



PRESS RELEASE

“CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS CALL ON THE CAMBODIAN MEDIA TO INCREASE THEIR COVERAGE OF THE ON-GOING ECCC TRIALS IN CASE 002/2”

Phnom Penh, 29 April, 2015

The Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee (CHRAC), Youth for Peace (YFP), KDEI KARUNA (KdK), Transcultural Psychological Organization (TPO) and Asian International Justice Initiative (AIJI) call on the Cambodian TV and radio stations as well as local newspapers to increase their coverage of the on-going trials and current events at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC).

The ECCC was set up in Phnom Penh with the intention to bring justice and reconciliation to the Cambodian people, especially to the Khmer Rouge victims who are admitted to participate in the trials as civil parties. This objective can only be achieved if the victims and Cambodian society in general are continuously being informed about the trials and the progress of the ECCC. Since the beginning of the trials in the year 2009, CHRAC and its members and partners have been working tirelessly to build a bridge between the judicial proceedings and the affected population through various outreach activities with victims and the general population. The Victims Support Section of the ECCC has travelled the country and conducted civil party forums in the provinces to keep the civil parties informed about the current developments at the ECCC and facilitate meetings between civil parties, their lawyers and other members of the court. Although this concerted outreach effort of NGOs and the Victims Support Section has been a success, it is neither possible for NGOs and the ECCC, nor is it their mandate, to inform the Cambodian society on a daily basis. We believe that the duty of the Cambodian media to keep their audience informed about current events includes a regular coverage of the on-going trials at the ECCC.

In the ECCC’s first case against Kaing Guek Eav alias *Duch*, the media attention to the trials was overwhelming. The *Cambodian Television Network* (CTN) sent a van to the ECCC every day the court was in session for a live transmission of the proceedings. *Aspara TV* and *Television Khmer* (TVK) frequently provided live broadcasts as well. In addition, there was a large number of radio programs on the topic.

Since then, there has been a drastic decline in the media coverage of the ECCC trials. The largest newspapers of the country, *Koh Santepheap*, *Reaksmey Kampuchea*, and *Kampuchea Thmey*, rarely publish news on the ECCC. Only the *Cambodia Daily* and the *Phnom Penh Post* frequently report about the on-going proceedings in Case 002/2 and other important events at the Tribunal. Similarly, the main TV stations seem to have lost interest in the Khmer Rouge trials. There are no more live broadcasts on TV, and the only regular TV program on the ECCC – the weekly show “Facing Justice”¹ on CTN - had to be discontinued in January 2015 for lack of

¹ Produced by the Asian International Justice Initiative and Khmer Mekong Films, funded by USAID.

funding. The number of radio shows on the topic has sharply decreased as well. Currently, only CHRAC² is organizing regular radio shows reporting about the ECCC.

This is a troubling development, as the lack of available information for victims threatens the mandate of the ECCC to bring justice to the victims. A recent survey by the *Open Society Justice Initiative* demonstrated that support for the Tribunal had diminished since similar surveys had been conducted during the first two years of its operations. The main reason for this diminished support was a lack of knowledge about the current status of the trial against the two most senior surviving Khmer Rouge leaders, Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea.³ Laura McGrew, the Justice Initiative consultant who conducted the surveys, noted: “*Only a handful of interviewees had seen any televised segments of the Case 002 trial. In comparison, the Case 001 trial of Kaing Guek Eav, the former head of the Tuol Sleng prison and torture center, was televised and widely viewed in 2009 and 2010.*”

The results of this survey clearly show that the Cambodian media is not adequately fulfilling their public mandate to keep the population informed about the Khmer Rouge trials. Since many Cambodians, especially those living in the provinces do not have access to the internet, they depend on Khmer-language newspapers, radio and television to receive information. The media must make a greater effort to cover the daily proceedings at the ECCC in this important phase of Case 002.

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² CHRAC organizes the monthly call-in radio show “KRT Watch” with the Women’s Media Center (FM 102). For a detailed broadcasting schedule, please visit www.chrac.org

³ For more information, please visit <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/press-releases/khmer-rouge-tribunal-urged-step-outreach>