

Khmer Rouge Judge Spells Out Grievances

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The Khmer Rouge tribunal judge who quit his post in protest earlier this week has released a statement spelling out what he describes as improper interference in his work.

Laurent Kaspar-Ansermet said Monday he could not continue his duties because of repeated challenges to his authority by Cambodian counterpart on the tribunal, You Bunleng. Kaspar-Ansermet's predecessor, Swiss Judge Siegfried Blunt, quit the tribunal earlier this year after complaining of similar interference.

Kaspar-Ansermet on Wednesday accused You Bunleng of failing in all but one instance to communicate directly on long-standing differences over who in the former regime should be probed and prosecuted for war crimes.

In that instance late last year, Kaspar-Ansermet said You Bunleng "expressed his will not to communicate or collaborate in any way."

The tribunal has already sentenced one former Khmer Rouge official to life in prison, and is currently hearing a second case against the group's three top surviving leaders. The trio faces charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity in the deaths of some 1.7 million Cambodians who died under Khmer Rouge rule in the 1970s.

Prime Minister Hun Sen, himself a former Khmer Rouge cadre, has repeatedly said there should be no further prosecutions. He and other Cambodian officials have voiced fear that further cases could spark civil war in the tiny Southeast Asian nation.

For his part, Kaspar-Ansermet has been probing evidence in two additional cases and says You Bunleng has actively opposed those probes, known as Cases 003 and 004.

Many of the international staff on the court want to proceed with the new cases, as do many Khmer Rouge victims. But other staffers on the U.N.-backed tribunal have sided with the government.