



Khmer Rouge court fury over insider leak

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PHNOM PENH — Cambodia's UN-backed war crimes court has threatened legal action in a bid to prevent publication of leaked details of a new Khmer Rouge case, adding to controversy over the investigation.

The document, describing prosecution allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity by two ex-Khmer Rouge members during the regime's 1975-79 rule, was sent to the press on Tuesday.

In a furious statement the two judges tasked with investigating the claims said "anyone publishing information from this confidential document" would risk contempt of court charges.

They added there was credible information that the content "has been divulged by a disloyal staff member" of the court.

The leak comes as victims and observers are increasingly concerned about the lack of openness in the investigation and fear court officials are caving in to government demands to dismiss the case.

"The judges are definitely upset about the leak," said trial monitor Clair Duffy from the Open Society Justice Initiative, stressing that the court shared some of the blame.

"By reason of its own secrecy... information was leaked from within. I am sure there are many staff members, dedicated to the cause of justice, who are extremely frustrated by the current situation."

The leaked document was submitted by the prosecution in 2008 and forms the basis of the court's third case.

The investigating judges have been under fire ever since they announced in April they had concluded their investigations into case three -- without questioning the suspects.

International co-prosecutor Andrew Cayley -- without the backing of his Cambodian colleague -- demanded the suspects be interviewed and more crime scenes examined but the judges rejected his requests this week on technicalities.

In its landmark first trial, the tribunal sentenced former prison chief Kaing Guek Eav,

better known as Duch, to 30 years in jail in July for overseeing the deaths of 15,000 people.

That case is now under appeal, while a second trial involving four of the regime's most senior surviving leaders is due to start later this month.

The court is still investigating a fourth case against three more suspects.

Prime Minister Hun Sen has repeatedly voiced his objection to further trials, saying they could plunge the country into civil war.

The hardline communist Khmer Rouge movement oversaw one of the worst horrors of the 20th century, wiping out up to two million people through starvation, overwork and execution in a bid to forge an agrarian utopia.