

Observers warn of an Extended KR Tribunal

By Park Chan Thul

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At a two-day Khmer Rouge tribunal conference that started Wednesday in Phnom Penh, participants expressed concern that the three years allotted for the trial will not be enough because of legal challenges that may be mounted over the length of pretrial detention for former Khmer Rouge leaders.

Kek Galabru, founder of local human rights group Licadho, said that half of the three years will be committed to the tribunal's administrative work, leaving only a year and a half for the trials themselves.

"We are worried that the challenge from the defending lawyers will waste times", she told the conference.

Former Khmer Rouge military chief Ta Mok and former Toul Sleng prison commander Kaing Khek Ieu, better known as "Duch" have been detained without trial since 1999.

"As you know, two people have been detained for some years now, Ta Mok and Duch", said David Boyle, charge de mission of the International Federation of Human Rights.

"The defense will undoubtedly attack that the detention was illegal and unconstitutional. It is unclear at this state what exactly will happen", Boyle added.

Participants also complained that Cambodia's agreement with the UN to hold a Khmer Rouge tribunal does not establish an international court and leaves the UN's role as merely participatory.

Under the agreement signed by the UN and Cambodian government, pledges for the full \$56 million tribunal budget must be secured and funding for the first year must be in the bank before the tribunal can go forward.

So far, only Japan, the largest donor at \$ 21.5 million, and Australian, Britain and France, which donated a total of \$ 5.2million, have committed money to the tribunal