

Cambodia's Cash-Strapped Tribunal to Hire Temporary Staff

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The UN is re-populating the Office of the Co-Investigating Judges at the Khmer Rouge tribunal, with plans to hire nine new staff to commence work on January 1.

Positions for a senior legal officer, an investigator, five legal officers and two associate legal officers were recently posted on the UN Assistance to the Khmer Rouge Tribunal website.

The openings for a one-year term in the office, which is conducting investigations into the government-opposed cases 003 and 004, are being announced even though the court's financial woes have prompted a hiring freeze.

"As for the UN recruitment freeze, it is for regular staff members and remains in place. The OCIJ's new recruitment is about temporary positions," public affairs spokesperson Yuko Maeda told the Post yesterday.

According to court budget documents during 2008 and 2009, the peak years for investigations in Case 002, 25 legal and administrative personnel were employed on the international side of the office.

Although Maeda said it was the court's position not to release staffing numbers, the injection of personnel is the first significant recruitment since a mass walkout in May 2011, purportedly in protest over botched and corrupted investigations in the controversial cases.

According to Human Rights Watch, "the investigating judges' entire UN legal team and many of their other UN staff have also quit".

Investigations into cases 003 and 004 against five surviving leaders from the Khmer Rouge regime have been marred by allegations of political interference and perversion of justice since prosecutors prepared briefs on the alleged war crimes and genocidal acts.

The fourth international co-investigating judge, American Mark Harmon, officially took office in October after two of his predecessors quit the court, citing perceptions of external and internal interference in the investigations.