



KRT judges rebut critics

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May 27, 2011

The Khmer Rouge tribunal's co-investigating judges have hit back at an article accusing them of bowing to government pressure to drop the court's controversial third and fourth cases, amid a torrent of public criticism directed at their office in recent weeks.

In response to an article published in the International Justice Tribune this week, the judges issued a statement yesterday addressing what they termed "misrepresentations" of the court and their work.

"The Co-Investigating Judges have worked independently from outside interference, will continue to resist all such attempts, and are resolved to defend their independence against outside interference," the statement read.

The judges announced the conclusion of their investigation in Case 003 last month, the suspects in which remain officially confidential but whom court documents reveal as former KR navy commander Meas Muth and air force commander Sou Met.

Over the 20 months that the investigation was open, however, the judges did not interview the suspects, nor did they visit a number of crime sites named by prosecutors.

In a statement earlier this month, international co-prosecutor Andrew Cayley said Case 003 had "not been fully investigated", listing a number of additional investigative steps he planned to ask the judges to perform. In response, the investigating judges ordered Cayley to publish a retraction of his statement, accusing him of breaching confidentiality rules.

In view of these and other developments, local activist Theary Seng told the IJT that the tribunal is "heading for an irreparable crash". In response, the judges noted the court's progress in Cases 001 and 002, adding: "As the Office of Co-Investigating Judges and the Office of the Co-Prosecutors are working normally (despite certain disagreements), the assertion that the tribunal is heading for a crash is baseless".

A source at the tribunal said earlier this month that the judges were considering initiating contempt-of-court proceedings against Cayley in relation to his statement, another development noted by the IJT. The judges responded that they had "never threatened this, nor did they ever let it be known that they were considering this; rather this is a malicious rumour intended to disrupt the harmony within the Court".