

## **ECCC Tries To Reassure Khmer Rouge Soldiers** **Joseph Freeman and Vong Sokheng** **July 6, 2012**

Kuoy Ra fought for the Khmer Rouge up until the very end.

Now he needs a crutch to get around, courtesy of a landmine that blew his right leg off years ago. He is a thin, 51-year-old man who has tired of combat.

And like others in Anlong Veng, the last stronghold of the Khmer Rouge, Ra is worried about answering for the past.

“I am concerned that if the [Khmer Rouge tribunal] attempts to arrest more, both myself and others will not wait for the arrest,” he said. “And we will escape to the jungle, and there may be civil war again, but I don’t like war.”

This view, which is shared by some senior government officials, that inevitable chaos would envelope the Kingdom once again if arrest for Khmer Rouge-era crimes occurred on a broader scale, is common in Anlong Veng.

It’s part of the reason why officials from the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia visited the area yesterday to explain the full scope of the tribunal’s operations.

“They want to see the trial go fast, and they want to know if there are more cases or not,” said Neth Pheaktra, spokesman for the ECCC.

The tribunal’s landmark first case saw S-21 prison commander Kaing Guek Eav, alias Duch, ultimately convicted and sentenced to life in prison in February.

Case 002 is trying three elderly high-ranking officials of the Khmer Rouge, and cases 003 and 004, which the government opposes, have yet to come to trial.

About 200 people from five communes in Anlong Veng district attended the public forum, Pheaktra said.

In response to questions regarding cases 003 and 004, legal affairs spokesman Lars Olsen told the participants that the cases are now in the hands of the investigating judges.

“These cases involve five suspects, and the court has not given the identity of any of these suspects to the public, and in these cases 003 and 004, there hasn’t been any decision to arrest anybody or to send anybody to trial,” Olsen said.

The ECCC has held public forums in other parts of the country, but this was the first time in Anlong Veng.

It was also the latest example of the court reassuring former members of the Khmer Rouge that they aren’t in the crosshairs of the tribunal.

When the tribunal sends a written summons to a potential witness, for example, the letter explains that only “senior leaders” or “those most responsible for the crimes” will be prosecuted. Giving testimony, in other words, amounts to immunity.

But the assurance of non-prosecution seems to have been lost in translation in Anlong Veng, where visitors can see Pol Pot’s grave and visit the house of his most ruthless commander, “the butcher” Ta Mok.

San Reoun, a 60-year-old former Khmer Rouge soldier who once worked for Ta Mok, said he supports the tribunal.

But he added: “I don’t want to see more suspects of the former KR get arrested and stand trial, because it will make other former KR live in fear.”