



Judges, prosecutors meet in full session ahead of major trial

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International and Cambodian jurists of the Khmer Rouge tribunal met in full session on Monday, as they made plans for the UN-backed court's biggest trial to date.

International judge Sylvia Cartwright said judges at the tribunal "have to restore the trust of the people," as the plenary session began.

The tribunal, which is preparing to try four senior leaders of the regime later this year, has faced an onslaught of criticism in recent months, following the hasty conclusion of a controversial case by investigating judges and continued allegations of political interference by Prime Minister Hun Sen and his supporters.

"We hope to succeed in delivering some measure of justice for the Cambodian people," Cartwright said. "This takes courage and determination [and means] the judges will fully examine all evidence and legal submissions and will make decisions that are unaffected by outside influences or by personal bias."

The court has completed one trial, of Khmer Rouge torture chief Duch, and is preparing for trial of senior leaders Nuon Chea, Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary and Ieng Thirith.

Two more cases, which would require indictments that Hun Sen opposes, are still under investigation, but critics say they worry political opposition are hampering those efforts. In a recent interview with VOA Khmer, investigating judge Siegfried Blunk said the cases had not been dismissed.

Cases 003 and 004, as they are known in court parlance, remain confidential, drawing the ire of Khmer Rouge victims who say they can't file proper complaints for five additional suspects and specific crimes.

However, Cartwright said Monday that public comment on court work is "unusual in most countries."

Judges and prosecutors will meet for the next three days to adopt amendments to the internal rules of the court, including adjustments to appeals for the Supreme Court Chamber, Cambodian judge Kong Srim said.

Cartwright said the jurists will work to balance the rights of civil parties with the rights of the accused.