



For Immediate Release
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U.S.-Based Cambodian Survivors of the Khmer Rouge Regime Make Historic Return to Cambodia to Seek Justice as Second Trial Opens

San Francisco, CA – On November 21, 2011, the Center for Justice and Accountability (CJA) will accompany three-U.S. based Civil Parties as they return to Cambodia to witness the start of the trial against the top surviving Khmer Rouge leaders. The second trial before the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) aims to bring to justice those most responsible for the widespread atrocities committed by the regime between 1975 and 1979, which resulted in the deaths of an estimated 2.2 million people. The United Nations-backed ECCC, a hybrid tribunal comprised of Cambodian and international judges, permits victims of the Khmer Rouge to participate directly in the proceedings as Civil Parties. Civil Parties, through their attorneys, support the prosecution and can seek non-monetary reparations that address the harms suffered as a result of crimes committed by the accused.

CJA represents 45 Civil Parties, all of whom reside in the United States. CJA will be in Phnom Penh for the first month of the trial, representing Civil Parties during the development of evidence on the command and military structure of the Khmer Rouge and advocating for reparations that address the wide variety of Cambodian survivors participating in the trial. CJA will also be working to highlight the continued impact of these crimes on the Cambodian diaspora, which holds some of the highest rates of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder of any refugee population in the U.S. For many survivors, this trial represents an opportunity to gain recognition of their harms and justice for the crimes that they and their families were forced to endure.

Two of the Civil Parties participating in the trial are Mrs. Sophany Bay of San Jose, CA and Mrs. Sarem Neou of Silver Spring, MD. Both have lived in the U.S. since the war and have been following the development of the Tribunal from abroad. Mrs. Neou states, “As a survivor and human being, I have a responsibility to find justice for the dead. Cambodians cannot heal and move on with their lives without knowing the truth.” And Mrs. Sophany Bay asks, “Why did they kill so many people? So far the leaders did not accept any responsibility for the genocide. I want justice for all the victims, for those who died, and for all Cambodians.”

Cambodian survivors are an often overlooked, yet significant, group of survivors residing within the U.S. As the survivors age, their stories of life under the Khmer Rouge run the risk of being lost. “The contribution of diaspora civil parties not only provides a strong cross section of evidence but helps highlight the history of this population. Their involvement in the trial will hopefully ignite a greater understanding of the court and Khmer Rouge history amongst the US public and younger Cambodians who may have little understanding of Khmer Rouge atrocities,” says Nushin Sarkarati, CJA staff attorney and International Civil Party Lawyer before the ECCC.

CJA will be working with the Cambodian victim's organization, the Applied Social Research Institute of Cambodia (ASRIC), to update and educate Cambodian survivors on the ECCC throughout the trial.

CJA clients and attorneys are available for interviews throughout the trial in the U.S. and Phnom Penh. Please contact Lisa Cohen to arrange an interview.

About the Center for Justice and Accountability

CJA is a San Francisco-based human rights organization dedicated to deterring torture and other severe human rights abuses around the world and advancing the rights of survivors to seek truth, justice and redress. CJA uses litigation to hold perpetrators individually accountable for human rights abuses, develop human rights law, and advance the rule of law in countries transitioning from periods of abuse.

About the Applied Social Research Institute of Cambodia

Founded in 2002 by medical sociologist Dr. Leakhena Nou, ASRIC is a non-profit, grass-roots and social action research organization committed to supporting the global Cambodian community post-genocide. ASRIC is dedicated to advancing Cambodian cultural identity and to restoring, distributing, and implementing procedural justice for victims and survivors of the Khmer Rouge. Through ASRIC's Cambodian Diaspora Victims Participation Project, ASRIC assisted the Cambodian genocide survivors in the US to file applications to participate before the ECCC. These cases are now being represented by ASRIC's legal counsel, CJA.

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