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Bridget Di Certo with additional reporting by David Boyle

January 30, 2012

Cambodian staff at the Khmer Rouge Tribunal will not be paid any salary until April at the earliest, administration directors told staff in a “town hall” meeting on Friday.

Nearly all of the roughly 300 Cambodian staff employed by the tribunal gathered in the public gallery of the courtroom yesterday and were told that in addition to not receiving their January salaries, they will not be paid for another three months, tribunal public affairs officer Huy Vannack told the Post yesterday.

“The Cambodian side of the court continues to face a financial crisis, and staff will not be paid starting this month,” Huy Vannack said, adding that Cambodian judges have not been paid since October 2011.

“The acting director of the ECCC said that what he wants to see in the future is that when funds are received by the United Nations, these funds should be split between the Cambodian and International side of the court,” Huy Vannack said.

The tribunal employees 480 staff, 180 of which are international staff whose salaries are paid by funds collected by the UN from international donors.

Under the Law on the Establishment of the ECCC, expenses and salaries of Cambodian staff “shall be borne by the Cambodian national budget”; however, Huy Vannack said this has not been the practice of the court.

“The Royal Government of Cambodia contributes funds for water, electricity, security, transportation of staff and outreach activities and they have been giving this funding on time,” Huy Vannack said.

“The Cambodian salaries have been funded by international voluntary contributions; the government is not obliged to pay these salaries.”

Anne Heindel, legal adviser at the Documentation Centre of Cambodia, said it has been common practice for Cambodian salaries to be paid from voluntary international contributions to the Cambodian government.

“Donors either give money to the UN side or the Cambodian side,” Heindel said.

But Huy Vannack said these international donations had “completely dried up”.

“We usually receive funds annually, and normally, the director and deputy director of administration fly to New York in November to apply for donations, but right now they are still here,” he said, adding there was a tentative plan for the directors to fly to New York next month.

Despite the requirement under the tribunal law for Cambodian salaries to be paid out from the national budget, an unofficial translation of the 2012 Budget Law reveals there is no provision for any funding.

Chairman of the National Assembly Finance and Banking Commission Cheam Yeap said last week the government had a separate budget for the tribunal outside the national budget, but he had not received any proposals for 2012 funding.

UN-appointed Special Expert David Scheffer said during a press conference last week that it was his “job” to ensure there was adequate financial support for the tribunal.

“We need to ensure that there’s that infusion of funding from relevant sources into the tribunal on a regular basis,” he said.