



## **UN warns officials to stop remarks opposing tribunal cases**

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The UN's top legal representative has warned Cambodian officials to cease public statements in opposition to two cases before the Khmer Rouge tribunal.

Patricia O'Brien, UN undersecretary-general for legal affairs, met with government officials Thursday night to discuss UN concerns in the wake of the resignation of international investigating judge Siegfried Blunk.

Blunk said Prime Minister Hun Sen, Foreign Minister Hor Namhong and Information Minister Khieu Kanharith had all made statements demonstrating government opposition to cases 003 and 004, creating an atmosphere in which he would be perceived as biased, no matter his judgment on the cases.

In a meeting with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon last year, Hun Sen said those cases at the court were "not allowed."

Blunk's resignation has fueled widespread speculation that the court is under political pressure not to fully investigate the cases, which would require the indictment of five more Khmer Rouge leaders, an act Cambodian officials have warned could destabilize the country.

O'Brien "strongly urged the royal government of Cambodia to refrain from statements opposing the progress of cases 003 and 004 and to refrain from interfering in any way whatsoever with the judicial process," the UN said in a statement following Thursday's meeting, which included Council Minister Sok An, who oversees the court for the government.

O'Brien also "expressed concern" over the developments at the court and called on government leaders and others to "respect and support the integrity and independence of the [tribunal] judicial process," the statement said.

The court is in the midst of preparations for its largest, and second, trial to date, in which jailed former leaders Nuon Chea, Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary and Ieng Thirith are charged with atrocity crimes that include genocide. The court is expected to open a major hearing in that case in November.

In its own statement after Thursday's meeting, the Council of Ministers made no mention of the warnings on cases 003 and 004 or of Blunk's resignation and his concerns for perceived political interference at the court.

However, Ek Tha, a spokesman for the Council of Ministers, denied any government officials had interfered with the tribunal's work.

"We let the court work to fulfill its duty in conformity with legal procedures," he told reporters.

Government spokesman Phay Siphon said the two sides had not "deeply" discussed the two controversial cases.