



## **K.Rouge court must tackle corruption: US diplomat**

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The US envoy for war crimes issues on Friday praised developments at Cambodia's Khmer Rouge tribunal but said officials must tackle corruption at the UN-backed court.

Clint Williamson, the US ambassador-at-large for war crimes issues, told reporters the court was "making real progress" with its first trial under way, but needed to agree and implement anti-graft mechanisms.

"There's increased awareness on the Cambodian side and the UN side that this (corruption) is an issue that needs to be tackled. There has to be some sort of resolution of this going forward," he said at a US embassy press conference.

The tribunal, which is currently trying former Khmer Rouge prison chief Duch, has faced controversy over allegations of political interference by the government and claims that Cambodian staff were forced to pay kickbacks for their jobs.

The UN has withheld funds to Cambodian operations at the court, and its talks with senior government officials to stop the alleged corruption have ended without agreement.

Williamson said he had met with government, UN and civil society officials during his four-day trip to Cambodia, and was working hard with other donors to make sure the court addresses the graft and management problems.

The long-awaited first trial has heard Duch, whose real name is Kaing Guek Eav, acknowledge responsibility and beg forgiveness for overseeing the torture and execution of more than 15,000 people at the notorious Tuol Sleng prison.

Four other senior officials from the 1975-1979 regime are also in detention, waiting for their trial to start next year. Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot died in 1998.

Up to two million people were executed or died of starvation, disease and overwork as the Khmer Rouge movement emptied cities and enslaved the population on collective farms in its bid to create a communist utopia.