

The Phnom Penh Post

Khmer Rouge victims say they endured forced marriage

Sam Rith and Robbie Corey-Boulet

October 7, 2009

The Victims' Unit at the Khmer Rouge tribunal last month received civil party application forms from 10 victims who say they were subjected to forced marriage during the regime, according to a press release issued Tuesday by the Cambodian Defenders Project (CDP).

The release states that the applications, from victims in Kampong Cham and Pursat provinces, "show striking similarities" to four applications submitted last October by victims in Kampot province.

In groups of up to 20, the victims were gathered in community halls and told to marry strangers, according to the release, which adds "nobody dared to refuse openly for fear of punishment".

The CDP release goes on to argue that the regime's "population policy" amounted to a crime against humanity.

The 2004 law establishing the tribunal does not include forced marriage in a list of possible crimes against humanity, though that list is not exhaustive.

UN court spokesman Lars Olsen noted Tuesday that the decision on whether to recognise forced marriage as a crime against humanity would be up to the Trial Chamber.

Failing that, civil party lawyer Silke Studzinsky said it could also be subsumed under crimes against humanity such as rape and enslavement.

She noted, though, that the Special Court for Sierra Leone in February found three former leaders of the Revolutionary United Front guilty of the crime.