



# USIPEACE BRIEFING

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## **Telling the Story:**

*Documentation Lessons for Afghanistan from the  
Cambodian Experience*

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## SYNOPSIS

This *USIPeace Briefing* describes a recent conference in Cambodia to introduce Afghan human rights leaders to best practices in documenting war crimes and mass human rights abuses. The Afghan participants met with experts from post-conflict countries who have undertaken successful documentation projects and also explored the methodology and lessons of Cambodia's extensive documentation work.

## INTRODUCTION

Documentation centers dedicated to researching, recording, archiving and protecting information related to mass crimes and human rights abuse conflict have been organized in countries as diverse as Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guatemala and Iraq. Their work is an integral part of a transition from an authoritarian regime or war to sustainable peace.<sup>1</sup> Victims want to tell what happened to them, be acknowledged, and know how and why atrocities occurred. Moreover, an accurate accounting of past crimes applies pressure to remove perpetrators from power and raises awareness toward preventing future abuse.

Nowhere is documentation more important than Afghanistan, which has suffered from more than 30 years of conflict involving numerous ethnic and political factions and several wars. Yet little has been done by the Afghan government or human rights organizations to systematically document the past. Groups such as Human Rights Watch, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and the Afghan Justice Project have published reports with substantial accounts of human rights abuses in Afghanistan, but the conflict has multiple phases and actors, making it difficult to write a comprehensive story. In Afghanistan there is an untapped wealth of information retained in boxes, photo albums, mementos and other items—in addition to memories—that will crumble, fade, and weaken if

it is not organized and preserved. However, there is no precedent in the country for systematic documentation.

To address this issue, USIP held a conference in Phnom Penh, Cambodia during the week of October 6, 2008 that brought leaders of several leading Afghan non-governmental organizations that work on transitional justice<sup>2</sup> together with experts from around the world to observe Cambodia's extensive past-crimes documentation efforts, build a better understanding of documentation purposes and practices and discuss related models and activities that might be used in Afghanistan. The conference was co-hosted by the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) and the Open Society Institute (OSI), with cooperation from the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ). The Afghan participants discussed documentation techniques with representatives of the Iraq Memory Foundation, the Burma Project of Earth Rights International (a member of the Human Rights Education Institute of Burma), and the Forensic Anthropology Foundation of Guatemala. Together, these groups are members of the Documentation Affinity Group – a consortium of documentation centers founded with a grant from USIP to develop linkages and common practices for documentation of past crimes worldwide. Additional experts joined from Physicians for Human Rights, and Benetech, a technology firm that specializes in human rights documentation databases. Each added their respective experience on forensic investigations and human rights reporting databases.

Over five days, the participants discussed documentation objectives and specific techniques—such as recording oral histories and forensic investigations of mass graves. The group also visited several documentation-related sites in Phnom Penh: the Genocide Museum dedicated to victims of the Khmer Rouge, the Genocide Memorial marking one of the larger mass graves, the DC-Cam headquarters and the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia which is now moving forward with the prosecution of Khmer Rouge leaders. Afghan participants left with more concrete ideas about how to effectively document and disseminate information on past crimes that occurred in their country.

## PAST CRIMES AND DOCUMENTATION IN AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan has suffered for nearly three decades of war and systematic abuses of human rights, including the Communist takeover of the government in May 1978, the Soviet occupation from 1979 to 1989, civil war among Mujahedeen parties in the early 1990s, the Taliban takeover in the late 1990s and today's insurgency. Mass atrocities and human rights abuses took place during each period of conflict. While outside monitors like the U.N., Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have recorded many of these incidents, there has been no comprehensive domestic accounting of violations that occurred during each period of conflict.

The few efforts that have been made by Afghan organizations to document the past—a majority by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC)—have revealed a tremendous appetite among Afghans to tell their stories and uncover the truth. This urge has led to the formation of several victims' support groups, mostly in Kabul, which meet to discuss their experiences and justice mechanisms. Nearly 75 percent of respondents to the AIHRC's 2004 survey said that they wanted to see judicial accountability for perpetrators of past atrocities, for example.

There have been virtually no government efforts, however, to account for the wars' legacy of murder, torture, and forced displacement, which unresolved helps to fuel continuing conflict in Afghanistan. The Karzai government adopted the comprehensive Action Plan on Peace, Justice and Reconciliation in December 2005 that calls for "truth-seeking and documentation," to "evaluate the facts of the conflicts and injustices that happened in the past, establish accountability and put an end to the continued state of impunity through acknowledging the oppression and expressing the belief in justice." This has not been implemented to date and, in fact, President Karzai's recent track record indicates his

prioritization of the security situation over immediate attention to transitional justice.

Perpetrators of crimes in Afghanistan have sought to fill this vacuum by promoting their self-serving visions of the past. Most notably, the Afghan Parliament, which includes several prominent warlords, passed an amnesty resolution in March 2007 that in part justified abuses on the grounds that Mujahedeen soldiers fought a holy war and therefore called on reconciliation without justice as a means for moving on from the past.<sup>3</sup> Others, including some in high-level positions in the Afghan government, deny any responsibility for past war crimes despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.<sup>4</sup> The amnesty bill purports forgiveness will promote “reconciliation and national unity” while ignoring the need for truth telling to facilitate this process. Yet, the demand for the truth by “ordinary Afghans” remains high, if unheard.<sup>5</sup>

The experience from other countries that have endured decades of conflict – like Cambodia—confirms that the demand for information does not fade over time, despite political opposition to forthright examinations of past conflicts. The key, documentation groups have learned, is to organize and preserve information about the past so that it will be available when demands for truth and accountability can be met. DC-Cam, for example, quietly gathered thousands of 1970s-era Khmer Rouge documents in the mid-1990s. They are now the basis for a national genocide museum, serve as a significant source of evidence in the ECCC trials, and underpin the content of a new Khmer language high school textbook that details the history of that conflict for students who were not yet born during the Khmer Rouge regime and might not otherwise believe that it occurred.

Several Afghan NGOs and the AIHRC work to preserve evidence and memory about the conflict in innovative ways. Victims support networks build communities of interest, a traveling theater elicits reflection on the legacy of impunity, and testimonials have been published in some papers and aired on radio programs. But generally speaking, these efforts are uncoordinated and

unheeded by the Afghan government and international donors. The same problems have been encountered by documentation centers in other countries recovering from decades of war. The documentation conference in Cambodia was designed to apply their experiences to the Afghan context and determine how Afghan groups can more effectively preserve information about the past as a basis for future understanding and reconciliation.

## DEFINING DOCUMENTATION

Members of the Documentation Affinity Group agree that the number one objective of documentation projects is "telling the story" of what happened and why. The victims, whose stories and experiences are being told, must be the focus. Group representatives explained that one of the best ways to empower victims is to tell stories—not just those of individual victims—but a comprehensive narrative that examines the various angles of a conflict.

The conference discussion revealed that evidence, context and a specific objective are needed to tell a complete story of the past. Documentation centers employ a variety of techniques to gather and organize each type of information. Evidence can be represented in a variety of media, including paper files and orders, audio and video recordings, live events, interviews with witnesses, and physical evidence such as remains in mass graves. This must be collected in a careful and organized fashion that both catalogues and protects accurate information.

Vijaya Tripathi, Human Rights Program Associate with Benetech—a nonprofit company that specializes in using information technology resources to strengthen justice and reconciliation programs—shared a few guiding principles of information management systems to help the participants contemplate systematizing, organizing and analyzing their data. Many of the problems that result during data analysis relate to collection. Quantitative data may include under-registration, selection bias and overlaps. Under-registration refers to

incomplete recording of events. Selection bias refers to unrepresentative samples by region or time period in which data was collected. Biased data may appear to show more abuses by one group versus another or more victims in one group than another. Overlaps occur when multiple accounts of the same incident have been recorded and should be deconflicted.

By recognizing these problems, documenting organizations can work to improve their collection methodology. Recording facts about the interview--where and when it took place, who conducted the interview, what their relationship is to the interviewer--can also prove valuable once many interviews have been collated. In addition to such methodology, software such as Martus (a free human rights database program, downloadable at [www.martus.com](http://www.martus.com)) filters out these problems to improve data.

Documentation must also be sensitive to context and should seek both broad understanding of events as well as specific evidence of abuses. For example, bones in a mass grave alone do not tell a complete story of how a massacre may have occurred. Forensic data must be merged with information from witnesses about the date or time of year it occurred, the commanders in the area in which it was created and which individuals may be buried inside. Therefore, documentation projects must seek a cross-section of sources and types of information to provide the basis for an accurate accounting of past events.

That said, members of the Documentation Affinity Group cautioned against overreaching by trying to collect all of the information available on a period of conflict, or trying to recount too many stories at once. Doing so will overwhelm what are likely to be limited resources and dilute the work's clarity and impact. For example, Iraq Memory Foundation Director (IMF) Hassan Mneimneh noted that although his organization thought it had found a gold mine when it gathered more than 11 million documents relating to the Saddam Hussein regime's crimes, it later realized that it was too much information to handle coherently.

One way to limit the scope of a documentation project is to focus on a particular objective to meet a limited goal where possible. If the objective is prosecutions, for example, then careful attention must be paid to gathering information that links individual perpetrators to crimes—either through direct witnesses or by establishing command-and-control structures. If the goal is to tell the story about a particular type of crime such as demonstrating that populations were subject to disappearances by the police, then interviewing a broad range of victims and relatives may be more appropriate. By pinpointing the type of story needed to achieve a specific objective, documentation efforts can be more focused and more effective. That said, in some societies emerging from conflict and mass atrocities, a documentation project may simply collect and information in order to preserve it for a later time when societal conditions become ripe for choices about how to use the information. The DC-Cam project, for example, labored for a number of years on documentation of Khmer Rouge crimes before decisions were taken in Cambodia to organize a prosecution effort.

## LESSONS FROM CAMBODIA

Although Afghanistan and Cambodia differ vastly in political, cultural and religious terms, unfortunate parallels bind the two when it comes to conflict and atrocity. The genocide in Cambodia took place from 1975 to 1979, during which time an estimated 1.8 million people died as a result of murder, starvation or forced labor. The Khmer Rouge abolished the monarchy and established a radical agrarian society based on Maoist principles. Money and technology were forbidden as professionals, intellectuals, clergy, and minorities were killed. The grim chapter ended when the Vietnamese army invaded in retaliation for a series of cross-border attacks, but the Khmer Rouge lingered as a rebel force for another 15 years, hampering peace and development.

Only after the Khmer Rouge regime was defeated in 1979 was the massive scale of the destruction known. Initial documentation was carried out by the Vietnamese occupiers, who sought to prove to the world how destructive the

Khmer Rouge were to further justify the invasion. The new government identified mass graves, dug up the bones and counted skulls. A tribunal was established to prosecute the two most senior Khmer Rouge leaders in absentia, but the hastily prepared trials failed to meet basic due process standards. Beyond these relatively superficial gestures, little was done by the Cambodian government to either investigate what happened during the Khmer Rouge regime or to prosecute known perpetrators responsible for the mass atrocities in part because the government continued to battle Khmer Rouge rebels.

In the face of official intransigence on transitional justice, NGOs took the lead in preserving evidence of Khmer Rouge atrocities and “searching for the truth.” The Cambodia Documentation Commission, a network of human rights activists, began documenting abuses and advocating for a war crimes tribunal in the late 1980s. In 1995, Yale University began a documentation project, funded by a Department of State grant, with a field office in Phnom Penh. Subsequently, in 1997, the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) became a fully independent Cambodian NGO, with a mandate to conduct systematic investigations into Khmer Rouge atrocities using rigorous internationally acceptable methodology. To date, they have conducted more than 20,000 interviews and catalogued 155,000 of pages of documents on the Khmer Rouge period, with 400,000 additional preserved pages yet to be catalogued.

DC-Cam has decided to tell the story of the Khmer Rouge in a number of different ways. This includes the organization of “living documents,” a project that brings survivors to the tribunal in order to report back to their villages. They recently completed a mass grave-mapping project that has located and mapped 189 prisons, 19,430 mass graves and 80 memorials and are conducting research to draw conclusions about where bodies from different massacres were buried. DC-Cam also produces a monthly newsletter, *Searching for the Truth*, with testimonials from victims, [and a means to find relatives who disappeared during the Khmer Rouge regime. The organization has also played a significant role in helping the Genocide Museum in Tuol Sleng to tell the story of victims and

survivors through photo essays and lists of victims. A documentary video unit has also produced films that portray Cambodian life under the Khmer Rouge.

Much of this information in the form of non-confidential materials are available at the documentation center's public library of audio, video and written materials, increasing the relevance of DC-Cam's work for Cambodians. Youk Chhang, founder and director, intends to conduct genocide education for undergraduate and graduate students and produce a curriculum for high schools about Cambodian's history. DC-Cam decided to document the period of the genocide but not events during the subsequent 20-year civil war after the Khmer Rouge's fall. Other members of the Documentation Affinity Group have had to make similar decisions to tell a story effectively with the resources and time available. As Youk, a genocide survivor himself, remarked, "I create room for victims to speak in their own voice." He knows better than most that people need to tell their stories.

In addition to DC-Cam's pioneering work, Cambodia has taken important steps to memorialize the atrocities that occurred during the Khmer Rouge regime in a Genocide Museum and a Genocide Memorial. The Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum is a former high school that was converted into a detention center for political prisoners under the Khmer Rouge. Up to 20,000 people were interrogated and tortured there; it is believed that fewer than a dozen survived. (Comrade Duch, the chief of operations at the prison, is one of the five defendants accused of crimes against humanity at the war crimes tribunal underway in Phnom Penh.)

As the Afghan group visited Tuol Sleng, Cambodian high school classes toured the exhibits. One of the more poignant displays is a photo essay composed by DC-Cam researchers that includes pictures of victims from the Khmer Rouge period and today, coupled with an explanation of what they did during the Khmer Rouge regime and how they reflect on that period now. The exhibit includes both

victims who suffered terribly during that time and soldiers who believe that they did their job and have no regrets.

The Chung Ek genocide memorial sits just outside of Phnom Penh on the site of a former “killing field” where many of those who were detained and tortured at Tuol Sleng were eventually killed and buried in mass graves. A tall, narrow pagoda, filled with human skulls, has been built at the site to honor those who died. Smaller memorials were established after 1979 in districts across the country where mass graves were found.

The Afghan participants were visibly moved by the two memorial sites, and many voiced the need to develop similar memorials in Afghanistan. “It is remarkable – the efforts to remember the past. The population started commemorating even before organized efforts took place,” remarked Hayatulah, of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. Haji Malik, representing the Afghanistan Justice Project said, “We should try to do the same thing.” However, a challenge is the complexity of the context in Afghanistan. Various groups were responsible for different massacres, and it is not always clear who is a victim and who is a perpetrator, or both. “In Afghanistan, so many people who are victims of past crimes also have blood on their hands,” says Asif Mohammad of the Foundation for the Open Society Institute in Afghanistan. “But just because a victim of a crime may have also been a perpetrator at one point does not mean we shouldn't try to document their views of what happened in the past. It's important to give people a voice and to document that.”

## DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO DOCUMENTATION

The other documentation experts at the conference emphasized that the particular techniques and objectives of a documentation project must be tailored to fit the unique circumstances and challenges of a given country and past. Yet tools like establishing documentation networks and human rights violation incident databases, conducting interviews and oral histories and performing forensic analysis were common elements of many groups' strategies.

The work of Naing Htoo at Earth Rights International and the Human Rights Education Institute of Burma (HREIB) illustrates the importance of using networks and long-term strategies to gather and preserve information about human rights violations while they are still occurring. Earth Rights examines the narrow issue of human rights abuse through environmental destruction as just one aspect of the Burmese Junta's oppression. Based in Thailand, Earth Rights collects witness testimony to help sue in U.S. courts large corporations that build pipelines or factories and pollute, destroy indigenous livelihoods and used forced labor in Burma. As part of the HREIB network, Earth Rights collaborates with a variety of NGOs investigating and documenting different types of human rights abuse by the Burmese regime--from those that address child soldiers and women's rights to those focused on health and the environment.

For the last four years HREIB has brought these groups together to develop a comprehensive database of human rights abuses. Banding together has advantages both in terms of safety—one group cannot be targeted alone without others protesting—and in improving the information made available. Earth Rights' data may be useful not just for proving environmental crimes, but its investigations also provide evidence about government structures useful for other groups' investigations. Common questionnaires distributed among different groups will be instrumental in collating data into a comprehensive, useable, and effective documentation center in the event of a transition in Burma.

The Forensic Anthropology Foundation of Guatemala (FAFG) scientifically examines mass graves to identify victims and determine how they were killed. FAFG's Claudia Riviera stressed the value of creating a holistic picture by gathering information from diverse sources. Witness interviews, forensic archeology (excavating graves) and forensic anthropology (analyzing remains) combine to paint a picture of what happened at a given site. FAFG focuses on the excavation and forensic analysis, but works with other NGOs to integrate information about the communities where atrocities occurred. Once victims are

identified, survivors must cope with the death of loved ones. Establishing information about them can assist in the healing and reconciliation process, providing details of the cause of death and also allowing for proper burials.

Physicians for Human Rights has carried out training on forensic investigation techniques in Afghanistan since 2004. The organization's Stephan Schmitt echoed Rivera's focus on the need for both sound scientific methodology and gathering enough information to place a mass grave into a social context. The most basic problem in Afghanistan, where there are likely hundreds of mass graves from the different conflicts over the years, is securing the premises to prevent careless excavations that destroy evidence or the deliberate removal of incriminating material.

In Iraq, the IMF is focusing on establishing sites of remembrance that emphasize a common interest in reconciliation. Mneimneh explained that in Iraq, victims of the Saddam Hussein regime tend to identify more with their own ethnic or religious group than with victimization across such group lines. The IMF has established an oral history project that has victims of all backgrounds recount what happened to them or their loved ones under the Saddam regime. The interviews are broadcast on national television as one of Iraq's most popular shows. While the IMF must be careful to build trust with the survivors to make them feel comfortable with broadcasting their story, in the end, victims are empowered by being provided the space to tell their story without censorship or revision. The ultimate goal is to demonstrate that while individual circumstances differ, Iraqis' suffering is shared.

Co-founder of the Afghanistan Justice Project Patricia Gossman emphasized the need for rigor in conducting interviews that are taken for the purpose of compiling information that leads to evidence of past crimes. Interviewers must be careful to establish the basic facts of an incident as clearly and thoroughly as possible to ensure that witnesses will not have to be re-interviewed at a later date. She emphasized the need to protect sensitive information that may reveal the identity

of a source who has given information that would elicit revenge on the part of a suspected perpetrator. Codes to enable separate storage of biographical information and the content of an interview are just one way of assuring that witness statements are properly protected.

## CHALLENGES IN AFGHANISTAN

Afghan human rights organizations face myriad obstacles in establishing a coordinated documentation center to tell the story of what happened during the country's multifaceted conflict. Ethnic identity separates victim groups into mutually suspicious camps. The Karzai government has demonstrated scant political will to implement the Action Plan on Peace, Justice and Reconciliation. Warlords and others who perpetrated atrocities retain considerable power and pose a real threat to investigators, victims and witnesses seeking or providing information on past crimes. There is also a capacity gap that needs to be filled before effective action is taken to implement the Action Plan, as Afghan groups often lack of understanding about, or training on, how to best gather documentation. Atop these difficulties, the overall deterioration of security in much of the country makes it increasingly difficult for Afghan NGOs to gather information in rural areas. In sum, "it's important to be realistic in terms of what we hope to achieve through documentation of past atrocities in Afghanistan. We face many challenges," says Hadi Ogal of UNAMA. "But it's still important that we try to overcome these obstacles, because most Afghans want and deserve to have their stories be told."

Despite the challenges, the Afghan NGOs represented at the conference have undertaken a variety of innovative steps to organize and empower victims while gathering and securing information about the past. Weeda Ahmad of the Social Association of Afghan Justice Seekers highlighted that there is a clear desire on the part of victims to have their stories told. One of the few public protests that has been made in support of transitional justice was by an association of women victims calling for more government action on accountability for human rights

abusers. The few small support groups that offer a forum to discuss what happened to their loved ones and to seek counseling to help them cope with their losses are overwhelmed. Victims have eagerly related their personal stories on radio shows and in newspaper columns. These activities help satisfy a demand for recognition by victims. Moreover, documentation organizations at the conference agreed that these activities can help prevent future abuse. When stories are not told and past abuses are not acknowledged, a permissive environment develops, leading to additional abuses by current leaders.

Another victim-centered project actively discussed, but not actively pursued, in Afghanistan is memorialization. Karzai has expressed the most support for the component of the transitional justice Action Plan addressing memorialization, and has called for a monument to be erected that acknowledges all of Afghanistan's war victims. This plan is mired in political problems, however, because without a comprehensive examination of the causes and consequences of the conflict, various groups contest the symbolism of different memorial plans. If a monument highlights Communist-era atrocities, the Taliban victims may take offense. If it hails the Mujaheddeen, victimized ethnic minorities may protest. One Afghan participant noted that the perception of unfair treatment or disproportionate representation of one group over others in memorialization efforts can be "used as a political tool to be divisive."

Amid this environment, it is not surprising that Afghan organizations working on human rights and justice issues lack coordination. The participants acknowledged this, but at the same time agreed that civil society and NGOs of all affiliations must learn to trust each other and think creatively to overcome the lack of funding, support, and accessible information. In telling their personal stories, it became clear that most have had family members who were detained, questioned or killed. All the Afghan participants feared for their safety or the security of family and friends and some had even experienced detention or torture. Many fled the country and experienced discrimination in exile, lacking opportunities for employment, schooling and in some cases public services.

These experiences motivated the Afghans to help others, and some even pursued higher education to more effectively address broad social and legal issues. As the participants have demonstrated, most Afghans have suffered, and this commonality should help them unite to work for justice and change, for themselves and for the next generation. The reflections of Jalil Abdul, the director of Afghanistan Watch, echo true for many: “I don’t want my three-year old daughter to see what I saw before.”

## CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Despite the significant obstacles Afghan organizations face in their efforts to promote justice for human rights abuse, much documentation can begin now. In the view of participants, Afghan stakeholders should consider the following next steps to facilitate the collection and preservation of information and the evolution of an effective program of transitional justice in the country:

- Establishment by Afghan organizations of a common database to record existing documents and interviews so that information can be easily aggregated, analyzed and shared with official bodies like vetting commissions, courts and future truth commission mechanisms.
- Development by victims’ groups of advocacy strategies that give voice to the existing demand by the “silent majority” for transitional justice in Afghanistan.
- In addition to radio and newspaper profiles, development by NGOs of traveling exhibits that combine photos, written statements and oral testimonials by different parties emphasizing the shared experience of Afghan suffering from abuse.
- Production of documentary videos by Afghan media groups that use archival and news footage to illustrate the depth of the justice problems there.
- Use of cultural and artistic efforts by NGOs, such as a nascent participatory theater project, to explain the goals and mechanisms of

- transitional justice to illiterate and uneducated populations and elicit information from audiences about what happened to them in the past.
- Protection of mass graves by government ministries and NGO experts, preserving evidence contained in them, while local groups gather contextual information to help establish who may be buried at these sites.
  - Development by Afghan communities of their own memorials to victims of the conflict that are appropriate for the local context.

These techniques have all been tried in other countries recovering from conflict, and their lessons are now available to Afghan organizations through the Documentation Affinity Group and international NGOs like USIP, ICTJ, and OSI that support transitional justice efforts in Afghanistan. The overriding message from documentation groups at the conference in Cambodia is that documentation is a slow and steady process that must be done methodically. But it also must not lose sight of the fact that the primary purpose of documentation is to ensure that a complete history of an abusive regime is accurately told.

#### FURTHER USIP RESOURCES

“The Urge to Remember: The Role of Memorials in Social Reconstruction and Transitional Justice.” <http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/srs/srs5.pdf>  
USIP On the Issues: Cambodia:  
[http://www.usip.org/on\\_the\\_issues/cambodia.html](http://www.usip.org/on_the_issues/cambodia.html)



*Afghan participants learn about the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia before the Angkorian symbol of justice on the grounds of the Chambers. Photo by Scott Worden*



*Files in the public information room at the Documentation Center of Cambodia.  
Photo by Rachel Steele*



ឈ្មោះ : ណាម អុង  
 ឈ្មោះ : ណាម អុង (កម្រិត)  
 ក្រណាត់ : ៨ ខែ ១៩៧៦  
 ថ្ងៃ : ០៥  
 ក្រុមគ្រួសារ : ក្រុមគ្រួសារ ៣០០  
 ក្រុមគ្រួសារ

**Name:** Nam Hong, Male  
**Age:** 18 (1976)  
**Joined the [Khmer Rouge] Revolution:**  
 5 May 1972  
**Position:** Combatant  
**Home Village:** Chreng Kriv Sub-district,  
 District 14, Region 31, Kampong  
 Chhnang Province

ឈ្មោះ : ណាម អុង  
 ឈ្មោះ : ណាម អុង (កម្រិត)  
 ក្រណាត់ : ៨ ខែ ១៩៧៦  
 ថ្ងៃ : ០៥  
 ក្រុមគ្រួសារ : ក្រុមគ្រួសារ ៣០០  
 ក្រុមគ្រួសារ

**Name:** Nam Hong, 18 years old (1976)  
 During the Democratic Kampuchea regime, I lived in  
 constant fear of being taken away at any time. Everyone  
 felt the same. Every few days, a truckload of people was  
 taken away without clear reasons. Fear of making  
 mistakes, fear of being arrested, fear of being killed. Once  
 imprisoned, the chance of survival was slim.



*Afghan participants Haji Malik, Zubair Ahmed, and Hayatulah Ahmad (left to right) tour a photo exhibit of the Khmer Rouge atrocities at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum. Photo by Scott Worden*



*Sakhi Ghulan of the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit studies an exhibit at Tuol Sleng before a list of mass graves mapped by DC-Cam*

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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## ABOUT THE RULE OF LAW CENTER OF INNOVATION

USIP's Rule of Law Center of Innovation conducts research, identifies best practices, and develops new tools for policymakers and practitioners working to promote the rule of law. It has played a significant role in shaping the field and in advancing the rule of law in fragile and post-conflict societies. Associate Vice President [Neil Kritz](#) heads the center.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, USIP's "Curve of Conflict" identifying the common phases of the transition from war to peace: [http://www.usip.org/training/online/analysis/2\\_0\\_1.php](http://www.usip.org/training/online/analysis/2_0_1.php)

<sup>2</sup> The Afghan participants represented the following organizations:

Afghan Justice Project; Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC); Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit; Afghanistan Watch; Civil Society and Human Rights Network; International Center for Transitional Justice; Foundation for Open Society Institute - Afghanistan; Social Association of Afghan Justice Seekers; United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan; and the United States Institute of Peace

<sup>3</sup> The preamble to the Amnesty Resolution states of the fighting that led to numerous atrocities: "jihad, resistance and the rightful struggles of our people to defend the religion and country is the splendid achievement in the history of the country and are considered our distinguished national glories." Resolution of National Assembly Regarding Reconciliation and General Amnesty, Hout 1385 (unofficial translation).

<sup>4</sup> "U.S.-based Human Rights Watch says Afghan Vice President Karim Khalili and army Chief of Staff Abdul Rashid Dostum are among those who should face trial before a special court for alleged war crimes. In a report last year, Human Rights Watch also listed Energy Minister Ismail Khan, Karzai's security adviser Mohammad Qasim Fahim, lawmaker Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, and former President Burhanuddin Rabbani as among the "worst perpetrators." Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "Amnesty Law Draws Criticism, Praise", March 16, 2007.

<http://www.rferl.org/content/Article/1347518.html> See also Human Rights Watch, "Blood-Stained Hands," 2005. <<http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2005/07/06/blood-stained-hands>>

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, "A Call For Justice" Survey taken by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission at [http://www.aihrc.org.af/rep\\_Eng\\_29\\_01\\_05.htm](http://www.aihrc.org.af/rep_Eng_29_01_05.htm); and Tom Perriello (recently elected as a member of the U.S. Congress), who observed in 2006 that "In my personal experience working on justice and security issues in a number of post-conflict countries, I have never seen such overwhelming support for war crimes prosecutions and vetting of public officials based on past abuses. Afghans explained that justice is one of the highest values within Afghan

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culture and Islamic tradition." Afghanistan Watch, Feb 2006.  
<<http://www.afghanistanwatch.org/newsletterarchive/listserv2-10-06.htm#1>>