



**Tribunal monitor urges Phnom Penh to approve United Nations judge
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A group monitoring the Khmer Rouge war crimes court on Tuesday called on donors to pressure the Cambodian government to approve the appointment of the reserve international investigating judge.

The work of the judge, Swiss national Laurent Kasper-Ansermet, has been in limbo for a month as Phnom Penh has failed to convene the judicial body that would recognize his appointment.

Kasper-Ansermet replaced controversial German judge Siegfried Blunk, who quit in October citing political interference in two cases currently under investigation, known as Cases 003 and 004.

Senior Cambodian officials have repeatedly said the government would not permit either case to reach trial at the United Nations-backed court.

In a statement the Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI) called on Phnom Penh to endorse the new judge's appointment 'immediately,' adding that the government had no right to block him from taking up his post.

'Judge Kasper-Ansermet's status must be made clear and unequivocal,' said James A. Goldston, the OSJI's executive director.

'He must be afforded access to every tool to which his appointment entitles him to move forward in the Case 003 and 004 judicial investigations.'

The group said that the United Nations and other donors to the tribunal should pressure the Cambodian government.

The call came as the Swiss judge and his Cambodian counterpart You Bunleng conducted a public war of words through competing press statements late Monday.

Kasper-Ansermet complained that You Bunleng had chosen not to keep the public informed of progress in the investigations into Cases 003 and 004.

You Bunleng hit back saying the Swiss national 'does not have legal accreditation' and noting his 'deep disappointment with the working manners' of Kasper-Ansermet.

Victims and trial observers last year accused You Bunleng and Blunk of judicial misconduct after they closed their investigation into Case 003 without interviewing the two suspects or most of the witnesses.

The trial of three surviving leaders of the Khmer Rouge, known as Case 002, resumed Tuesday in a prosecution that Phnom Penh does support.

The defendants have denied charges of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes for their alleged roles in devising the policies that led to as many as 2.2 million deaths during their government's 1975-79 rule.

The defendants are Nuon Chea, known as Brother Number Two, and regarded as the Khmer Rouge's chief ideologue; Khieu Samphan, who was head of state; and Ieng Sary, who was foreign minister.