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Victims seek graft documents

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A group of civil parties at the Khmer Rouge tribunal have added their voice to calls for judges to release report on allegations of corruption at the court

Lawyers for civil parties at Cambodia's war crimes court have filed a motion requesting access to the results of a UN inquiry into allegations of corruption at the tribunal.

They join four defence teams and the prosecution in urging judges to take action on the issue, after talks between the government and the UN last month failed to reach agreement on how best to deal with graft accusations.

"The existence of the [UN report] is directly relevant to the proceedings in the Duch trial, as its publication after the close of the proceedings may expose the trial judgment to claims ... that corruption within the ECCC rendered the trial unfair," a press statement by lawyers representing the civil parties, known as "group one", said Monday.

The lawyers asked judges to make a formal request to the UN secretary general to make the report accessible to the parties. But they also pointed out that they had no evidence themselves that pointed to graft at the court.

The corruption row arose after staff members on the Cambodian side of the court accused their superiors of taking a percentage of their salaries.

Court officials have denied this practice occurred, saying several audits have failed to uncover any wrongdoing.

"This court does not exist in a vacuum.... It's an international criminal court, it's serious," Alain Werner, a lawyer for the group, told the Post Monday.

"We were hoping that there would be an anti-corruption mechanism in place by now, but the government and the UN have decided against this. We are now in the position where we are four weeks into the first trial and the allegations we are reading about are actually getting worse ... it's a ticking bomb," he added.

"The victims know that it is not closure if the verdict is tainted," he said.

Richard Rogers, chief of the defence section of the tribunal, told the Post last week that the situation was becoming an embarrassment to all involved.

"There is a report sitting in someone's drawer in New York that details corruption allegations at the court and judges would prefer not to look at it," he said.

"There is only one thing worse than the court collapsing, and that is a court going forward with trials that are not fair."