



**Judges ‘will not answer’ concerns over tribunal case
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Investigating judges at the Khmer Rouge tribunal have failed to respond to a letter from victims of the regime, who said they are concerned for the way a controversial case at the UN-backed court has been handled.

Victims from the Trapaing Thmar dam project, where 320,000 people were forced to work and where thousands died of exhaustion, starvation or execution, say they want the judges to investigate closely Case 004, which is among two cases opposed by Prime Minister Hun Sen.

The investigating judges, Siegfried Blunk and You Bunleng, hastily concluded their investigation into Case 003, prompting the court’s international prosecutor to appeal for more work and sparking concern among tribunal observers that the court was not fully pursuing the case.

In their letter, five villagers from Banteay Meanchey province who are representing 550 families, said they worried the judges would “drop” Case 004, and they urged the judges to “act independently.” The representatives hope to file as civil party participants when and if the case comes to trial.

In a message to lawyers obtained by VOA Khmer, the investigating judges said they “will not answer this kind of letter.”

The investigation is “confidential,” the judges wrote, but the case is “still under active investigation.”

Crimes alleged at the Trapaing Thmar dam are part of Case 002, which is pending at the tribunal, the judges wrote.

Civil party lawyer Hong Kim Suon said villagers will continue to follow up on their potential participation in Case 004. “They are waiting to participate the case as civil parties or witnesses,” he said.

Tribunal observers say the confidentiality of cases 003 and 004 remain a problem for civil party applicants, who cannot file until more specifics are known.