



## **UN Voices 'Serious Concern' as Khmer Rouge Judge Quits March 20, 2012**

The United Nations expressed "serious concern" after a second judge quit Cambodia's war crimes court over a rift about whether to pursue more former members of the Khmer Rouge regime.

Swiss co-investigating judge Laurent Kasper-Ansermet resigned on Monday, saying his efforts to probe possible third and fourth cases had been constantly "blocked" by his Cambodian counterpart at the UN-backed tribunal.

"The situation at the (court) continues to be of serious concern and the United Nations is examining it closely," a spokesperson for UN chief Ban Ki-moon told AFP in an email late on Monday.

Kasper-Ansermet's resignation came after German judge Siegfried Blunk quit the court in October citing government interference in the controversial cases.

The United Nations named reserve judge Kasper-Ansermet as his replacement but Cambodia refused to recognise the appointment, sparking an unprecedented row and forcing the Swiss to work without the support of his Cambodian counterpart.

The UN has not yet said whether it has a replacement judge ready to take over when his resignation takes effect from May 4, but observers believe any future judge would likely face similar difficulties.

"The UN must demand that the Cambodian government desists from this political interference, and make clear the consequences should it continue," said Rupert Abbott, Amnesty International's Cambodia researcher.

New York-based Human Rights Watch added that the UN should "think hard" about its participation in the Khmer Rouge trials, claiming that Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen "has yet again succeeded in obstructing justice".

"This is a disaster for Cambodians hoping that key perpetrators of the Khmer Rouge atrocities would face trial," Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch, told AFP.

Hun Sen has long and vocally objected to pursuing more suspects of the 1975-1979 regime beyond the current second trial.

The tribunal, set up to find justice for the deaths of up to two million people under the hardline communist Khmer Rouge regime, has so far completed just one case, sentencing a former prison chief to life in jail for overseeing the deaths of some 15,000 people.

A second trial involving the regime's three most senior surviving leaders is ongoing.