

Judges on Khmer Rouge genocide tribunal

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May 10 (Reuters) - Cambodia has released the names of the judges and prosecutors for the long-awaited trial of Pol Pot's top surviving henchmen for the 1970s Khmer Rouge genocide.

An estimated 1.7 million people were executed or died of starvation, overwork or disease under the ultra-Maoist regime from 1975 to 1979. No Khmer Rouge leader has ever faced justice, and Pol Pot himself died in a jungle guerrilla camp in 1998.

The trial will be conducted under a modified form of Cambodia's French-based judicial system, with domestic and international judges and prosecutors working jointly to try to guarantee the courts' independence.

Due to Cambodia's erratic and highly politicised judiciary, a complex formula of majority voting is in place to ensure no decision can be taken without support from both sides.

Officials say the court, aimed at those "most responsible" for the atrocities, will be up and running in earnest in 2007, but can be deemed under way once co-prosecutors open their preliminary probes.

Once formal accusations have been lodged, the two co-investigating judges conduct further research and write a report which goes to the trial judges.

The five-judge chamber -- three Cambodians and two foreigners -- then deliberate on its contents and arrive at a verdict.

Under the special trial format, there will be only one court of appeal -- the seven-member Supreme Court. A five-member Pre-trial Chamber is designed to rule on disputes arising between the co-prosecutors and co-investigating judges.

Following are brief personal histories of some key figures:

CO-PROSECUTORS

CHEA LEANG, 59 (CAMBODIA)

- Little-known Appeals Court prosecutor, despite being a rare female in a male-dominated profession and society. Has law degree from the former East Germany.

ROBERT PETIT, 44 (CANADA)

- Criminal attorney who has served on international genocide tribunals in Rwanda and Sierra Leone. Has also worked as a U.N. legal adviser in Kosovo and a serious crimes prosecutor during the U.N. mission in East Timor.

CO-INVESTIGATING JUDGES

YOU BUN LENG, 48 (CAMBODIA)

- Appeal court judge since 1993. Has Vietnamese law degree. Speaks English.

MARCEL LEMONDE (FRANCE)

- Details not immediately available

TRIAL CHAMBER

NIL NONN, 50 (CAMBODIA)

- Head since 1993 of the provincial court in Battambang, where he has dealt with fallout from the rehabilitation of Pol Pot's guerrillas after their final surrender in the area in 1998. Has Vietnamese law degree. Speaks English.

THOU MONY, 43 (CAMBODIA)

- Has served on Phnom Penh's Appeal Court since 1991, earning a reputation for judicial probity. His most high-profile case involved sentencing three Khmer Rouge commanders to 20 years in jail for the 1994 murder of three tourists from Australia, Britain and France. Has Vietnamese law degree. Speaks English.

YA SOKHAN, 51 (CAMBODIA)

- Phnom Penh Court judge. Attracted diplomatic and media attention in 2004 when he convicted Hambali, a suspected regional al Qaeda associate, in absentia for a plot to bomb the U.S. and British embassies. Has law degree from Metchnikov in Ukraine, then part of the Soviet Union.

SILVIA CARTWRIGHT (NEW ZEALAND)

- Appointed Governor-General of New Zealand in 2001 after a distinguished career as lawyer and jurist. The first woman appointed to New Zealand's High Court, she is well known as an advocate of women's rights.

JEAN-MARC LAVERGNE, 45 (FRANCE)

- Vice-President of the Criminal Court in the French town of Le Mans. Previously served as Appeal Court adviser in Rennes.

PRE-TRIAL CHAMBER

The pre-trial chamber has three Cambodian and two international judges. Its most controversial member is:

NEY THOL, 55 (CAMBODIA)

- Military Court chairman since 1987. Has made several controversial rulings, including sentencing co-Prime Minister Norodom Ranariddh to 30 years in jail after 1997 fighting between Ranariddh's forces and troops loyal to Hun Sen, the other co-Prime Minister.

Last year, he sentenced opposition MP Cheam Channy to seven years on charges of forming an illegal armed group. Diplomats and human rights organisations criticised both rulings. Sources: Khmer Rouge Trial secretariat, Reuters news reports.

<http://today.reuters.com/News/CrisesArticle.aspx?storyId=BKK112339>