



Khmer Rouge war crimes prosecutor is appointed December 2, 2009

Cambodia's Khmer Rouge war crimes court has named Andrew Cayley as its new international prosecutor.

The genocide tribunal appointed British-born Mr Cayley several months after the resignation of his Canadian predecessor, Robert Petit.

Mr Cayley recently defended the former Liberian President Charles Taylor at his war crimes trial.

Cambodian King Norodom Sihamoni formally appointed Mr Cayley, according to a court statement. American Nicholas Koumjian was appointed reserve co-prosecutor.

Disagreements

Mr Cayley has spent the last two years in private practice, during which time he defended Mr Taylor.

Before this he worked for the International Criminal Court investigating crimes in Darfur, and served at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. His appointment was welcomed by court observers who stressed the importance of having a permanent international prosecutor in place.

Critical decisions "should be made by the international prosecutor who will have the responsibility for carrying them out," Heather Ryan, court monitor for the Open Society Justice Initiative, told the French news agency AFP.

The UN-backed tribunal incorporates mixed teams of foreign and Cambodian judges, prosecutors and defenders.

Disagreements among the legal teams have been known to lead to frequent delays, whilst allegations of corruption have damaged the tribunal's credibility. Indeed, the resignation of Mr Petit came after a dispute with Cambodian co-prosecutor Chea Leang over whether to pursue more suspects of the late 1970s communist regime.

Mr Petit denied any connection, saying personal reasons were behind his resignation.

Senior leaders

The tribunal, created in 2006 to prosecute leading Khmer Rouge members, recently held its first trial of prison chief Kaing Guek Eav, better known as Duch, with Australian Bill Smith serving as interim international prosecutor.

He was convicted and sentenced to 40 years in jail. A term of 45 years should be imposed but five years had been deducted to take account of Duch's co-operation and time he had already served, Mr Smith said.

Duch is the first of five leading Khmer Rouge figures to face the UN-backed tribunal. The joint trial of four other - more senior - Khmer Rouge leaders is expected to start in 2011.

The court is also investigating whether to open more cases against five other former Khmer Rouge officials.

Up to two million Cambodians died under Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge rule in the 1970s.