

**CAMBODIA TRIBUNAL MONITOR (CTM)**

**DOOR TO ACCESS INFORMATION ON THE KHMER ROUGE TRIBUNAL**

November 15, 2012

On November 15, 2012 the Cambodia Tribunal Monitor and Trial Observation Teams from the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) hosted a workshop on the CTM website at the InterED Institute. The purpose of the workshop was to disseminate information related to the ongoing development of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, raise awareness of the trials of the Khmer Rouge leaders among students, and to encourage more effective utilization of its Cambodia Tribunal Monitor website ([www.cambodiatribunal.org](http://www.cambodiatribunal.org)) for research purposes.

The workshop was scheduled to begin at 2:00pm. However, a moderate rainfall delayed the arrival of a significant number of students. While awaiting the arrival of additional students, Lao San, an elderly lecturer, welcomed the team and those students who were there, telling them about his



Sorn Samnang welcomed the team

experiences in teaching and about his life during the Khmer Rouge regime. This left everyone looking forward to the arrival of the remaining students and the commencement of the workshop.

At 2:30, the conference room was filled with approximately 70 energetic students including several monk students. They were from various subject areas and levels of study. They all were given several informative and useful documents from the Documentation Center of Cambodia. Among them were a textbook, the *History of the Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)*; Case 002: Genocide Booklet; instructions on how to use the CTM website and its contents; *Searching for the Truth* magazines; and the trial observation bulletins. To keep attention and encourage meaningful participation of all attending, the agenda of the conference moved smoothly from the film screening of the “Tuol Sleng Prison” to the discussion of the film, the history of the Khmer Rouge regime, key tools necessary to

utilize the CTM website for research purposes, and the on-going development of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal.

### **I. Tuol Sleng Prison and the Khmer Rouge History**

The session began with the welcoming speech of Sorn Samnang, former president of Royal Academy of Cambodia, currently advisor to the Cambodian government and board of advisory council of the InterEd Institute. He introduced DC-Cam’s presenters and members of the working group to the students and then gave the floor to Sovanndany Kim who gave a short introduction to the film “Tuol Sleng Prison.” This film was made in 1979 by two Vietnamese journalists

after the fall of the Democratic Kampuchea era. It was later donated to DC-Cam by the Vietnamese government. Some students could not recognize Tuol Sleng prison, known at that time as S-21 in the film.



Students listened to the presentation

They asked each other discretely about name of the place, and its location. Even without knowledge of the place, they watched the ten-minute long film attentively. Some students were shocked to see the dead bodies of prisoners in shackles with their inner organs removed. Some students made notes while watching the film.

Once the film came to an end, Khamboly Dy, author of the textbook “History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)” and DC-Cam’s staff initiated discussion of the film by explaining its origin and how it was made. He further explained that this prison was used to detain citizens who were considered enemies of the regime as well as to detain high ranking officials of the previous regime. Consequently, between 12,000 and 14,000 prisoners were tortured, detained, and killed at Tuol Sleng prison without being tried. Only a few people were known to survive detention at Tuol Sleng.

The topic was later changed to the KR history. “Have you ever heard your parents talk about the KR? And why do we need to study the KR history?” Khamboly Dy asked the students. Virtually all students responded yes to the first question, while the later was answered differently. Responses included such reasons as to avoid the same crime happening

again in the future, to gain knowledge on the KR, and so on. Before allowing answers to the second question, he compared the occurrences of genocide in different countries around the globe. He told the students about the Holocaust created by the Nazis during the World War II, mass killings of about 800,000 people in Rwanda in only 90 days, and the KR who claimed lives of about 2 million innocent Cambodian people from 1975 to 1979. He said that Cambodia has set up the ECCC as a mechanism to educate the citizens about genocide in order to reconcile the country and to help bring justice to the people.

Following that he discussed causes and effects of the KR regime. According to him, the coup d'état by the Lon Nol government which overthrew King Sihanouk was an important force which helped the KR succeed. The millions of bombs dropped by the United States from 1970 through 1973 when Lon Nol was in power angered the people. This coup d'etat, the bombing, and the call of the King for people to join the KR in the forest made the KR stronger, allowing it to gain power in 1975. The KR success was made easier by withdrawal of US support of the Lon Nol government. The result of the KR coming to power was the deaths of millions people and destruction of all infrastructure in the country. He ended his speech by yielding the floor to the next speaker and telling students to ask questions at the end of the sessions.



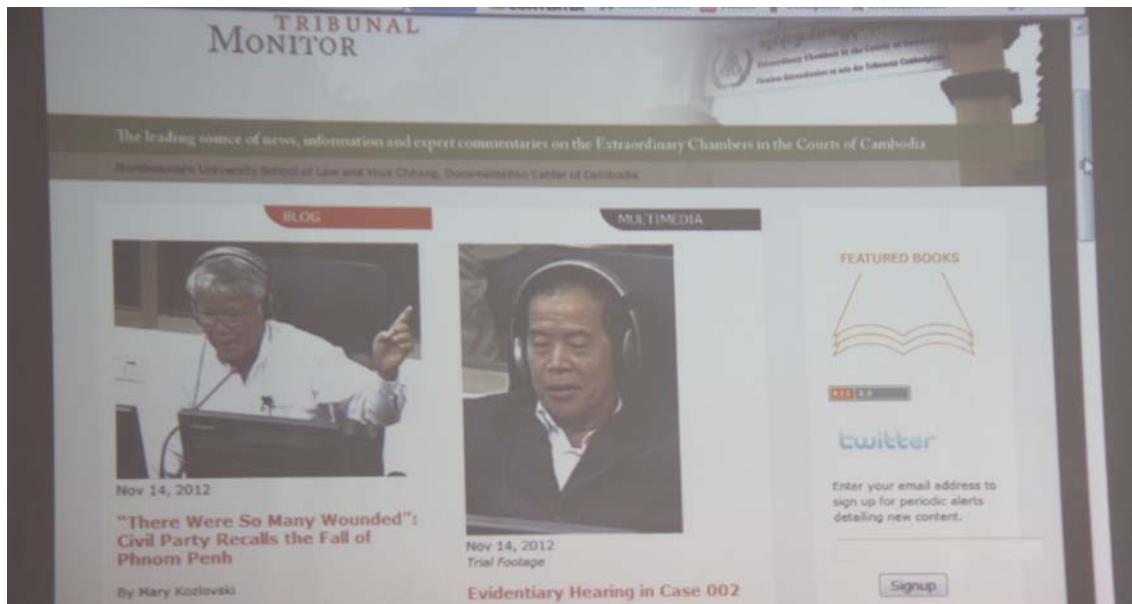
InterEd Institute's staff and students listened to the presentation

## **II. Accessing Information**

Sovanndany Kim started her presentation by asking the students what websites they normally use to find information related to the trial at the ECCC. She then opened the CTM

website and explained and lead the students through each section of the website. The Blog section consisted of the daily report of the hearing at the ECCC. The Multimedia section included trial footage of every hearing and short videos of the reaction of the audiences reflecting their views on the trial of the KR leaders at the ECCC. Other sections contain additional information that should not be missed by the readers. One such section is the Commentary section; it contains articles about the trials written by well-known scholars. She also emphasized the fact that this website is authorized by the ECCC to post the entire trial footage and all information related to the trial. The website has been recognized for its excellence and important contribution by the granting of three awards in 2010 and 2011.

She ended her speech by encouraging students to access information on the website because “it is one of the best resources to find information of the Khmer Rouge trial and Khmer Rouge related history” said Sovannandy Kim.



Cambodia Tribunal Monitor Website

### III. The ECCC and Case 002

The last speaker was Socheata Dy whose presentation focused on current issues related to Case 002 of the trial of the senior KR. To begin she introduced the members of the Trial Observation Team and explained its activities to the students. Next, she addressed development of Case 002 consisting of accusations against Ieng Sary, Ieng Thirith, Khieu Samphan, and Nuon Chea who were the senior leaders during the KR regime. After discussing the procedures and proceedings at the ECCC, she highlighted the case of the

accused Ieng Thirith who was recently released due to having dementia causing her to be deemed unfit to stand trial. During the period of Democratic

Kampuchea, she was Minister of Social Affairs and wife of Ieng Sary who was Minister of Foreign Affairs. Socheata Dy explained the importance of the timeliness of the trials in view of the fact that all of the accused are in their eighties.



Socheata Dy presented to the team

The presentation sparked questions from all students.

Some of the questions were:

- 1) Why did the United Nations fail to take such action as it did in Libya recently?
- 2) Should the court continue prosecution of Case 002 and bring new cases or would such actions bring instability to our country?
- 3) What would happen if the ECCC ran out of funds?
- 4) How do we know that ECCC is fair?
- 5) What caused the KR regime to occur?

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The workshop ended after all questions were addressed. Participants vigorously involved themselves in the workshop and posed insightful questions to the presenters. It is hoped that the DC-Cam team will provide more such workshops in the future.

**Report: Phalla Chea**

**Photo: Thoronkearan NITH**

**Presenters: Khamboly Dy, Sovannpany Kim, and Socheata Dy**

**Trial Observation Team: Cheytoat Lim and Pratna Chan**

Funded by Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center and J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation. Supported by Northwestern University School of Law, Center for International Human Rights and the Office of Global Programs, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), U.S. Department of State with core support from United States Agency for International Development (USAID). (2013-2014).