

## Initial Hearing scheduled, but when will Duch trial actually start?

Written by

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After a two-day, closed door logistical meeting last week, word came from the court Monday that the Initial Hearing for "Comrade Duch" will be held Feb. 17. This is the first public stage of the trial process.

The [Initial Hearing](#) will "address preliminary objections by the parties, consider lists of witnesses submitted by them and consider new Civil Party applications," according to the court.

After this hearing, court officials say, the substantive portion of Duch's trial should begin in earnest in March. However, issues could be raised at the Initial Hearing that would delay these proceedings further.

As court monitor Michelle Staggs Kelsall told the [Post](#): "as with every initial hearing, there may be judicial challenges by the prosecution or defence that may delay actual testimonies ... in that sense the trial proper may be delayed."

Duch's lawyers have repeatedly said that their client (who has cooperated with the court) wishes to be tried as soon as possible. But an [appeal by Co-Prosecutors](#) this fall already pushed back the trial's anticipated October start date by a number of months. And civil parties may have their own issues to raise at the Initial Hearing.

Furthermore, the [untested nature of the court](#) could lead to delays, as members of the defense and prosecution iron out procedures.

More information about a potential trial schedule should be available later in the week. Whether the ongoing debate over [corruption allegations](#) at the court could affect Duch's trial is unclear. I will try to examine this in the coming weeks.