



## **Khmer Rouge Tribunal Judge Criticizes Media Coverage**

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A judge at the United Nations-backed Khmer Rouge tribunal in Cambodia has criticized media coverage of the ongoing war crimes trials after a series of reports that contained leaked confidential information.

A Supreme Court Chamber Judge for the Khmer Rouge tribunal in Cambodia had harsh words late Thursday for the media's coverage of its proceedings.

The tribunal last year sentenced one former Khmer Rouge leader for crimes committed in the late 1970s and is in the process of trying four most senior leaders in a second case.

But there is much debate over whether further leaders will stand trial in a potential third and fourth case, details of which were earlier this year leaked to the media.

Judge Agnieszka Klonowiecka-Milart lashed out at recent media reporting on potential new defendants whose names were revealed in the leaked court documents.

Speaking at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand in Bangkok, she said what should be a confidential investigation is being hijacked by the media.

“Arguments are being held in the fora of the media as opposed to the courtroom. And I think...oh, and that the confidential documents are being leaked, whether under the sanction of contempt or not, let's leave it aside, but it's ignoble," the judge said. "Even if it was already in the public domain it was wrong that it so happened. And, it's not a reason to put it again in the public domain.”

The tribunal's Co-Investigating Judges this week instituted [contempt proceedings against the Voice of America's Khmer service](#) for quoting from one leaked document and broadcasting its image.

The court document was leaked earlier this year and its contents had already been revealed in other media reports, but the court only named VOA in its contempt proceedings.

VOA issued a statement of concern about the potential “chilling effect” the threat could have on media coverage of the tribunal.

Anne Heindel is a legal advisor for the Documentation Center of Cambodia, an organization that collects evidence of crimes committed during the Khmer Rouge era.

She also spoke at the FCCT and said the leaks are driven by the tribunal's practice of keeping information confidential throughout the investigations and trials, frustrating public awareness and adding to criticism of the court.

"Because people feel that cases three and four are not being adequately investigated, that there's... the national government has said they don't want these cases, the internationals really don't want to fund the cases, there's a feeling that they aren't going to happen for political reasons and not so much for legal reasons," Heindel said. "This has led to a lot of information coming out through irregular channels and not through the court."

Since the tribunal's founding, critics have accused it of being corrupt, too expensive and slow, as well as being vulnerable to political interference.

Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen, himself a former Khmer Rouge, has publicly stated there should be no further trials because they could divide the country and lead to civil war.

Led by Pol Pot, the ultra-communist Khmer Rouge ruled Cambodia from 1975 to 1979. In its quest to form a rural utopia, as many as two million Cambodians, nearly a quarter of the population, were executed, starved, and worked to death.