

Chief, Potential Judges Named For KR Tribunal

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The names of top administrators and potential international judges for the Khmer Rouge tribunal were announced separately on Thursday by the Cambodian government and the UN.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Anan is set to interview 21 candidates to serve as international judges and prosecutors at the tribunal, the UN announced on its Website.

The Council of Ministers also issued a statement that Sean Visoth—formerly the executive secretary of the government's tribunal taskforce—has been appointed director of the office of administration of the extraordinary chambers, and Michelle Lee—the UN-appointed coordinator—is the deputy director.

"I am excited to receive this information but the work is big and it is historical, so I have to try and work to make the trial to meet international standards," Sean Visoth said Thursday. "I have a long way to go."

Documentation Center of Cambodia Director Youk Chhang said that Lee will be coming to Cambodia on Dec 4 and will hold a press briefing on Dec 6. He said the UN judicial candidates, selected by the UN Legal Counsel, will be interviewed on Dec 3, and the nominees will be announced on Dec 6.

Then, Cambodia's Supreme Council of the Magistracy must select two international judges for the trial chamber, three for the supreme court chamber and two for the pre-trial chamber, of which one will be a co-investigating judge and one a co-prosecutor.

The May 2003 agreement between the UN and the government asserts that the trial judges must be "of high moral character, impartiality and integrity," be qualified as judges in their home countries and be experienced in criminal law, international law, international humanitarian law or human rights law.

The UN offered no information on the background of the individuals nominated for the posts.

But, from Web searches, those named include prominent justices from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the US, Poland, Austria and Egypt.

Some appear to have served at previous UN missions: Polish candidate Agnieszka Klonowiecka-Milart and Austrian justice Claudia Fenz in Kosovo and US Judge Phillip Rapozo in East Timor.

Others appear to be current or former appeals or district court judges in their home countries.

The list names Silvia Cartwright, who could not be independently confirmed to be the same justice currently serving as governor-general of New Zealand.

Government taskforce adviser Helen Jarvis said the short-list of Cambodian judicial officers would likely be announced in December.

But the government's statement on Thursday noted that Cambodia still needs to fill a \$10.8 million tribunal budget shortfall before the trial preparation can proceed.

"The Cambodian government is appealing to other governments for urgent action to help meet this gap through bilateral contribution," the statement said.

Former Khmer Rouge officials questioned the merits of a trial.

"I don't see that the trial will bring peace," said Kong Doung, a staff member at the Information Department of Pailin Municipality and a former cadre.

"The important thing is to show people's living conditions. When...the gap between the rich and poor people is not so far, there will be no revolution," he said.

"\$56 million for the trial is worthless," he said. "They should transfer this money for development. That is better."