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UN urges disclosure of 'files'

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A UN spokesperson at the Khmer Rouge tribunal said Wednesday that he "would expect" government officials to hand over to the world body the findings of a government-led monitoring effort targeting foreign workers at the UN-backed court.

"We would expect that the government or anyone else who has any information of misdeeds by UN staff members at the [tribunal] would submit such information to the UN," said Lars Olsen, spokesman for the UN Assistance to the Khmer Rouge Trials.

"[The UN] will then process such information in accordance with UN global procedures, specially emphasising due process," he added.

Officials with the Cambodian side of the court declined to comment.

Council of Ministers spokesman Phay Siphon described files kept on foreign staffers at the tribunal in an interview with the Post Tuesday, saying government officials were "monitoring" international staff in an effort to detect corrupt acts "that might discredit" the court's work.

However, he said Wednesday it would be misleading to refer to the effort as "monitoring". Rather, he said, officials were "verifying" certain complaints of misdeeds given by a source he declined to name.

"We didn't believe the complaints [of wrongdoing] in a file we were given, so we are verifying them in good faith," he said.

He declined to elaborate on the verification efforts, or whether information would be sent to the UN.

'No breakdown of trust'

Several lawyers and court monitors said on Tuesday that the government's decision to maintain files on foreign staffers amounted to inappropriate interference and even intimidation.

They also expressed concern over what Michelle Staggs Kelsall, a court monitor for the East-West Centre's Asian International Justice Initiative, described on Tuesday as "a complete breakdown of trust between" the Cambodian and international sides of the court.

Phay Siphon said Wednesday that such concerns were unfounded. "There is no breakdown between the two sides," he said. "We are still talking."

But Olsen said there were "no more meetings scheduled" between Cambodian officials and Peter Taksoe-Jensen, the UN's top legal official who has travelled to Cambodia several times to discuss the establishment of an anti-corruption mechanism at the court that would satisfy international donors, many of whom are reluctant to fund the Cambodian side of the court because of unresolved graft allegations.

Several donor countries were silent on the issue Wednesday. Fabyene Mansencal, first secretary of the French embassy, declined to answer questions for this article.

No one at the European Commission delegation to Cambodia or the Japanese embassy was available for comment.