



## **Cambodian activists plea for more K.Rouge trial funding**

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PHNOM PENH - CAMBODIAN ctivists on Friday warned international donors that without vital funding for the cash-strapped Khmer Rouge tribunal, justice for two million genocide victims would be put at risk.

The court's officials were meeting with potential donors in New York on Friday, seeking tens of millions of dollars to enable the tribunal to continue its operations.

The Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee (CHRAC), a coalition of local civil society groups, said inadequate funding would 'weaken judicial independence and lessen the chances of achieving justice in Cambodia.'

'The ongoing participation of the international donors is necessary to ensure that the tribunal meets international standards of justice,' CHRAC said in a statement.

International backers have appeared hesitant to pledge more money to the court amid allegations of mismanagement and political interference.

Japan agreed this week to donate nearly three million dollars and France pledged another million dollars in April, but court officials were seeking much more on Friday.

The tribunal, which opened in 2006 after nearly a decade of wrangling between the United Nations and Cambodia, was originally budgeted at 56.3 million dollars (\$\$1.37 million) over three years.

Once in operation, the tribunal significantly raised its cost estimates to more than 100 million dollars.

Court officials expect the trial of former Khmer Rouge jailer Duch, whose real name is Kaing Guek Eav, will start by October.

The United Nations this year announced that an audit showed no financial mismanagement.

But last year, the New York-based Open Society Justice Initiative alleged that Cambodian tribunal staff, including judges, had bought their jobs.

Up to two million people died of starvation and overwork, or were executed as the communist Khmer Rouge dismantled modern Cambodian society in a bid to forge an agrarian utopia during its 1975-1979 rule.