



## **UN Protests After Cambodia Blocks Khmer Rouge Judge January 21, 2012**

The United Nations on Friday protested at Cambodia's rejection of a Swiss judge to the international Khmer Rouge tribunal who has paralyzed probes into two cases opposed by the government.

Cambodia is in "breach" of an accord with the UN setting up the international tribunal into the Khmer Rouges crimes of the 1970s in which up to two million people died, UN spokesman Martin Nesirky told reporters.

"This is a matter of serious concern," stated Nesirky who said the Cambodian government had formally notified UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on Thursday of its refusal to name Laurent Kasper-Ansermet of Switzerland as co-investigating judge.

"The United Nations continues to support Judge Kasper-Ansermet and Cambodia should take immediate steps to appoint him as international co-investigating judge," the spokesman said.

The tribunal, officially known as the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, was set up with one Cambodian investigating judge and one foreign judge. The previous German judge resigned in October following government opposition to further prosecutions linked to the 1975-1979 regime.

Kasper-Ansermet was the official reserve judge and Nesirky stressed that the 2003 accord setting up the court "states unequivocally" that if there is a vacancy the person appointed must be the reserve judge.

The Cambodian government "raised ethical concerns" about Kasper-Ansermet in November, said Nesirky.

"The United Nations thoroughly reviewed the concerns, determined that they were unfounded, and requested that the Supreme Council of the Magistracy proceed with his appointment."

David Scheffer, an American named as special expert on UN assistance to the Cambodia trials, is travelling to Phnom Penh for talks with the government and court officials, the spokesman added.

Kasper-Ansermet has been blocked since his arrival in Phnom Penh in December. The supreme council, the government body charged with rubber-stamping the nomination, has not met.

And the Cambodian co-judge You Bunleng has publicly refused to work with the Swiss. Kasper-Ansermet has in turn accused You Bunleng of blocking "important" information about the two new cases involving five ex-Khmer Rouge members accused of crimes against humanity.

The tribunal has so far completed just one trial. A second is underway but risks being overshadowed by the new controversy.