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'Mini-trial' Reference Blasted

Bridget Di Certo

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Continued reference to the first segment of Case 002 as a “mini-trial” is offensive to victims and should not be used, prosecutors at the Khmer Rouge tribunal said yesterday.

Senior assistant to the co-prosecutor Tarik Abdulhak said that repeated reference to a “mini-trial” was entirely inappropriate in a court trying crimes that “affected literally millions of people”.

“It is offensive to the victims and not reflective of both the scope and complexity of the case,” Abdulhak said, in response to use of the term by defence counsel.

Judges have severed the indictment against the three accused senior leaders of the Khmer Rouge into a number of unspecified trial segments due to the complexity of the case and to achieve “meaningful and timely justice”.

The first segment of the trial deals primarily with the forced movement of the population out of Phnom Penh and other urban areas, as well as the roles of the accused and their criminal policies during the Democratic Kampuchea period.

However, defence lawyers have been up in arms, objecting to evidence proposed by the prosecution that the defence counsel say is irrelevant to the first trial segment of Case 002.

“The facts that constitute the crimes alleged in this first trial do not concern execution sites and detention centres,” former Democratic Kampuchea head of state Khieu Samphan’s international counsel Anta Guisse said yesterday, objecting to prosecution documents concerning those crimes.

“Irrelevant evidence includes a road map dated back to 2001. How is this relevant to the first trial?” she added.

Abdulhak replied yesterday that the division of the case into several parts is not equivalent to an exclusion of certain crimes.

“The first trial encompasses a thorough examination of fundamental issues,” he said. “You cannot dissect this joint criminal enterprise.”