

## Cambodian Prime Minister Warns No Khmer Rouge Tribunal Without More Aid

By Kate Woodsome

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Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen has warned that former Khmer Rouge leaders will not go to trial unless international donors give money directly to the Cambodian government to help pay for the tribunals. The prime minister is angry at countries that have insisted on donating funds for the court only to the United Nations.

More than 25 years after the fall of the Khmer Rouge, the radical Maoist regime that killed nearly two million Cambodians from overwork, starvation or murder, a handful of its leaders remain alive and free.

After a decade of negotiations with the United Nations over the legal framework and budget for a war crimes tribunal, Cambodia is the closest it has ever been to seeing the Khmer Rouge brought to justice.

But Prime Minister Hun Sen said Monday in Phnom Penh that the tribunal will not take place unless the international community recognizes that Cambodia cannot contribute any more money to the process.

"When I speak like this, it doesn't mean the government doesn't have the will to move forward," he said. "But all the donor countries, they contribute to the U.N. and they know that Cambodia is poor. So if they know it's poor, why don't they give the money to Cambodia? If they give the money and Cambodia didn't take any action, then they can accuse. Now they cannot accuse Cambodia. If they don't give the money, then the tribunal cannot be established. I don't have the money for setting up this tribunal."

The United Nations has agreed to contribute \$43 million to the three-year proceedings, while the Cambodian government is obligated to pay nearly \$12 million. But Hun Sen has said the country can only provide \$1.3 million.

Hun Sen, who is a former Khmer Rouge soldier, insists his government is committed to clearing the record over the regime's rule from 1975 to 1979. He noted that it took just three years to eliminate the movement once the Phnom Penh launched its "win-win" policy in 1996, which saw Khmer Rouge factions defect to the government.

But the prime minister says the effort to bring offenders to justice has been much more difficult and gives him a headache.

The Japanese government has offered to allow Cambodia to use funds from its aid program to cover the financial shortfall. But Cambodian leaders say they will continue to push international donors to contribute before the country has to dip into its other aid money.

Many critics have accused the government of dragging its feet on the tribunal. They have also expressed concern about the credibility of Cambodian judges and worry that some of the tribunal funds could be diverted to officials' pockets.

Searching for the Truth.

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