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## **Civil party reforms at KRT**

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Chum Mey, a survivor of Tuol Sleng prison and a civil party during the Khmer Rouge tribunal's first case, testifies in June.

THE Khmer Rouge tribunal will convene a plenary session next week to discuss reforms to civil party participation, including the consolidation of their courtroom representation under a single set of co-lawyers.

"Due to the high numbers of Civil Party applications received in relation to Case 002 and the complexity of the case, there is a need to streamline and consolidate Civil Party participation," the court said in a statement on Thursday.

Case 002, described in the Thursday statement as the tribunal's "core case", features senior regime leaders Nuon Chea, Ieng Sary, Ieng Thirith and Khieu Samphan, as well as Kaing Guek Eav, alias Duch, the Tuol Sleng prison chief who was the sole accused in the court's first case. Ninety civil parties participated for the entirety of the Duch trial, represented by four groups of lawyers.

Under the amendments up for consideration at the plenary, which begins Tuesday, civil party groups would be represented collectively by a pair of lead co-lawyers, though the court added that civil party testimony "is likely to remain a significant feature of the trial in Case 002".

Some civil party lawyers fear that a concentration of power in the hands of the lead co-lawyers may hinder the effective representation of their clients.

The proposed rule changes, said civil party lawyer Silke Studzinsky, give the lead co-lawyers "a broad discretion and power which is not at all limited or controlled by anybody, and there is no power for the civil party lawyers... to get their voices heard."

Trial monitors, however, said much of the civil party testimony during Case 001 was repetitive, calling for reforms that the court began considering several months ago.

"It is well known that the Trial Chamber has found the process of involving victims

as civil parties to be cumbersome and that it has frequently had the unlooked-for effect of slowing the trial while not providing for the victims' needs, which include achieving timely justice for their suffering," trial chamber judge Silvia Cartwright told the court's last plenary session, held in September.

Today is the deadline for civil party applications in Case 002, with the court having received 3,533 such applications as of the end of December.