



Tribunal Funding Faces Immediate Shortage, Long Term Woes
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WASHINGTON DC - The Khmer Rouge tribunal's funding will dry up in October without an infusion from donors, tribunal experts say.

David Scheffer, the UN's special expert for the tribunal—which is in the midst trying three former leaders for atrocity crimes—wrote in the New York Times the court needs more funding right away.

“Several nations have pledged sufficient funds to finance the tribunal for two more months, and that is good news, Scheffer wrote in the opinion pages. “But at least \$4 million must be raised to cover November and December expenses. (The Cambodian Government's smaller portion of the budget has been covered with the help of foreign aid.) And then there is 2013 to worry about—immediately.”

James Goldston, executive director for the Open Society Justice Initiative, told VOA Khmer that international donors must fund the trials to their conclusion, having begun the process years ago.

“It seems to me that the donors should recognize that a criminal process once started must be completed to its judicial conclusion, and they need to provide the finance to ensure that happens,” he said.

Scheffer wrote in the Times that a lack of funding now would diminish the ideas behind tribunals, which is that of “no impunity.” International standards for the court, which began in 2006 after years of wrangling between Cambodia and the UN, cannot be upheld without sufficient funds, he said.

“The tribunal could do its job much better, with strengthened independence for its mission of international justice, if it were not dangling on the financial precipice,” he wrote. “Judges, prosecutors, investigators and defense counsel should be liberated to undertake their important work without the pressures of ‘donors’ fatigue.”

Chhang Youk, director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia, told VOA Khmer that donors must support the tribunal to its conclusion.

“I think that if all internationals and all countries see that is the problem of the human, I think that support will happen and continuously allow this court to successfully finish as a message in preventing genocidal acts from reoccurring,” he said.

Many court observers point to government interference in the court, with judges echoing the positions of top officials, including Prime Minister Hun Sen, who opposes certain cases before the court. The tribunal has also continuously battled allegations of corruption and mismanagement.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a diplomat from a donor country said the financial situation for the court is dire. The court will need more than \$40 million to continue its work into 2013.

Some court observers say the tribunal will not be able to do much else, despite two more cases in the office of investigating judges that would require five more indictments.

Peter Maguire, author of “Facing Death in Cambodia,” told VOA Khmer the court needs to stop after the current trial—for leaders Nuon Chea, Khieu Samphan and Ieng Sary—is complete.

“As I have said for a very long time, the UN needs to announce that they will withdraw after Case 002, and focus their energies on Case 002,” he said.

On Friday, the court completed two days of hearing to determine whether a fourth leader, Ieng Thirith, the former social affairs minister and wife to Ieng Sary, is mentally fit to stand trial. Judges heard from three medical experts and said they would announce their decision after some deliberation.