

Press-Telegram

Survivors' stories sought for trials

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The testimony could be used against alleged perpetrators of Khmer Rouge.

There are still a few chances for local Cambodian residents who were victimized by the Khmer Rouge to have their stories heard.

The Applied Social Research Institute of Cambodia, in partnership with several organizations, is talking to survivors and families of victims of the 1970s genocide at several events this week.

Participants have the opportunity to provide testimony that may be used in proceedings against alleged perpetrators in the ongoing war crimes tribunals in Cambodia.

For decades, a debilitating fallout for survivors of the genocide has been feelings of helplessness and powerlessness.

Dr. Leakhena Nou, a professor at Cal State Long Beach, has led the effort to get victims' testimony from the Cambodian Diaspora in the U.S.

Nou says by speaking out, victims are able to regain a sense of power and justice.

"It's a matter of human rights," Nou told the Press-Telegram in March. "They have a right to be part of truth and reconciliation for their suffering and for their own healing."

Kaing Geuk Eav, also known as Duch, is the first alleged war criminal appearing before the Extraordinary Chambers of the Courts of Cambodia, which is conducting the tribunal.

Duch is charged with overseeing the mass torture and execution in prison camps, including Cambodia's notorious Tuol Sleng, or S-21.

Between 1975 and 1979, an estimated 2 million Cambodians died from executions, starvation, illness and deprivation under the Khmer Rouge.

A second trial is slated for alleged Khmer Rouge leaders Noun Chea, Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary and Ieng Thirith.

More trials and defendants are possible.

Victims and families affected between April 17, 1975, and Jan. 6, 1979, have the right to file complaints that will be brought to the ECCC.

Law students from UCLA's International Justice Clinic and translators will help victims fill out official information forms.