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Cambodia Genocide Judges Meeting Again to Finalize Internal Rules

By Michael Sung

The Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) announced Wednesday that the UN-supported Khmer Rouge genocide tribunal will meet for two weeks beginning May 31 to resolve remaining disputes between Cambodian and international judges concerning the internal regulations of the tribunal. Co-investigating judge Marcel Lemonde told AFP that "once the internal rules are adopted, the judicial investigation can start in the following weeks." The meeting follows resolution of a major dispute over fees payable by foreign lawyers appearing before the court; late last month the Cambodian Bar Association (BAKC) agreed to dramatically lower its proposed fees after rights NGOs and international judges said that those would discourage volunteer lawyers from offering their services and would prompt complaints that defendants had not been given a free choice of counsel. AFP has more.

The draft rules proposed for the tribunal have been a source of intense controversy for months. A meeting of the judges in November failed to reach agreement, as did a subsequent meeting in January. A March meeting made progress but still left the fees issue and other procedural details unresolved.

The ECCC was established by a 2001 law to investigate and try those responsible for the Cambodian genocide that occurred under the 1975-79 Khmer Rouge regime. The genocide resulted in the deaths of over 1.7 million people from maltreatment, disease and malnutrition. To date, no top Khmer Rouge officials have faced trial and questions have been raised concerning exactly how many of the Khmer Rouge's top officials will face the tribunal, as several of those responsible for the genocide have recently died and others are in failing health.

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