

So We Will Never Forget

Human Rights Center -- University of California at Berkeley

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Press Release:

Nearly thirty years after the end of the Khmer Rouge regime many Cambodians vividly recall the killings, torture, and starvation they suffered and witnessed. Ninety-three percent of older Cambodians consider themselves victims of the Khmer Rouge, according to a new national survey conducted by the Human Rights Center, University of California, Berkeley.

Nine out of ten respondents in the survey said that members of the Khmer Rouge should be held

accountable for the crimes they committed. Yet 85 percent of those surveyed had little or no knowledge about the Extraordinary Chambers of the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), a joint Cambodian-international tribunal established in 2006 to try top Khmer Rouge leaders.

These findings are troubling, said Phuong Pham, lead author and Director of Research at the UC Berkeley Human Rights Center. In the eve of the ECCC's first trial, more Cambodians should be aware of the Court's work, especially as there is such a strong desire for justice. The report, *So We Will Never Forget*, reveals Cambodians have mixed expectations and knowledge of the Khmer Rouge tribunal. Respondents who were aware of the Court gave it very

high marks. Two-thirds believed the ECCC judges would be fair and that it would have a positive effect on the victims of the Khmer Rouge and their families. Still, 33 percent felt the court was not neutral and 37 percent did not know exactly what the ECCC would accomplish. Of those survey respondents who had heard about the ECCC the main sources of information were radio (80%) and television (44%). The vast majority of the survey respondents (98%) said

they would watch the trials of the Khmer Rouge leaders if they were broadcasted live on TV.

Local human rights organizations have traveled throughout Cambodia in an effort to inform Cambodians about the workings of the Court, said Patrick Vinck, a co-author of the report. Yet much more needs to be done. These organizations cannot bear this responsibility alone, the ECCC, Cambodian government, and the international community must play a more active role publicizing the Court's activities. ()

This court exists for the Cambodian people, said Mychelle Balthazard, a co-author of the report. It is incumbent on the ECCC and the international community to ensure Cambodians are aware and engaged supporters of these trials and not merely auxiliaries to a process far removed from their daily lives.

Research for *So We Will Never Forget* was conducted in September 2008 among 125 randomly selected communes across the 24 provinces of Cambodia. Sample size was 1,000 adults 18 years of age or older. By the time of the survey, the ECCC had arrested and charged five former leaders of the Khmer Rouge. The first to stand trial will be Kaing Guek Eav (Duch), former head of the notorious Tuol Sleng prison and torture center in the capital of Phnom Penh,

and proceedings are expected to begin in March 2009.

Press Release : <http://hrc.berkeley.edu/pdfs/so-we-will-never-forget-press-release.pdf>

Full Report : <http://hrc.berkeley.edu/pdfs/so-we-will-never-forget.pdf>