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The Collective for Khmer Rouge Victims Says a Trial Which Would Not Bring Justice to Victims Would Be Worse Than No Trial at All

PARIS — While April 17 commemorates Phnom Penh's takeover by Khmer Rouge forces and the start of the atrocities committed during the period of Democratic Kampuchea, uncertainty is still prevailing as to the effective operation of the Khmer Rouge trials before the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia. The creation of the ECCC raised the hope that victims would finally have a voice. However, this major step in the direction of national reconstruction is now threatened to be reduced to ashes.

The Collective still believes that a sham trial, not consistent with international standards and which would not bring justice to victims, would be worse than no trial at all. This is why the Collective fully supports the position of the ECCC international Judges conditioning the adoption of the Internal Rules to the settlement of the issue relating to the foreign lawyers' registration fees possibly required by the Bar Association of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

It is highly regrettable that this situation is sometimes misinterpreted as the UN "balking" at the fees or as the international Judges delaying the trials on a "down-in-the-weeds monetary issue". The outrageous fees tentatively imposed by the Cambodian Bar Association contravenes the principle of free choice of counsel and would prohibit in practice the participation of pro-bono foreign lawyers on behalf of indigent victims. Such registration fees should only compensate actual expenses related to the administration of new members and should not be used as an "income tax" or a way to make profits on Justice, which would be contrary to the principles governing the United Nations. Therefore the Collective considers this issue as a matter of principle, which should be resolved to allow the trials to proceed.

After 37 years of impunity, this is the last opportunity to bring Truth, Justice and Reconciliation in Cambodia.

The Collective for Khmer Rouge Victims is made of the following organizations: Asie Aide à la Jeunesse, Asie Extrême, CARIÉCJ, Connecté, Les Enfants du Sourire Khmer, Justice pour le Cambodge.

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