



US-based victims group questions tribunal's independence

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The latest flares at the Khmer Rouge tribunal have drawn sharp criticism from the Cambodian-American Diasporas and added to their suspicion over the court's independence.

"The controversies surrounding case 003 clearly show the Court's inability at this point to remain independent and transparent," said Dr. Nou Leakhena in an interview with VOA Khmer last week.

The Khmer Rouge Tribunal is caught up in a spat between its investigating judges and international prosecutor over case 003 which could involve two more prominent suspects in the Khmer Rouge regime.

Dr. Nou Leakhena whose organization, the Applied Social Research Institute of Cambodia (ASRIC), represents 41 civil parties and 129 complainants at the court said some of her clients have almost lose hope in their search for justice and that the court should find ways out among themselves and restore confidence.

Many national and international organizations including the US-based Open Society Justice Initiatives have called for more openness in the way the court conducts its work which is mainly under the name of "confidentiality".

"The negative response by the court's senior element to those who raise concerns about process further impedes the quest for justice," said Dr. Nou Leakhena. "Even so, at the end of the day, the debates over case 003 may prove to be a galvanizing force for those who have tirelessly pushed for justice."

Dr. Nou and her legal team are now en route to Cambodia to attend the court initial hearing of case 002 scheduled for June 27 and involve four senior Khmer Rouge leaders. They will seek ways to work with other civil society groups to act as one voice to represent the victims.

"We want to come together as one voice to express our demand for justice and voice concern when the court acts without transparency," she said.