



Preliminary hearing cools some anger at court

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The head of a US-based group that advocates for victims at the Khmer Rouge tribunal said last week's hearings for four jailed leaders will likely soften some criticism for the court.

Nou Leakhena, director of the Applied Social Research Institute of Cambodia, said on "Hello VOA" Thursday that court officials had eased some of the concerns of victims, "to make sure their grievances and voices are heard."

Nou Leakhena was in Cambodia last week to help Cambodian-American victims of the Khmer Rouge file and be represented at the upcoming trial.

Some court observers say they now worry the court will not bring indictments for five other leaders in two more cases, but Nou Leakhena said Thursday the number of cases was not as important as proper proceedings that can serve as an example and prevent such atrocities from happening again.

"We are not shy to speak out if the court is doing something wrong," she said. "The most important thing is that we protect the rights of victims both inside and outside Cambodia. The victims want to see the court work transparently, to deliver justice, not as a joke."

Former leaders Noun Chea, Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary and Ieng Thirith have all denied atrocity charges they will be facing when a trial begins in earnest later this year.

A preliminary hearing on key procedural questions was held last week, with some 3,000 people taking part over four days, according to a court spokesman.

"We have heard their voices and we acknowledge that this is because they are concerned," the spokesman, Huy Vannak, said of victims. "They care about justice, and we will work to follow all legal procedures to deliver justice."