

## KR victims accuse Verges of "playing games," call on judges to bar him from court

Written by

Saturday, 06 December 2008 05:16

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As anyone who has spent time in Cambodia knows, people in this country generally go to great lengths to avoid overt confrontation. So the verbal sparring that erupted at a post-hearing press conference Thursday revealed the extent to which Khmer Rouge survivors were offended -- and even enraged -- by the antics of Khieu Samphan's defense team.

Center ring was Jacques Verges, Samphan's French co-lawyer. A bombastic character who has

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made a career defending notorious clients like Nazi Klaus Barbie, he returned to the ECCC to once again argue that all the documents in Khieu's case file be translated into French. Because the court has refused to provide adequate translation -- and thus violated Khieu's rights -- the former Khmer Rouge head of state [should be released from provisional detention](#), Verges argued. A decision on the defense's appeal is due at a later date.

True to reputation, Verges' appearance at the hearing had a theatrical flair. (Recently, he has been performing a one-man show, *Serial Plaidieur*, in Paris). Verges accused Co-Prosecutors of "mocking" him and said he felt like he was in "a third world market bargaining to receive translations."

"I am wearing a robe that gives me dignity and I am not wearing the slippers of a servant," Verges told the court. "... I laugh in the face of your threats."

As the hearing adjourned, Verges and his similarly animated Cambodian counterpart, Sa Sovan, were swarmed by media. They continued to lambaste the court at a press conference and challenged the Co-Prosecutors to a debate. But victims in the audience quickly lost patience with the defense lawyers' arguments and demeanor.

"You, co-lawyer, you speak too much," a diminutive woman called out from the audience. "Why not let the victims speak too? We are here but we cannot speak."

The exchange quickly devolved into a shouting match, with Sa Sovan rebuking and pointing accusatorily at the woman, before court staff escorted him and Verges out of the room.

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