

Book planned to probe tribunal so far
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September 22, 2009

The Documentation Center of Cambodia is set to launch a new book recapping the last three years of the Khmer Rouge tribunal, detailing the politics behind the UN-backed court, challenges to administration and providing a wrap-up of the trial of Duch.

The Documentation Center has the largest collection of Khmer Rouge documents in the country, amassed over years of research. The book, “On Trial: The Khmer Rouge Accountability Process” details each stage before and after the Duch trial, as well as the arrests of the five suspects.

Duch, whose real name is Kaing Guek Iev, has undergone the first trial, for atrocity crimes committed as head of Tuol Sleng prison and other sites, and his trial is expected to end next month.

“Over the past three years, we’ve had a unique trial for Duch,” said Youk Chhang, executive director of the Documentation Center. “We wanted to close this page and review what we have done regarding the trial, investigation, reconciliation, and so on...and after that review, [to ask whether] the three-year plan is enough or not, and what we have to continue to do.”

The English-language text runs to 352 pages, with authors examining the influence of politics in the UN-backed court and the challenges it now faces, including the controversy over further indictments. It will be available Oct. 3.

The front cover of the book shows now-detained former foreign minister Ieng Sary at the airport, receiving well-dressed Cambodian visitors, without the black uniforms that would come to typify the revolutionaries. The back cover depicts each of the five detained leaders, including Ieng Sary, his wife, Ieng Thirith, head of state Khieu Samphan, ideologue Nuon Chea, and Duch.

Inside the book, authors conclude that the court’s decisions have thus far been soundly based in international law and that overall the decisions of the court’s organs have surpassed the expectations of many.

The hybrid court has a complex structure and took years of wrangling between the UN and Cambodia to come to fruition. Cambodian judges, meanwhile, have shouldered concerns that they might act politically. But Youk Chhang said the court has served some purpose so far.

“Those who died have their value,” he said. “We honor them even though they died. We are still insisting on justice for all of them. And the survivors must hear, understand and see steps forward for reconciliation. The book is dedicated to all the victims who died or survived.”

Tribunal trial chamber judge Silvia Cartwright wrote that the book provides a “useful historical and intellectual context” for the trials, and Khmer Rouge researcher David Chandler hailed the work as “a wealth of information” about the court.