**Cambodia can 'terminate' genocide tribunal if ex-king prosecuted: official**

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A Cambodian cabinet minister has said that the Cambodian government could "terminate" the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) if it "illegally" attempts to charge former King Norodom with crimes committed during the Communist Khmer Rouge's control of Democratic from 1975-79, according to Cambodia Daily Monday. Sihanouk was the symbolic head of state for the regime of Pol Pot until he was forced out of office in 1976. Information Minister Khieu Kanharith said that because the ECCC operates under Cambodian law, it may be disbanded if it attempts to violate the immunity granted to Norodom Sihanouk by Article 7, Paragraph 3 of the Cambodian constitution. The now-retired king resumed office again in 1993 and then stepped down in 2004 in favor of his son; he has not been questioned or investigated by the ECCC, but last month a letter from the US-based rights group Cambodian Action Committee for Justice and Equality called for Sihanouk's immunity to be stripped so that he could be charged. The government immediately issued a statement rejecting the idea, emphasizing that the issue was "clearly and definitively excluded at the time of the former king's retirement."

The UN-backed ECCC was established in 2001 to investigate and try those responsible for the Cambodian genocide that occurred between 1975-1979 and resulted in the deaths of approximately one-third of the Cambodian population. To date, no top Khmer Rouge officials have faced trial. Last month, the ECCC brought its first charges against Kaing Guek Iev, better known as "Duch", who was in charge of the notorious S-21 prison in Phnom Penh.