

The Phnom Penh Post

Duch testimonies to resume amid concerns of meddling Neth Pheaktra and Georgia Wilkins May 18, 2009

The trial of S-21 chief Kaing Guek Eav continues this week, as government says it is keeping tabs on foreign court staff.

Witness and expert testimonies will continue to be heard at Cambodia's war crimes court this week, as the trial of former S-21 chief Kaing Guek Eav resumes today.

The trial is restarting after a two-week recess amid concern over recent government claims it is verifying complaints of wrongdoing by foreign staff at the court.

Genocide specialist Craig Etcheson is scheduled to appear in court over the next week, with Bou Meng and Chum Mey - two of the only 14 people known to have survived the prison - expected to follow.

"I will testify to the court, face-to-face with Duch, after other witnesses talk to the judges. But I don't know when exactly I will confront Duch," 78-year-old Chum Mey told the Post, referring to the accused by his revolutionary name.

"Since the trial started, I have listened to and noted what Duch and other witnesses have told the court. I believe that some of the confessions given by Duch are true. Duch recognises his fault for some things, but for others ... Duch is transferring responsibility onto colleagues who have already died."

Court still on shaky ground

Last week, Council of Ministers spokesman Phay Siphon said he was "verifying" complaints of wrongdoing by foreign court personnel, the source of which he declined to name, sending a shockwave of concern through the legal and diplomatic community.

The UN responded that it hoped any complaints against UN staff would be handed to the world body to process.

A diplomatic source who declined to be named told the Post last week that there was concern about recent claims that the government was taking its own measures against alleged acts of wrongdoing by international court staff.

"We are concerned about the statements because we are generally concerned about allegations of corruption at the court," the diplomat said.

"It remains to be seen whether there is a credible basis for the comments, and we expect to pursue that privately with the government."