

When will court air its "dirty laundry?"

Written by

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As the court's Cambodian side nears bankruptcy -- and funding to pay its staffers' March salaries remains uncertain -- the need to address corruption at the tribunal becomes increasingly urgent. Numerous donors have said they will not pledge money to the court's Cambodian side until this issue is satisfactorily resolved.

The Defense Support Section issued [the following statement](#) about corruption allegations at the court at the close of this month's plenary session:

"The DSS welcomes the statement by the international judges affirming their concern about unresolved allegations of corruption within the ECCC. This reinforces their position at the last Plenary that kick-back allegations must be dealt with 'fully and fairly [...] and in a transparent manner' and will be a comfort to all those who fear that the administration of justice within the ECCC may fall prey to political compromise."

When the tribunal's fifth plenary session opened March 2, [Judge Silvia Cartwright vowed](#) that international judges would not let corruption "interfere with the tribunal's delivery of justice for the people of Cambodia."

In late February, local media publicized a German report in which the tribunal's UN administration chief was quoted saying that [Cambodian staffers were forced to pay kickbacks](#) for their jobs. The revelations in the report sparked additional press coverage and raised ever more daunting questions about the ECCC's legitimacy.

"The latest revelations about alleged misconduct and corruption at the Khmer Rouge tribunal have startled even its most jaded critics," scholar John Hall recently wrote in the [International Herald Tribune](#). "Indeed, the nature of this dirty laundry suggests that the UN-backed tribunal is so deeply flawed that its very existence needs to be reevaluated."

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Hall has previously written that [apparent political interference](#) regarding additional prosecutions at the court could also cripple the tribunal's international reputation.

Interestingly, in a statement this week, Minister of Information Khieu Kanharith told reporters that the court should focus on speeding up trials for the five defendants already in custody [instead of pursuing additional prosecutions](#)

. This appears to mirror the sentiments of Cambodian Co-Prosecutor Chea Leang, whose opposition to additional prosecutions is viewed by many as a politically motivated stand.