

## **CAMBODIA: Judge transfer raises fears of Khmer Rouge trial delay**

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In Cambodia, one of the judges presiding over the trial of the former Khmer Rouge leaders has been appointed president of the country's court of appeals.

The appointment means that judge You Bunleng has to resign from his position with the Khmer Rouge tribunal.

Observers and human rights groups fear this development could delay justice for the victims of human rights abuses during the Khmer rouge era.

Radio Australia's Girish Sawlani reports that Judge You Bunleng was sworn in on Thursday as president of Cambodia's Court of Appeal and at the same time, inducted as a member of the Supreme Council of the Magistracy.

Speaking on Radio Australia's Connect Asia program, Dr. Helen Jarvis, the chief of public affairs of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, says the abrupt appointment was a matter of great urgency.

"Cambodia has newly promulgated codes of civil procedure and criminal procedure and he was selected in an emergency situation where the president of the appeals court was vacated.

"It was decided that he would be the best person to fulfill the role in this difficult situation, and he believes that he can effect an orderly transition that would not impede the work of the extraordinary chambers," she says.

However, human rights activists in Cambodia are afraid that this development will further delay the trials against former the Khmer Rouge leaders who were responsible for the death's of up to two million people.

One such activist is Kek Galabru, the Director of Licahdo, the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defence of Human Rights, who has been following the developments.

"If he leaves the Khmer Rouge tribunal, we are afraid that the (tribunal) process will be delayed," he says.

Like many other Cambodians affected by the atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge, Kek Galabru says that it is imperative that the remaining perpetrators be brought to justice and receive the appropriate punishments.

"Almost all Cambodian people are victims of this Khmer Rouge period.

"So all of us would like to see justice. Can you imagine a group of people were responsible for almost two million deaths and no one has been prosecuted.

"We cannot accept that," he says.