

October 6, 2006

Prosecutor sees Khmer Rouge Probe this Year

By Reuters

THE HAGUE — A prosecutor investigating the Khmer Rouge genocide of the 1970s said on Friday he expected to hand cases against those responsible for the deaths of 1.7 million people to an investigating judge by the end of the year.

"We're reasonably confident that by the end of the year we will be forwarding investigation propositions to the judge," Canadian prosecutor Robert Petit told a meeting of international prosecutors in The Hague.

"I think you can safely assume that next year we will have trials," he said, adding that the Cambodian court would have to work faster than other international tribunals as it only had a budget for three years.

"We're all shooting for three years," said Petit, one of 17 Cambodian and 10 foreign judges and prosecutors on the long-awaited tribunal to which judges were appointed in July.

Almost every Cambodian family lost relatives under the 1975-79 Khmer Rouge regime and none of its top leaders, some of whom are alive and living quietly in Cambodia, has faced trial.

It is not clear how many of Pol Pot's cadres will stand trial more than three decades after the Khmer Rouge emptied Phnom Penh and other cities on taking power after a civil war.

Whole sections of society, including Buddhist monks, ethnic minorities and the middle class, were branded hostile to Pol Pot's dream of a peasant utopia and put to death in the "Killing Fields" or died of starvation, forced labor or disease.

Pol Pot died in 1998.

Copyright 2006
Reuters