

## **Khmer Rouge Tribunal Halts Salaries for Cambodians January 26, 2012**

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia — About 300 Cambodians working at the U.N.-backed Khmer Rouge tribunal will not be paid this month — and some have worked without pay since October — because funds from donor countries have dried up, a tribunal spokesman said Thursday.

International staff are paid by the United Nations and will continue to receive salaries. The salaries of local staff, however, are funded by contributions from donor countries, said Huy Vannak, a tribunal spokesman.

"Despite the fact that no key donor countries have pledged any new financial assistance, the court pursues its work as normal," he said.

The tribunal is seeking justice for an estimated 1.7 million people who died from torture, starvation, exhaustion or lack of medical care during the Khmer Rouge's 1970s rule. It opened in 2006 after years of wrangling between Cambodia and the United Nations, and just one trial has been completed.

The lengthy delays have been costly and raised fears justice will not be achieved due to the shaky health of the aging defendants. Its latest hurdle is a disagreement between the United Nations and Cambodia over the appointment of a new judge.

About two-thirds of the tribunal's 480 employees are Cambodian. Cambodian judges and prosecutors stopped receiving salaries in October, while the remainder who do mostly administrative work will not be paid this month, Huy Vannak said.

David Scheffer, the U.N. special expert to the tribunal who concluded a four-day visit Wednesday, said it was repeatedly brought to his attention that "certain Cambodian staff had not received their salary since October."

"This is great concern for the Cambodian staff," Scheffer told reporters. "I made this point very directly in my meeting with government officials."

The United Nations has accused the Cambodian government of violating an agreement that established the tribunal to prosecute Khmer Rouge war crimes suspects by refusing to appoint a Swiss jurist as a co-investigating judge.

Laurent Kasper-Ansermet was chosen to replace German Judge Siegfried Blunk, who resigned in October. Human rights groups had criticized Blunk for failing to fully investigate new suspects, but Blunk defended his record and blamed government pressure for the lack of new cases.

Prime Minister Hun Sen has openly opposed expanding the trials by adding indictments of other former Khmer Rouge figures, some of whom have become his political allies.

The tribunal's first verdict came last year when former prison chief Kaing Guek Eav was sentenced to 35 years in prison for war crimes, crimes against humanity and other offenses.

Three top Khmer Rouge leaders accused of orchestrating Cambodia's "killing fields" went on trial in late November.

The tribunal was originally set to end its work in 2009 and its original budget was about \$50 million. The total expenditure from 2006-2011 has been estimated at \$150 million, the court said.

(This version CORRECTS that the Cambodians' salaries are paid by donor countries, not Cambodia.)