

Hun Sen, researcher in row over indictments

Chun Sakada

September 7, 2009

Prime Minister Hun Sen on Monday warned a leading Khmer Rouge researcher not to implicate him as an obstacle to further indictments of former regime leaders at the UN-backed tribunal.

Hun Sen called on Youk Chhang, a prominent researcher and head of the Documentation Center of Cambodia, to send a letter of explanation, following media reports where the researcher called on the tribunal to make a decision counter to Hun Sen's political wishes.

The Pre-Trial Chamber of the tribunal announced last week it would allow investigations of more suspects to continue, ending a nine-month decision-making process that put the international and national prosecutors at odds.

Hun Sen has warned more indictments could plunge the country back into war. Critics say the Cambodian judges at the tribunal have followed this political logic in decision-making outside the purview of the law.

The chamber allowed the possibility of indictments to move forward after it failed to reach a super-majority—a provision under the rules of the court—to disallow the international prosecution's motion. The potential indictments will now be forwarded to the investigating judges.

“We have allowed the court to decide on the additional former Khmer Rouge cadre following the majority,” Hun Sen said Monday.

“If the court wants to charge more former senior Khmer Rouge cadres, the court must show the reasons to Prime Minister Hun Sen,” the premier said referring to himself in the third person. “Hun Sen only protects the peace of the nation. I do not affect to the court issue.”

“Now, if you try the former Khmer Rouge leaders without thinking of peace and national reconciliation, war will happen again, killing 200,000 to 300,000 more, and who will be responsible for this?” he said. “I changed my life for the whole Cambodia. I will not allow anyone to destroy it, and this nation and people also will not allow anyone to bring instability, not only Cambodian, but also foreigner.”

Youk Chhang said in a letter to Hun Sen Monday he had “no intention” of pushing for more charges in statements he made at a seminar. The Documentation Center of Cambodia has spent years collecting evidence of Khmer Rouge atrocities, and is the repository of much of the nation's history during the period.