

# UN NEWS CENTRE

## **UN-backed tribunal in Cambodia hears reparations wish list for Khmer Rouge victims**

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Lawyers representing 4,000 victims of Khmer Rouge atrocities today [presented](#) a wish list for reparations to the United Nations-backed tribunal in Cambodia that is trying four former political leaders of the regime accused of crimes against humanity.

The tribunal, known officially as the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), was set up under an agreement signed in 2003 by the UN and the Government, and is tasked with trying those deemed most responsible for crimes committed under the Khmer Rouge between 1975 and 1979 during which as many as two million people are thought to have died.

Former leaders of the Democratic Kampuchea, the Khmer Rouge-controlled communist organization – Defence Minister Ieng Sary, head of State Khieu Samphan, Social Affairs Minister Ieng Thirith and Nuon Chea, also known as Former Brother Number 2 – are currently on trial for genocide and crimes against humanity.

This is the first time victims participate as civil parties in an international criminal trial and are entitled to request “moral and collective” reparations in the event of conviction.

“Reparations have to be satisfactory for civil parties. Reparations have to alleviate their pain and grief,” said international lead co-lawyer Elisabeth Simonneau-Fort. “It is our duty to be ambitious... If we are not ambitious, we cannot represent our civil parties.”

Among the reparations listed were the establishment of a national remembrance day, providing health services for elderly victims, and supplying vocational training to victims of forced marriage and their children. There was also a request to provide legal counsel to help ethnic Vietnamese who had been forcibly deported by the Khmer Rouge to obtain Cambodian nationality.

According to the UN Assistance to the Khmer Rouge trials (UNAKRT), lawyers focused on the importance of preserving the memory of the Khmer Rouge period so younger generations can understand the significance of that time period in the country’s history.

Senior assistant prosecutor Vincent De Wilde D’Estmael supported the reparations requests, saying that civil parties “are the voice of all of the victims who remained voiceless during the regime of the Democratic Kampuchea” and encouraged the parties in court to do everything possible to ensure their requests are accepted.

But defence attorney Michael Karnavas said the list was beyond the scope of the tribunal. "It would appear highly commendable and aspirational, but it is something the Government should be doing," he said. "I'm not convinced that the court is capable to grant those reparations requests."