

Court staffers confirm corruption at tribunal

Written by
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In today's *Post*, Cambodian staffers at the Khmer Rouge Tribunal describe how they are [forced to kick back](#) a portion of their salaries to higher-ups at the UN-backed court. It's a damning article for the ECCC.

"I can tell you until the day you close the door, the corruption will still go on," a staffer told the *Post*.

The article also quotes Andrew Ianuzzi, a legal consultant for Nuon Chea's defense team, saying it appears some UN officials are involved in covering up the court's corrupt practices: "It is very damaging for the credibility of the tribunal. Why are international officers protecting corrupt Cambodian officials?"

After appearing in this morning's paper, the article was a hot topic at today's appeal hearing for Khieu Samphan. Court watchers questioned how the tribunal could maintain credibility if the UN does not address the seemingly widespread culture of corruption at the ECCC.

Certainly, allegations of corruption have been festering for some time.

In a move blasted by court watchdogs and even defense lawyers, the Cambodian Government has [refused to make public](#) the results of a UN corruption probe conducted in the summer.

But revelations in local media during the last couple days have seemingly raised the stakes. On Thursday, the *Cambodia Daily* publicized a report from a German parliamentary delegation that met with the tribunal's deputy director of administration Knut Rosandhaug in October 2008.

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Rosandhaug apparently told the delegation that tribunal staffers could not obtain work without paying kickbacks.

Then today, along with the *Post's* front page story on corrupt practices, the paper published a [letter from tribunal defense lawyers](#)

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Daily

had omitted "perhaps the most striking passage" of the German report.

Not only has the UN investigated tribunal administration head Sean Visoth -- it has "come to the conclusion that he was guilty of corruption," the lawyers wrote of findings in the translated report.

Sean Visoth has been on sick leave since November.

Will these disclosures force the UN's hand? Will the body finally address the corruption issue head-on and in public?

So far, many following court developments feel the UN has tried to gloss over the issue. In a [joint statement](#)

with the Cambodian Government issued Monday, the UN hailed "important progress" in the construction of anti-corruption mechanisms at the tribunal.

But tribunal watchdog the Open Society Justice Initiative immediately [criticized the planned safeguards](#) as

inadequate. They are far less extensive than those the UN originally proposed and essentially create a UN system parallel to the system already in place on the court's Cambodian side.

I am not sure where the UN will go from here. With the court's first trial about to start in earnest and the tribunal's Cambodian side running out of money, the corruption revelations could hardly come at a worse time.

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The UN response will have tremendous ramifications for the tribunal's credibility, both internationally and in Cambodia.

Those involved with the court often highlight how it can set a new judicial and bureaucratic precedent for this struggling country. But what kind of message will the UN send if looks the other way while corruption flourishes?

* *Pictured: Tribunal administration head Sean Visoth, before his extended sick leave.*