



US-Cambodians to discuss tribunal options

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Cambodians living in the US who feel they are victims of the Khmer Rouge will gather in Arlington, Va., later this month to discuss their right to file testimony at the UN-backed court in Phnom Penh.

The Khmer Rouge tribunal has mechanisms built into it that allow victims to file suits and have representation at proceedings as “civil parties.”

The tribunal is currently undertaking its first trial, of the regime’s chief torturer, Duch, while four other senior leaders remain in detention and await their own atrocity crimes trials.

Organizers expected up to 30 participants from Washington and neighboring states as far away as Pennsylvania.

“Some people will attend this event for the first time because their past suffering is too deep to bear any more,” Yap Kimtung, president of Cambodian Americans for Human Rights and Democracy, told VOA Khmer by phone. “They will have to speak out and give it as a testimony to let the outside world know.”

The gathering in Virginia is one of those initiated by the Applied Social Research Institute of Cambodia and the Asian Pacific American Institute at New York University.

At each meeting participants discuss searching for indigenous conceptions of justice and reparation, contextualize psycho-emotional consequences of Khmer Rouge trauma, and hear explanations about Khmer Rouge tribunal procedures.

“The main purpose of our workshop is to encourage the Cambodian community in the US and outside of Cambodia to participate in and understand the Khmer Rouge [tribunal] process, and to encourage them to demand justice,” Leakhena Nou, founder of the Applied Social Research Institute, told VOA Khmer. “It has now been 34 years, and they should not be quiet about what they have been through. According to my research, Cambodians overseas and in the country have mental wounds and need healing.”

She said she felt compelled to help because there have been no efforts by the Cambodian government to involve overseas participants.

Khmer Rouge tribunal officials say the court has received more than 3,000 complaints and civil party applications—a relatively small number compared to the number of victims of the regime.