

Official dismisses concerns of politics in tribunal

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A Cambodian official derided Human Rights Watch on Thursday, saying the international organization “did not know” the country after it claimed the Khmer Rouge tribunal’s credible has been hurt by politics.

Human Rights Watch on Wednesday questioned the UN-backed court’s independence, following remarks by Prime Minister Hun Sen saying the tribunal should not indict more leaders of the failed regime.

“Hun Sen has no role in this court, yet he keeps trying to use his hold over its Cambodian personnel to interfere,” Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch, said in a statement. “The UN and international donors need to put their foot down so that the court can get on with its work in an independent and impartial manner.”

Hun Sen said during an official visit to France last week that the court “would not” threaten peace in Cambodia by indicting more suspects.

“Cambodia is Cambodia,” Khieu Kanharith, a government spokesman, said in response to the Human Rights Watch statement. “Hun Sen is resolved to have peace. It is the biggest thing.”

Hun Sen has said on a number of occasions he is opposed to indictments beyond five leaders of the regime.

“To be independent is the role of the Khmer Rouge tribunal,” said Youk Chhang, director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia. He said he considered Hun Sen’s remarks to be only the view of an individual.

However, Thun Saray, president of the rights group Adhoc, said Hun Sen’s statements were worrying, but at least the senior-most leaders of the Khmer Rouge were now in custody awaiting trial.

The Pre-Trial Chamber of the court has yet to determine whether more suspects will be indicted, a point that the prosecution is at odds over.