

Trial Chamber gears up for Duch proceedings; Court watchers call for more suspects

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A [two-day logistical meeting](#) that will lay the foundation for the court's first trial begins Thursday. Although it will be closed to the public, court officials will announce a general time frame for the trial of "Comrade Duch" after the meeting's conclusion. Duch himself is [planning to appear](#) at the meeting. Co-Prosecutors submitted their [witness list](#) to the court on Monday and, judging from the number of people who will testify against the torture chief, the trial should last three or four months, said Co-Prosecutor Robert Petit.

While the court appears to be making progress in this area, prosecutors [remain at an impasse](#) over whether to pursue additional suspects.

Civil society leaders issued a statement today claiming that failure to pursue additional suspects would "undermine the impact and legacy of the court. Victims of the Khmer Rouge regime have already had to accept the limited mandate of the ECCC due to the realities of transitional justice; they will not however accept a failure of the court to properly exercise its existing powers and responsibilities."

Rebutting claims made by national Co-Prosecutor Chea Leang, the statement argued that investigating additional suspects would not jeopardize the country's stability: "Contrary to previous concerns, the arrest and action against the current 5 suspects has not led to instability and there is simply no credible evidence that the prosecution of a similar number of further suspects would risk Cambodia's stability, or national reconciliation."

The civil society leaders also shot down Leang's claim that, given the court's limited time and budget, it should focus on suspects already in detention.

"The successful and full completion of the court's mandate should take precedence over short term considerations of budget and time," they wrote. "If at the end of the life of the ECCC, and despite the huge expense of establishing and running the court, it has failed to prosecute all surviving senior leaders and those with greatest responsibility then this investment will be seen to have been largely wasted."