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Terse beginning to new relationship among KR tribunal judges

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International Co-Investigating Judge Laurent Kasper-Ansermet arrived for his first day at the Khmer Rouge tribunal yesterday to a less than warm welcome.

The tribunal's Cambodian investigating judge, You Bunleng, told Kasper-Ansermet that he had not been properly appointed and therefore "any procedural action taken by [him] is not legally valid".

Kasper-Ansermet, a Swiss national, released a statement yesterday afternoon stating he had officially assumed his office at the tribunal and that he had "executed his mandate by remote means from abroad since November 14".

You Bunleng issued a swift response, saying his colleague's statement had been issued "without any consultation with the national co-investigating judge".

Kasper-Ansermet has been a reserve judge at the tribunal since February and was called upon to take up the official co-investigator position after German Judge Siegfried Blunk quit the court in October amid allegations of improper judicial conduct.

Blunk cited perceptions of political interference in his duties investigating cases 003 and 004 as his motivation for resigning. After Blunk's departure, You Bunleng and court officials repeatedly told the Post that the investigating judge would conduct his duties alone until Kasper-Ansermet assumed office.

You Bunleng did not mention knowing that his counterpart had been working from abroad.

Allegations of improper judicial conduct included multiple motions from International Co-Prosecutor Andrew Cayley regarding the lack of information flowing from the office of the co-investigating judges regarding investigations into the tribunal's cases 003 and 004.

Kasper-Ansermet wrote in his short statement that "working in conjunction with his national colleague, [he] will ... endeavour to keep the public sufficiently informed about major developments in cases 003 and 004".