

More tribunal complaints sought in US

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Efforts to bring Khmer Rouge survivors in the US to file with the UN-backed tribunal in Cambodia are continuing, as the deadline for filing approaches.

“The trials that are going on in Cambodia right now are very unique that they allow victims to participate,” Audrey Redmond, a legal advisor for the Applied Social Research Institute of Cambodia told VOA Khmer, as she distributed flyers encouraging people to participate in a session organized for Sunday. “So in addition to helping Cambodians heal by telling their stories, we hope to use this for educational purposes and hope to use it for the court.”

Civil parties and witness statements are an integral part of the UN-backed court, with lawyers sitting in on hearings and testimony used in the trials, in the hopes of providing some national reconciliation to the process.

Through its Cambodia Diaspora Victims’ Participation project, Applied Social Research and the Asia/Pacific/American Institute at New York University have organized several meetings for Khmer Rouge survivors, to help them share their experiences, as well as properly file for the tribunal.

The next one, on Sunday, will be held at Puthikaram pagoda in Maryland.

“Getting together to talk about Pol Pot’s regime is very important to have mental healing, because the experiences from going through that time will traumatize us for life,” said Him Chanrithy, author of “When Broken Glass Floats.” “This is the first step for Khmers who never talk about the regime to get healing.”

The Khmer Rouge tribunal is currently undertaking its first trial, for former prison chief Duch, but it is still receiving complaints from witnesses in its next case, against four senior-most leaders of the regime: Noun Chea, Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary and Ieng Thirith. The deadline for filing complaints in that case is the end of 2009.

The tribunal has received 4,000 complaints, 67 of which have come from overseas. Applied Social Research has collected nearly 50 complaints, but has not submitted them yet.

“If there are people who wish to participate in the tribunal process, our unit here will always welcome them,” said Kassie Neou, coordinator for the tribunal’s outreach team in Phnom Penh.