

# The Phnom Penh Post

## **PM denies KRT interference, warns of possible civil unrest** **Cheang Sokha** **December 4, 2009**

PRIME Minister Hun Sen on Thursday repeated his claim that more prosecutions at the Khmer Rouge tribunal could plunge the country into civil strife, and also disputed allegations that he was interfering in the UN-backed court's operations.

"Sorry, no more [prosecutions]. I would rather see the court fail than let the country fall into war," Hun Sen said during remarks at the 11th annual national day for the disabled.

Acting international co-prosecutor William Smith in September requested the investigation of five more suspects after a legal technicality allowed additional introductory submissions to go forward over the objections of national co-prosecutor Chea Leang. The same day Smith submitted the request, Hun Sen warned that more indictments would lead to civil unrest that could claim hundreds of thousands of lives.

He reiterated that claim Thursday, saying: "I am not interfering with the court, but it is not the court that stopped the war. Be careful. The court will create war, causing more divisions in society."

He added: "Again and again, I see they want to question [more suspects]. Be careful, this is the issue of death."

The premier has repeatedly been accused of trying to interfere with the work of the tribunal. A report released last month by the Open Society Justice Initiative stated that political interference "poses a serious challenge to both the credibility of the court and its ability to meet international fair trial standards".

UN court spokesman Lars Olsen said Thursday that there was no chance the court's independence would be compromised.

"The court will follow the law and make its decisions independently, according to the law," he said.

"We do not seek advice from the executive branch or anyone else."