

Documentation Center of Cambodia
The Cambodia Daily, Tuesday, January 25, 2005

Retired King Says Tribunal A 'Hypocrisy'
Wency Leung

Retired King Norodom Sihanouk questioned the merits of holding a long-awaited Khmer Rouge tribunal on Sunday, saying the prosecution of only a handful of former leaders of Democratic Kampuchea would be a "comedy and hypocrisy." Instead of spending more than \$56 million to establish a UN-backed tribunal and "to support, for 3 years, its judges in luxury," he suggested it may be more judicious to provide families of Khmer Rouge victims with fertile land and irrigation systems. "[T]he question is to know whether condemnation by the famous Khmer-UN Tribunal of five or six Khmer Rouge would be sufficient to appease my spirit," Norodom Sihanouk wrote in a message posted on his Web site. He noted that many people close to him and his wife, Queen Norodom Monineath, were killed during the 1975 to 1979 regime. "If [the tribunal] needed to carry out real justice, it would have to equally condemn and punish the hundreds and perhaps thousands of torturers and killers," he wrote. In a message last week, Norodom Sihanouk noted that many torturers and executioners under the Khmer Rouge have since become high-ranking officials in the country's military and government. Sean Visoth, secretary of the government's tribunal task force, declined to comment on the retired King's statements. "I'm not in the position to talk about this," he said Monday. The task force is currently waiting for UN member states to make financial pledges before the tribunal can move forward, he said. Youk Chhang, director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia, defended the proposed tribunal Monday saying the process would help strengthen the judicial system. Youk Chhang added that a tribunal could help recover the vast amounts of money and valuables seized from people during the regime. "That money should be brought back to the victims," he said, adding that recovered funds could be used to provide social services, irrigation projects and hospitals. Whether that money could have wound up in the pockets of current high-ranking officials who belonged to the regime, he said: "So far, we don't know. The court has to investigate where that money is."