

**Minister of Foreign Affairs' Comments OK: Judges  
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November 26, 2012**

Judges at the Khmer Rouge tribunal have decided that public comments made by Cambodian Minister of Foreign Affairs Hor Namhong about his experiences during Khmer Rouge rule do not amount to interference in trial proceedings, according to documents published on Friday.

The decision comes after a months-long controversy that started in July, when witness Rocheom Ton claimed that Namhong was once in charge of the Boeng Trabek detention centre.

The centre, where researchers today plan to build a genocide museum and school, was once a main holding camp for Cambodian intellectuals lured back from abroad by the Khmer Rouge.

After the remarks from the witness in court, Namhong released a statement that appeared to be a direct rebuttal to what was said.

The comments, which were published in the Post, accused unnamed people of “stirring up controversy around public figures like myself”.

The published statement, and an article which quoted the witness as recanting what he said in July, prompted the international defence team for co-accused Nuon Chea to ask the court to publicly rebuke Namhong, warn him against making similar comments in the future and “to conduct further investigations to determine whether there are sufficient grounds” for proceedings to be instigated against him.

Trial chamber judges reasoned that the tribunal may only sanction or refer conduct to the authorities if someone “knowingly and wilfully” interferes with the administration of justice, and that nowhere in Namhong’s statement is there proof that he intended to influence, intimidate or interfere with a witness.

Moreover, the judges explained that the court’s Witness and Expert Support Unit visited Ton in August to look into the matter further, and that it discovered no evidence of interference.

One of Nuon Chea’s international lawyers, Jasper Pauw, said the tribunal could consider, at the very least, to call the witness back and seek clarification from him in court, because his excuse that he was confused and misspoke did not add up.

“What did they expect the witness to say? 'I changed my story because I felt pressured by Hor Namhong?' Of course the witness would never say that.”