



Duch trial logistical meeting set for mid-January

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Now that judges have confirmed the final charges against "Comrade Duch," the Trial Chamber has taken the next step toward actually trying the Tuol Sleng torture chief. A "Trial Management Meeting" has been scheduled for Jan. 15-16.

The meeting, which will be closed to press and the public, will "allow exchanges between the parties, facilitate the setting of dates of the Initial and Substantive Hearings and review the status of the case," according to a release from the court.

Included on the preliminary agenda for the meeting: review of defendants' health status, updates on civil party applications, witness protection issues, proposed daily trial schedules and potential trial dates. After this largely organizational meeting, the Trial Chamber will set a date for the Initial Hearing, "during which the Chamber will consider the lists of potential witnesses and experts filed by the Parties, preliminary objections and applications submitted by victims to be joined as civil parties," according to the release. Once this hearing is complete, the date for the trial's first substantive hearing can be scheduled.

Hopefully this process will proceed in an expeditious manner and the substantive portion of Duch's trial will begin, as predicted, by March 2009. However, I am not sure what effect unresolved corruption allegations at the court could have on the tribunal's time line. A UN delegation met with Deputy Prime Minister Sok An last week to discuss corruption charges leveled at the court. However, no information released to the public addressed a recent UN review of kickback allegations that reportedly recommended the Cambodian government conduct a full investigation.

Instead, the UN delegation abruptly cancelled a press conference scheduled for Wednesday evening and issued a joint statement with the Cambodian government. According to the statement, the national and foreign sides of the court will conduct joint sessions to "ensure that the entire administration operates in a transparent, fair and efficient manner." Results of the sessions will be reported to higher authorities by the end of January 2009.

Once again, no mention was made of the UN corruption review already forwarded to the Cambodian government.