

## Conference Report

### The First Conference

## **THE FUTURE OF CAMBODIA WITHOUT GENOCIDE: PREVENTION AND RESPONSE THROUGH EDUCATION AND HEALTH CARE**

**Organized by** the Office of the Samdech Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Documentation Center of Cambodia, and Temple University's Beasley School of Law, USA

**Supported by** the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces of the Ministry of National Defense

**Generously sponsored by** the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

20-22 May 2024

**The Yutti Techo Hall**, Army Headquarters of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces  
(Former Courtroom of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia)  
Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia

### Introduction

From 20th to 22nd May 2024, the first conference on **"The Future of Cambodia Without Genocide: Protection and Response through Education and Health Care"** was organized by the Office of the Samdech Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), and Temple University's Beasley School of Law, USA. This conference was generously sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and supported by the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces of the Ministry of National Defense. The conference was attended by 876 participants including survivors of the Khmer Rouge regime from six provinces, young researchers who are members of the CamboCorps of the Documentation Center of Cambodia, history teachers, national and international honorary speakers, program coordinators, diplomats, senior government officials, officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, civil society organizations, members of the Ministry of National Defense, the General Command and the Cambodian Army, staff of the Documentation Center of Cambodia, and conference organizers. The first conference took place in Yutti Techo Hall located in the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces Headquarters, Ministry of National Defense.

The first day of the conference, 20 May 2024, Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei Hun Manet, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, honored participants by giving the keynote address. Afterwards, national and international experts specializing in genocide, genocide prevention, peace, reconciliation, and mental and physical health provided their presentations and discussions related to the topics. On the last day of the conference, 22 May 2024, Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, President of the Senate of the Kingdom of Cambodia, honored attendees by delivering the closing remarks of the first conference.

## Conference Format

- Panel discussion: four panels
- Focus group: four groups
- Film screening: *Don't Think I've Forgotten: Cambodia's Lost Rock and Roll*
- Exhibition: *exhibition panels of Prime Minister Hun Sen's historic journey which led to the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge genocidal regime, June 20-21, 1977, and the ECCC Process*
- Traditional music: Singer Pich Chakriya and her team performed between breaks to highlight the achievement of cultural arts in Cambodia and to provide a calming atmosphere

## Background

Nearly fifty years ago, on April 17, 1975, the Khmer Rouge took power in Cambodia. The regime maintained political control through brutal violence, seeking to destroy ethnic and religious minorities, Buddhist monks, and intellectuals. The impact on Cambodian society was devastating: an estimated one-third of the Cambodian population was murdered by or starved to death under the Khmer Rouge regime. Even after the regime collapsed, internal conflict and international isolation followed, and in their wake came famine, political instability, and overwhelming human suffering for nearly forty years.

An estimated five million Cambodians survived the Khmer Rouge regime. Research on trauma-induced mental health challenges in post-conflict societies, including surveys specific to Cambodia, have found substantially increased levels of mental and physical health conditions resulting from the trauma suffered by survivors. To understand these challenges more fully, the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) has collected information from over 31,000 Khmer Rouge survivors, identifying conditions such as high blood pressure, heart disease, gastrointestinal disorders, and mental illness that have resulted at least in part from the trauma of the Khmer Rouge regime and its aftermath. Strikingly, nearly 90 percent of those surveyed continued to experience upsetting memories of the Khmer Rouge era and a quarter still suffered nightmares from their experiences over four decades ago.

This research points to a finding that is crucial to Cambodia's future: the trauma from the Khmer Rouge era and its health sequelae continue to impact many Cambodians, from those who survived the regime to their children, grandchildren, and broader communities. Untreated trauma from these unspeakable harms can be at the root of harmful behavioral patterns such as substance abuse and even domestic violence. The challenges of processing the trauma and related emotions from the era can impact the nation both individually and through its institutions.

In Cambodia, landmines endure as a physical reminder of its conflict-laden history. Thousands of Cambodians have been killed or injured simply because they stepped in the wrong place while walking through the countryside, unaware of the explosive harms that lay hidden just beneath the surface. While less immediately visible, the mental health consequences of Cambodia's history, if left untreated, risk similar consequences. Cambodia's mental health legacy can negatively impact individual identities, family and community relationships, and

belief systems through harmful behaviors and actions. These harms in turn can impact societal perceptions of government services, norms, and laws. In other words, decisions about whether and how to address the mental and physical health challenges resulting from the Khmer Rouge era will impact the future of Cambodians as individuals and Cambodia as a society.

The conference foregrounded the roles of atrocity crimes education and mental and physical health care in preventing and responding to genocide. Education about the perpetration of atrocity crimes is crucial in ensuring that individuals and societies understand their own past. This knowledge, combined with an understanding of the ongoing impacts of these crimes, is a vital first step in building the thoughtfulness and diligence necessary to dismantle conditions that might catalyze future harm. Successful education around atrocity crimes requires dedicated and substantial commitment from governments and civil society actors.

### **Objectives**

The conference aimed to establish a transnational community of experts in human rights and genocide prevention in post-conflict societies who can share innovative ideas and best practices and work together to build an enduring peace in Cambodia and beyond. This was the first in a series of conferences that will lay the foundations for that network.

In terms of policy goals (prevention and response), this conference sought to develop campaigns to ensure that governments throughout the world integrate atrocity crimes education into mandatory high school curricula at the national level. Participants also discussed collaborative approaches to obtain pledges from military forces around the world, namely that they will include atrocity crimes education as a mandatory component of professional military education of officers and senior leaders. Most importantly, the conference devised strategies to incorporate atrocity crimes education into international development policy by conditioning development aid on the implementation of a credible atrocity crimes education curriculum.

### **The Yutti Techo Hall**

The Yutti Techo Hall is a historical site that represents one of the few courtrooms in the world that has been dedicated to international criminal justice and law. Moreover, it represents one of a handful of courtrooms in the world that has been the site of the successful prosecution of the crime of genocide.

The Yutti Techo Hall was originally built and used as a conference hall for the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces. In 2006, Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen ordered the hall to be loaned to the United Nations (UN) to use as a courtroom, which would be jointly managed by the UN and the Royal Government of Cambodia to prosecute Khmer Rouge senior leaders. The courtroom was officially named the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), though it was also colloquially referred to as the Khmer Rouge Tribunal (KRT).

The ECCC was established to support the prosecution of crimes committed by senior leaders of the Democratic Kampuchea (DK) and those believed to be most responsible for grave violations

of national and international law during the period of Democratic Kampuchea (17 April 1975 - 6 January 1979). The ECCC was the one of the first hybrid tribunals in the world, meaning that it was established under both international and national law. The ECCC represents the Royal Government of Cambodia and international community's dedication to justice for the Cambodian people, including those who were killed by or died during the regime, as well as those who suffered and survived to tell their story. It is estimated that over two million Cambodian people died during the Khmer Rouge regime, though five million people survived to tell their story. The ECCC oversaw the successful prosecution of senior leaders and those individuals believed most responsible, for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the crime of genocide.

The Yutti Techo Hall is an important historical location for memorializing the stories and work of both relevant ECCC cases and the difficult pursuit of justice that continues to this day. In 2022, after over sixteen years at the site, the ECCC completed its historical operations, returning the hall to the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces. After the handover, Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei Hun Manet, former deputy commander-in-chief and the commander of the Royal Cambodian Army, instructed the Army to preserve the hall and treat it as an important historical site for future generations of Cambodians to learn about the history of the prosecution of the Khmer Rouge senior leaders.

Photo: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/Ew2N2HmmlSX3fwji7>

## **Activities**

### **DAY ONE: Monday, 20 May 2024**

Participants along with national and international experts arrived at the conference hall at 7 o'clock in the morning. At 8 o'clock, Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei Hun Manet, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia arrived and visited several panels of the photo exhibition outside the conference room before entering. The conference session began.

#### ***Morning Session:***

##### **Welcome Remarks by Mr. Youk Chhang, Director of Documentation Center of Cambodia**

Executive Director Youk Chhang began by expressing gratitude to the prime minister, the royal family, the military, and USAID for supporting this conference on genocide prevention and response. According to Chhang, Cambodia must strive to face its history and take the lessons from its past to create meaningful strategies for future. These strategies will serve the four pillars outlined in this conference: Genocide, Justice, Youth and Education, and Health. This is to be the first in a series of conferences for transnational groups to share ideas to build enduring peace in Cambodia and other nations. Director Chhang set the conference tone: collaboration through exchange of ideas and viewpoints.

##### **Keynote Speaker and Opening Speech: Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei Hun Manet, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia**

The prime minister, after expressing gratitude to all participants, stated that Cambodia must protect its people and future society so there would be no more genocide. Prime Minister Hun

offered five essential steps for Cambodia to ensure this. First, because time is passing such that eventually there will no longer be living eyewitnesses to the genocide, Cambodia must agree on a unified interpretation of the past and a common understanding of events. Seeking international justice is also essential, as the ECCC “healed the wounds of survivors” and helped to build peace. Third, a society must learn from Cambodia’s past and not allow extremists to take control. An important fourth step is that genocide education is genocide prevention, and that all government institutions should recognize the importance of spreading genocide education throughout a variety of studies including history, art, and animation. DC-Cam was gratefully acknowledged for their teaching initiatives. The final and most important step is that Cambodia must protect peace at all costs. “All countries should work together to maintain the existing peace and seek peaceful dialogue...in order to prevent the loss of civilian lives under any form of genocide,” stated Samdech Prime Minister Hun Manet. The prime minister recognized that facing the past “is a serious emotional burden for Cambodia due to the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge regime;” but that reflection need not focus only on past atrocities. “The Cambodian people must draw hope from the fact that our people and our nation have survived strong. We are a role model for other countries around the world that are experiencing similar problems and destinies.” The work on genocide education in Cambodia can provide a role model to other nations. Please see the Remarks by Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei Dr. Hun Manet, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia at the Opening Ceremony of The First Conference on "The Future of Cambodia Without Genocide" held from 20 to 22 May 2024 at 'The Yutti Techo Hall' of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (H.Q.):

Photo: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/Y4Xx6Zuw1TrED9SE8>

*"All government institutions, both military and civilian, must support the work of genocide education for future generations. We must ensure that history teaching is properly integrated into the public and private school curricula from secondary education to the university level, and all of our teachers can join forces to promote genocide education in schools across the country. Genocide education does not have to be limited to history lessons. We can integrate it into all subjects, from Khmer morality and literature to leadership studies and other soft skills development. We can also develop creative ways to tell these difficult stories to people of different ages and generations through arts, digital content, or multimedia."*

*"We need to emphasize that the obligation to promote genocide education is the responsibility of all, not just the government. Today's conference is a great example of good cooperation and solidarity between the various stakeholders. I would like to thank the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) for assisting the Royal Government in integrating the teaching of the history of genocide into professional and institutional development and in disseminating activities in national and international society, using history to reflect and inspire the future of Cambodia."*

**Keynote Address: Under-Secretary General and Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, Madam Alice Wairimu Nderitu**

Special Advisor Nderitu began her remarks by defining genocide and praising Cambodia for taking important early steps in atrocity prevention and memorialization, including being one

of the first countries to ratify the Genocide Convention. She noted that education is critical in the role of genocide prevention and that her office has welcomed DC-Cam staff to train not only teachers in Cambodia but also in Thailand and Vietnam in genocide prevention and education. Nderitu stressed the importance of preventative measures to stop genocide. She explained how the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention identifies risk factors and raises awareness about the early signs of genocide. Finally, Special Advisor Nderitu acknowledged the importance of enabling survivors to recognize their experiences. She underscored that education and memorialization will ensure the past is not forgotten and that future atrocities can be prevented.

**Her Excellency Dr. Beth Van Schaack, The United States Ambassador-at-large for Global Criminal Justice (Virtual)**

Ambassador Van Schaack began her video presentation by explaining that her office is dedicated to the prevention of and response to atrocity crimes and genocide, and that the promotion of justice and education can enable healing. The Ambassador acknowledged the international community in supporting Cambodia's efforts towards justice and reconciliation through partnerships like the Documentation Center of Cambodia and in initiatives like the ECCC. She specifically mentioned the Guidebook (the DC-Cam textbook of the history of the Khmer Rouge regime provided to high school students) as a tool to accomplish this. The Ambassador noted that the DC-Cam's lessons of trauma-informed interviewing when collecting survivor testimonies have served as a global inspiration. "Transitional justice is crucial to break cycles of violence," stated Ambassador Van Schaack, which is why "this conference and plans for follow-up gatherings...indicate Cambodia is committed to a future without genocide and committed to sharing the lessons from its past for the benefit of its people in the region and the world."

**Speech by H.E. Mr. Keo Remy, Senior Minister in charge of human rights, Chairman of the Cambodia Human Rights Committee, Permanent Vice-chairman of the Royal Government Task Force on the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia**

Keo Remy began by saying this conference demonstrates commitment to prevent genocide, and that Cambodia is a leading country in the efforts to condemn and prevent future genocides. He shared the history of the ECCC. Remy described his visit to Khieu Samphan in prison in December, explaining that he found him to be well cared for. He shared his hope to establish a permanent institute in 2025 with the support of the UN and other embassies to continue to preserve the resources of the ECCC and to use their mobile library to serve outreach education.

**PANEL DISCUSSION 1: GENOCIDE**

**The United Nations Genocide Convention, Atrocity Crimes**

**Moderators:**

- Prof. John Ciorciari, Dean of the Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies, Indiana University

- H.E. Mr. San Dara, Senior Legal Officer of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia
- Ms. So Farina, Principal Deputy Director of the DC-Cam

***H.E. Mr. You Ottara, Deputy Presiding Judge, Supreme Court of Cambodia***

Mr. You Ottara began by sharing the definition of genocide from the Genocide Convention, Articles 1-4, and noted especially the killing of Cham and Vietnamese people as the Civil Party lawyers suggested charging genocide to these crimes. Ottara, who later shared his family's own history as Khmer Rouge genocide survivors, offered four suggestions to prevent genocide and crimes against humanity: strengthen legal frameworks both nationally and internationally, close the social and economic gaps, prioritize genocide prevention education and awareness, and encourage international cooperation and diplomacy. He concluded by stating it is crucial that the not only students but also the military receives genocide prevention education.

***H.E. Lieutenant General Nith Narong, Deputy Chief of Staff and Head of Military History, Military Regional 4, Royal Cambodian Armed Forces***

Narong began by presenting his life background from his childhood and his involvement in the military at the age of 14. According to Narong, all Cambodian citizens, including all Cambodian youth and members of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces, should receive genocide education and education about national and international laws of genocide prevention. He said, *"We must not look at atrocity crimes prevention education as a tool exclusively for youth. I would argue that providing atrocity crimes prevention education for adults and especially members of the armed forces may be of greater immediate importance because the armed forces are on the front lines of defense and response to atrocity crimes."* Narong said that military force is most often the primary and only way to respond and stop genocide. Therefore, the armed forces must be aware of the law, and they should be trained in the history and national and international law regarding the prevention of genocide.

*"Military history is synonymous with atrocity crimes prevention education in Cambodia because you cannot study the former without also learning about the latter and vice versa. As a military historian, I can say that understanding military history is not only important to preventing genocide, it prepares you in many other ways as a soldier. Having a strong understanding of military history will help you in problem-solving skills, decision-making, and ultimately it will make you a better overall leader."*

He continued. *"The role of the Cambodian military and its contribution to society has three primary functions. First, we promote and protect peace. Second, we preserve the military history zone and provide military history education to our young officers and civilian youth in general. We have collaborated with the government and with other organizations, including Documentation Center of Cambodia, to help the country recover from the disastrous legacy of the Khmer Rouge and Pol Pot regime. I take great pride in our ongoing role, including supporting this important conference."*

At the end of his speech, Narong added, “*The Cambodian Nation has tremendous potential to educate the world about its atrocity crimes prevention education program, but we must ensure it is incorporated into professional military education. With this education, the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces can be trainers in other countries—teaching other foreign militaries about atrocity crimes prevention using Cambodia's military history as a reference and lesson and our education program as a model.*”

**Dr. Maung Zarni, Co-Author of “The Slow-Burning Genocide of Myanmar’s Rohingya”**

Through his presentation, Dr. Zarni passionately shared his history in activism. He explained that how the Cambodian genocide had raised “consciousness for all Southeast Asians.” While wearing the Palestinian keffiyeh, he called attention to the parallels among those lost during the Khmer Rouge regime, the Holocaust, and the Srebrenica Massacre. He also stated that the U.N. Security Council is not complying with international law and that “the world is broken.” However, through existing legal frameworks and the work of institutions such as the DC-Cam, according to Zarni there can be a future world without genocide.

**Mr. Michael G. Karnavas, International Criminal Defense Lawyer & International Co-Lawyer for Ieng Sary and Meas Muth (The Netherlands)**

Mr. Karnavas, who spent forty years as a criminal defense lawyer, began with the question whether it is time to rethink the definition of genocide. Genocide, according to Karnavas, is a loaded word and depends on context. Among other points of his presentation, he deeply regretted that international precedent could not be established by the ECCC trial lawyers in the case of the Chams. He encouraged scholars to look at the history and language of the Genocide Convention in order to formulate a new definition so that it cannot never be misinterpreted.

***Afternoon Session:***

**PANEL DISCUSSION 2: JUSTICE**

**Moderators:**

- Dr. Jacqueline R. McAllister, Senior Adviser, Office of Global Criminal Justice, US Department of State
- H.E. Pich Ang, Civil Party Lead Co-Lawyer for Case 002
- Mr. Prum Phalla, D-News Editor-in-Chief

**H.E. Mr. Nil Non, Deputy Presiding Judge, Supreme Court of Cambodia and Trial Chamber Presiding Judge, Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia**

As the former President of the Trial Chamber of the ECCC, Mr. Non first shared that the trials were a complex undertaking involving 4000 pages of documents, witnesses across all zones of the country, and many senior leaders and cadres. He argued that the ECCC was more effective than the courts of Nuremberg and the Hague. Mr. Non explained that the trials’ conclusion was successful in seven cases (with ten accused leading to three life sentences for their crimes). He praised the Kingdom of Cambodia for its dedication to protecting its own people as well as the ECCC for contributing to the improvement of Cambodian judicial system.



**Ms. Mao Vann, Khmer Rouge Survivor, Kampong Cham province.**

Ms. Vann was one of 239 invited survivors from six different provinces to take part in the conference. Including the voices of the survivors is important to both humanize what is being presented but also as a reminder that the stories of Khmer Rouge genocide survivors must be collected as a matter of urgency as the generation is getting older. Ms. Vann shared her family's horrifying experiences as a 17th of April Person. She described their work rice fields with "only liquid porridge," and explained that starvation meant that they did not not enough energy to work. She described how her parents and siblings were executed during that time and their bodies were thrown into a river. After surviving the genocide, Ms. Vann became a teacher and understood the importance of sharing her experiences with others. She has provided her story to the DC-Cam staff and hundreds of high school students, many of whom hug her and try to give her money after hearing about her suffering. She thanked those who rescued her and blessed the DC-Cam staff for their continued work in the efforts of genocide education, collecting survivor testimony, and peace building.

**H.E. Keo Sothie, Expert in Transitional Justice**

Mr. Keo Sothie began his presentation by asking what peace building is and how societies with a history of violence move toward peace. Cambodia, according to Sothie, is "not a failed state but a dynamic, growing country" that is dedicated to the sustainability of peace. He shared the goals put forth by the ECCC, recognizing that Cambodia is building a future toward peace.

**Ms. Jennifer Glaudemans, Senior Advisor, U.S. State Department's Office Global Criminal Justice**

Senior Advisor Glaudemans stated that justice is more than criminal liabilities. Justice may come from criminal tribunals or even simple truth telling, but ultimately it is up to the people of Cambodia to define justice for themselves. Glaudemans described the ECCC as retributive and composed of a hybrid of Cambodian and foreign judges. She said that one of its most enduring legacies was breaking the silence to the world on the crimes during the period of Democratic Kampuchea. She concluded by sharing the ECCC has maintained an extensive archive that should be shared globally.

**Prof. Alexander Hinton, Professor of Anthropology, Rutgers University**

Professor Hinton's purpose in his message was to underscore critical self-reflection (as framed by Adorno's essay) as the core of genocide prevention. He mentioned "uncanny" as a gateway to becoming comfortable with and willing to explore that which is unsettling, such as a history of genocide. He connected this theme with how Cambodia continues to endure the hardships of "working through the past" but must also understand the present and move toward the future. Professor Hinton encouraged Cambodia to show the world its model of critical self-reflection stemming from its dark past: attending to the health needs of survivors, transforming education to include genocide, memorializing history, and recognizing the legacy of justice.

**PANEL DISCUSSION 3: YOUTH AND EDUCATION**

**Moderators:**

- Mr. Christopher Dearing, DC-Cam's M&E Specialist
- Dr. Ly Sok-Kheang, Director, Anlong Veng Peace Center
- Mr. Thuok Theangly, Deputy Director of the Legal Documentation Center relating to the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia

**H.E. Mr. Neth Pheaktra, Minister of Information and Deputy Chair of the Royal Government Task Force on the Implementation of the ECCC Residual Mechanism**

Mr. Pheaktra focused on the resources of the ECCC, explaining that students identified these archives of the tribunal as having great potential in educating them about Cambodia's past. According to Pheaktra, the two million pages from the court are a "national treasure" and need to be a part of an established institution of learning to share with current and future generations. In the future, Mr. Pheaktra hopes to see this permanent institute allow for access to the archives, offer site visits to the former chambers, and to bring a mobile resource center directly to students so they "can engage with the past to change the future."

**Mr. Sam Vichet, Teacher of History, Cambodia**

Mr. Vichet, an invited educator of history, became a teacher because he heard his "parents and grandparents talk about the Khmer Rouge," underscoring the importance of learning about the past to inspire the future. To understand Cambodia's history of genocide, Vichet engaged his students by having survivors speak to them about their experiences, collecting those survivor stories to preserve within their local library, and taking site visits to Tuol Sleng and the ECCC chambers with his students. Mr. Vichet encouraged all students to read about their history, even if it includes a tragic past, and maintained that only through peace studies can there be an end to violence.

**Prof. Hoang Thi Hong Nga, Faculty of History, Vietnam National University**

Since 2019, Professor Nga has presented student workshops on genocide and other atrocities. "Education plays an important role to prevent atrocity crimes and genocide," according to Nga. He also explained that schools in Cambodia that teach about genocide are "learning to reshape the future of Cambodia by building a future without genocide," noting how important genocide education is within the schools. He concluded by acknowledging DC-Cam for their many efforts in preventing genocide through their own educational programs.

**Dr. Chalermchai Panthalert, Director of Social Studies Institute, Thailand**

Dr. Panthalert began with an overview of the Social Studies Institute's program, including what it means to document and teach about the past. He then focused on Citizen Education for all citizens, stating that learning about past histories should be part of a global effort. He cited the Ministry of Education in Thailand's promotion of history, such as how UNESCO of Bangkok conducted a shared history project on the history of the treatment of the Cham people.

**H.E. Ms. Maria Amelita C. Aquino, Former Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines to Cambodia**

Ms. Aquino believes in learning about the past to shape a peaceful future. One personal experience in peacebuilding she had recently was taking the time to visit the Anlong Veng Peace

Center to learn about their programs. “Students should not be shielded from learning about the past,” Aquino shared with the audience of many survivors and student volunteers. She spoke out for more attention and resources to be given for early genocide prevention.

**Ms. Sin Sokly, Student Volunteer/CamboCorps, Battambang province**

Ms. Sokly, a member of the CamboCorps, explained that meeting survivors inspired her to become a volunteer. This experience working among Khmer Rouge regime survivors helped her to “gain a new perspective on life.” She called upon future generations to also learn from the past, telling them that “if you have good knowledge, you can see better” (live a better life). She left the audience with feelings of hope to solve problems in “a peaceful manner” and to “spread forgiveness.”

**DAY TWO: Tuesday, 21 May 2024**

In the morning, all participants including national and international guest speakers arrived the conference room at 7:30 a.m., and the conference session began at 8 a.m. and ended at 15:10 p.m.

***Morning Session:***

***Farina So, Principal Deputy Director of the DC-Cam, Opening Remarks for the second day:***

Ms. So reminded the audience that the prime minister “challenged us to confront history despite it including a painful past.” The next panel included members of the medical field with special interest in the health issues faced by survivors. There were several maps shared of the incredible work addressing those needs. According to DC-Cam's research, there are 2,272 private clinics nationwide. DC-Cam has partnered with 68 clinics. Among these, KV Hospital and Keo Vannak Hospital based in Tbaung Khmum and Kampong Cham provinces are the most active partners. During Covid-19 in twenty-five provinces, over 1,000 volunteers were able to interview those survivors and identified ten common health issues including hypertension, gastrointestinal issues, malaria, heart disease, and arthritis (which is very common because of forced hard labor under the Khmer Rouge). This overview led to the panelists’ presentations.

Ms. Kim Sovannandy, the DC-Cam Project Coordinator, then presented the ten common diseases to the participants.

**PANEL DISCUSSION 4: HEALTH**

**Health, Human Rights, and Genocide Prevention in Post-Conflict Societies**

**Moderators:**

- Dr. Demosthenes Reyes (Demy), MD (Republic of the Philippines)
- Dr. Meas Sarun, MD, Deputy Inspector General, Secretariat of Ministry of Health
- Ms. So Farina and Ms. Kim Sovannandy, DC-Cam Coordinator for the “Advancing the Rights and Improving the Conditions of the Health of Khmer Rouge Survivors Project”
- Mr. Hang Vannak, Chief of Victims Support Section at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia

**Dr. Daryn Reicherter, Stanford University (Virtual)**

Dr. Reicherter, Professor of Psychology at Stanford University focusing on trauma stemming from atrocities, presented virtually during the conference. He worked with Mr. Youk Chhang and the DC-Cam to create a space that uses spiritual guidance from monks along with mental health professionals to create professional community centers. He discussed the publication of *Cambodia's Hidden Scars*, a series of books that discuss trauma psychology and health after the Khmer Rouge regime. Dr. Reicherter also used the ECCC as an example of how international courts trying cases of genocide and other atrocities should think about survivor trauma and how to make reparations for survivors.

**Mr. Ben Zinner, Director, Office of Public Health and Education, USAID**

Mr. Zinner outlined the history of USAID work in Cambodia. USAID has provided \$3 billion in aid to Cambodia since 1992. Those funds have been devoted to a range of projects, including meeting basic needs in public health, supporting educational initiatives, investing in the demining of the country, and establishing the Health Equity Fund for five million Cambodians. USAID became a key partner in reducing HIV by 90%, controlling malaria, and reaching 37,000 survivors of the genocide. They are proud of the partnership with DC-Cam to provide educational and health services throughout the country and their long history with the Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO), which leads the field of mental health care and psychosocial support to all of Cambodia. During the questions segment after the panelists were finished, he shared that multigenerational trauma affects Cambodia. The country has high levels of substance abuse, anxiety, and depression, all of which are signs of residual trauma.

**Dr. Manop Pitukpakorn, Doctor of Medicine and Clinical Molecular Genetics, Siriraj Hospital, Thailand**

Dr. Pitukpakorn shared the incredible work in the Thailand Geonomics Project, the collection of over 50,000 genetic profiles in hope to prevent cancer development. He spearheaded this project, which now allows for anyone in Thailand to receive this genetic testing for free. He encouraged the sharing of genetic information between Thailand and Cambodia and acknowledged the importance of global outreach to improve the healthcare of all citizens.

**Dr. Pich Panha, Clinical Supervisor/Counselor of the Transcultural Psychosocial Organization**

Dr. Panha began by saying the title of the conference was very meaningful: to never see genocide in Cambodia or anywhere in the world ever again. He explained that if you open a mental wound, you must have the skills to open the wound and remove the pain, which is the task of the Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO). The TPO worked with the ECCC to provide supported group and individual treatments to witnesses who testified in court. Within the country of Cambodia, TPO provides assessment and intervention at the individual and family level, sometimes with three-generational dialogues. However, there are challenges to mental health care: not enough financial support, mental health not integrated in public health, rural areas struggling with extreme poverty, and the stigma of needing mental health resources. Dr. Panha called upon the government to pay attention to the importance of mental

health care for all and encouraged survivors in the audience to strengthen not only their mental but also physical health.

### **Dr. Phork Sovann, Head of the Intensive Care Unit, Calmett Hospital**

Dr. Sovann, a survivor of the Khmer Rouge regime who is now the Head of the Intensive Care Unit at Calmett Hospital, focused his presentation on water borne illnesses to link the past to the present. Because during the Khmer Rouge regime citizens were sometimes forced to work in the Mekong River, some were infected with diseases such as dysentery. In modern times citizens are using this same water to swim in, and there remains the same diseases within the water. He urged caution about the contaminated water supply that may result in the need for medication or sometimes surgery.

### **FOCUS GROUP/BREAKOUT SESSION**

The purpose of the session was to give a platform to Khmer Rouge survivors and youth to speak out and connect with experts, which would in turn help to generate questions for field visits. Participants were divided into four groups. The following are impressions from rotating among all four groups.

#### **GROUP 1: Oral History/Memory**

*Group leaders: Mr. Christopher Dearing and Ms. Vong Socheata, Project Management Specialist at USAID)*

Mr. Dearing separated students from the survivors in the audience and first instructed students on proper techniques in interviewing survivors: make introductions, have a purpose, share the interview topic and rights survivors have during the interview (to not answer more sensitive questions for example), and to be an active listener. Students and survivors were then asked to brainstorm five questions to ask (or to be asked) about their past experiences and three ways to prepare for an interview. Participants then shared ideas together before sharing out to the group. Survivors were quite vocal in saying students should feel comfortable asking them anything; they are anxious to share their stories with the next generation. Seeing the health and age of the survivors in the audience, it is clear the collection of these interviews needs to be completed with some expediency so as capture their stories for future preservation.

#### **GROUP 2: Justice**

*Group leaders: Mr. Pich Ang, Legal Aids and Support for Victims and Mr. Sieng Sopheak, Deputy Director at the Legal Documentation Center relating to the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia*

During part of this session, Mr. Ang encouraged survivors to come forth to tell their stories, to not feel inadequate because they may be illiterate. He reassured them that courts are looking for them to simply tell their stories truthfully, not to worry about being “experts,” and that going to court is a way “to put your worries to rest.” When one survivor shared his family’s story and asked why the guilty party had not been tried, Mr. Ang explained that there was simply not enough evidence to get a conviction in each case.

### **GROUP 3: Genocide Education**

*Group leader: Pheng Pong-Rasy, Director of Takeo Documentation Center of the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam)*

To begin, Pheng Pong-Rasy described a genocide education program at the Documentation Center of Cambodia to the group members. Then he raised a question to the participants, asking them how to improve genocide education in Cambodia. After a moment, the group decided to discuss the role of religions (Buddhism and Islamism) in teaching about the genocide in school. Rasy encouraged all participating students and KR survivors to express their opinions about how to teach the genocide effectively in Cambodia, using Buddhism and Islamism religions. Professor Nela Navarro from Rutgers University asked the group members, especially the KR survivors, to answer the question, “Do you think that using Buddhism and Islamism is an effective way to teach genocide?” Two survivors who were Buddhist and Muslim elaborated on the answer to this question. The two survivors demonstrated that relying on both religions is a useful technique to teach students to prevent genocide. Professors Alex Hinton and Peter Maguire, as well as Dr. Muong Zani, also raised several questions related to the teaching of genocide. The KR survivors answered all questions.

### **GROUP 4: Health (mental and physical) as a response**

*Group leaders: Ms. Kim Sovannndany, and Dr. Long Dara, M.D.*

Dr. Dara fielded questions from the audience, which consisted of the largest group of survivors of all the sessions. Dr. Dara suggested taking medicine regularly, going to the hospital when needed, and changing any unhealthy lifestyle choices such as eating too much sugar or not exercising enough. A survivor mentioned that medicine contains chemicals, and discussed the fear of ingesting chemicals. The physician patiently took time reassuring the survivors of the importance of taking proper medication when it is needed.

### **Afternoon Session:**

***A film screening at Yutti Techo Hall presented by Youk Chhang: “Don’t Think I’ve Forgotten: Cambodia’s Lost Rock and Roll.”***

This remarkable documentary follows the rise of Western music, particularly rock and roll, in Cambodia during the 60s and 70s. It follows some of the country’s most popular musicians before, during, and after the Khmer Rouge regime. This film transcends generations, appealing to music lovers of all ages, and underscores the point that genocide education is not limited to history class alone. At the conclusion of the film, a young student stood in the audience in tears and shared that she cries each time she watches the documentary, thinking about what survivors went through. This day she said she shed even more tears watching survivors cry in the audience while reliving their painful pasts. She felt great sympathy toward what they had endured.

### **DAY THREE: Wednesday, 22 May 2024**

The participants sat on the chairs in the conference room respectfully, waiting for the presence of Samdech Akka Moha Senapadei Techo Hun Sen, President of Senate of the Kingdom of

Cambodia, and President of Supreme Privy Council to His Majesty King Norodom Sihamoni. Mr. Chhang Youk welcomed him at the entry to the conference hall and accompanied him to visit some panels of the photo exhibition. At 8:15 a.m., Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Mr. Chhang Youk and high government officials arrived the conference room.

**Remarks by Mr. Youk Chhang, Director of Documentation Center of Cambodia**

Mr. Chhang expressed profound gratitude to all dignitaries, organizations, and other individuals who made the conference possible. He shared that the First Conference is an initial step to envision Cambodia without genocide through intergenerational panels. Please read the full text of Mr. Youk Chhang's Closing remarks:

- *Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, President of Senate of the Kingdom of Cambodia, and President of Supreme Privy Council to His Majesty the King Norodom Sihamoni,*
- *His Excellency and Her Excellency members of the Senate, the National Assembly and Government Officials,*
- *Her Excellency Mrs. Alice Wairimu Nderitu, Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide,*
- *Her Excellency Dr. Beth Van Schaack, the United States Ambassador-at-large for Global Criminal Justice,*
- *His Excellencies, Lok Chumteav, Ladies and Gentlemen,*
- *Oum, Pou Ming, the Survivors of Khmer Rouge Genocide and beloved youths!*

*As we close the "The Future of Cambodia Without Genocide" Conference, I want to extend my deepest gratitude to those who made this conference possible.*

*I want to express my deepest gratitude to His Majesty the King, Her Majesty the Queen Mother, Samdech Mohabovor Thipdei Hun Manet, Samdech Akeak moha sena padei Techo Hun Sen, and the entire Royal Government of Cambodia including military and police. The United States Agency for International Development has provided steadfast support to DC-Cam and the success of this conference is just one illustration of the importance of USAID's commitment to Cambodia. This conference would not have been possible without all of this support.*

*I also want to renew my sincere gratitude to General Mao Sphan, Deputy Commander in-chief of the Cambodian Royal Armed Forces and Commander of the Royal Cambodian Army, for allowing us to use this most prestigious Hall, which has made this conference all the better.*

*This conference is just one step forward in realizing a Future Cambodia Without Genocide. This conference begins the task of establishing a transnational community of experts in human rights and genocide prevention. I look forward to working together to build an enduring peace in Cambodia and beyond through future conferences. Again, I want to thank the Royal Government of Cambodia, USAID, and all of you for taking time to participate in this important event. Thank you for making this conference a success.*

***Concluding Remarks by Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, President of Senate of the Kingdom of Cambodia, and President of Supreme Privy Council to His Majesty King Norodom Sihamoni***

President Hun Sen offered important comments during his address on the final day of the conference. First, Hun Sen highlighted the significant role of the ECCC in seeking justice and underscored the need to protect victims and the challenges of maintaining the court. He stated that the international community should recognize the suffering of the Cambodian people and condemn those who supported the guilty parties. Next, the president stressed the necessity of building peace. He emphasized the importance of dialogue, understanding, and cooperation among different parties to maintain peace in the future. President Hun Sen cited the Win-Win Policy as an example of a cooperative effort to build future peace. Finally, the president shared the importance of education in the establishment of peace. He concluded by underscoring the need for historically accurate documentation and laws to ensure a future generation will understand Cambodia's history and build toward a future without genocide.

**An Exhibition:**

On Trial: 16 Years of the ECCC Process

By John D. Ciorciari

Senior Legal Advisor to the Documentation Center of Cambodia

Dean of the Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies,  
Indiana University (USA)

In the decades after the demise of the Khmer Rouge regime, Cambodia suffered from almost unfettered impunity. The architects of some of history's most notorious mass crimes went free, unchallenged by a credible legal process. Survivors bore their pain with little prospect of justice. Their hopes rose with the 2004 establishment of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), a tribunal organized and staffed by the Cambodian government and United Nations. The ECCC was created to deliver justice for some of the most notorious Khmer Rouge atrocities, including genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. Cambodian survivors overwhelmingly welcomed the tribunal as an opportunity to advance truth, justice, and reconciliation.

The ECCC process unfolded over several years. Cambodian and international prosecutors, investigators, judges, lawyers, and staff devised a complex set of rules and procedures to govern the complex "hybrid" court. Investigators then set out to probe some of the many crimes of the Khmer Rouge regime. Its first case focused on atrocities at the infamous S-21 security center at Tuol Sleng, led by Kaing Guek Eav, better known as Duch. His lengthy trial featured a great deal of documentary and forensic evidence, as well as testimony by expert witnesses and several courageous Cambodian survivors. In 2010, the ECCC convicted Duch for crimes against humanity, murder, and torture—the first credible judgment in more than 30 years for the atrocities of Democratic Kampuchea.

The ECCC's second case focused on an array of crimes orchestrated around the country by senior Khmer Rouge leaders. The first trial in that case was a complex affair, including multiple



charged persons, an expansive investigation, and the involvement of thousands of “civil parties”—survivors represented beside the prosecution as part of the ECCC’s groundbreaking scheme for victim participation. Two of the four charged persons did not face judgment. Former Khmer Rouge Minister of Social Affairs Ieng Thirith was found unfit to stand trial due to dementia, and her husband, former Khmer Rouge Foreign Minister Ieng Sary passed away during the lengthy trial. The two remaining defendants, senior Khmer Rouge figures Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan, were convicted of crimes against humanity in 2014. In a second trial, both men were found guilty of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity by the trial chamber, though only Khieu Samphan survived to see his convictions upheld on appeal.

For survivors, the ECCC proceedings brought mixed reactions. Many appreciated and benefited from the opportunity to join as civil parties and to participate by sharing their stories. Many also witnessed portions of the process directly in the ECCC’s large gallery, and others engaged in the process through regular outreach events organized by the tribunal and its NGO partners. Many welcomed the taste of justice when the court pronounced its verdicts and appreciated the collective and moral reparations it awarded in collaboration with civil society organizations. However, the length, complexity, and limited legal focus of the proceedings also left some survivors disappointed. Many survivors passed away before seeing any senior Khmer Rouge officials brought to justice. Others lamented the small number of persons charged and wished for a process that would focus more on the crimes they experienced and witnessed every day. Some saw the tribunal as a political affair. Even those most supportive of the ECCC process saw it as just one aspect of a broader quest.

This exhibition includes sixteen panels, each representing one year of the ECCC proceedings. The panels highlight key successes and shortcomings of the process. They chronicle the tribunal’s unprecedented judicial investigations into crimes of Democratic Kampuchea, its indictments of senior Khmer Rouge figures, its contentious trials, and its watershed verdicts. The exhibition also shows the ECCC’s limits, such as its narrow jurisdiction and the constraints on its innovative scheme for victim participation. The panels convey the tribunal’s tribulations as well, including legal controversies, administrative challenges, and politicized feuds over further prosecutions. Overall, it shows the ECCC process to be a crucial step in genocide justice for Cambodian survivors but a limited, imperfect one. This chronology of the ECCC’s experience thus points toward the continued need to invest in historical memory and justice in Cambodia.

Curators: Youk Chhang and Seang Chenda

Researchers: Eng Sokmeng and Prum Phalla

Presentation: Documentation Center of Cambodia

Venue: Yutti Techo Hall, Army Headquarters of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces, Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia

**DC-Cam most sincere gratitude for the Khmer Rouge Genocide Survivors and Youths:**

Farina So,

Principal Deputy Director of Documentation Center of Cambodia

May 24, 2024

**Khmer Rouge Survivors:** <https://photos.app.goo.gl/XR9i5hkKBDXQgykk9>

**Youths (CamboCorps):** <https://photos.app.goo.gl/EzAQK3CjcmwzJg2M7>

On behalf of the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), in collaboration with the Office of the Samdech Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia and Temple University's Beasley School of Law (USA), we want to extend our most sincere gratitude for your participation in the Future of Cambodia Without Genocide Conference, which was held May 20-22, 2024.

Your participation in this conference was crucial to its success, and without question, this conference was a resounding success on multiple levels of strategic engagement, planning, and execution in the prevention of atrocity crimes in Cambodia, the Southeast Asian region, and the world. While the organizers of the conference are continuing to work on a final report summarizing key takeaways, policy statements, and strategic next steps, we wanted to highlight certain points that were underscored by Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei Hun Manet, the Prime Minister of Cambodia.

In the Prime Minister's opening remarks, he denoted the critical role survivors have in educating the next generations. The future of Cambodia depends upon the (re)telling of stories about the history of the Khmer Rouge because it is the most effective way of ensuring this history is never forgotten.

In conclusion, we want to thank you for your participation in this conference, which made all the above achievements possible. We are excited about the success of this conference, and we look forward to future opportunities for atrocity crimes prevention education that build off this success. We sincerely wish you and your family good health, blessings, and our deepest regards. Sincerely,

### **Participant's expressions**

**KR survivors from Takeo province:** <https://photos.app.goo.gl/5R2q4pVXrPUPUW9h9>

**KR survivors from Prey Veng province:** <https://photos.app.goo.gl/da1NxAGeg9eCMwZs8>

**KR survivors from Tbong Khmum province:** <https://photos.app.goo.gl/vAsLm3ts6B5v8YxP8>

**KR survivors from Kampong Cham province:** <https://photos.app.goo.gl/SgRV8KuqAY1M6cNJ6>

**KR survivors from Anlong Veng:** <https://photos.app.goo.gl/h6y6fDVSrYze9eAS6>

**KR survivors from Prusac province:** <https://photos.app.goo.gl/ShtZJvg4G9uHWP1U7>

**History teacher:** <https://photos.app.goo.gl/TQehQYTRnTqmZdf16>

### **Sok Sam Ol, a survivor from Takeo province**

*My name is Sok Sam Ol. I am 80 years old, and I am the Chairman of the Construction Committee of Wat Khnol Kor Koh. My purpose in attending the first conference on "The Future of Cambodia Without Genocide" is to listen to the speeches of Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei Hun Manet, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia and Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, President of the Senate of the Kingdom of Cambodia. This conference made me aware of the elimination of genocide and the creation of laws to prevent the genocide from happening again*

*in the future. I also wanted to hear an explanation of the meaning of reconciliation. As for me, I believe that reconciliation is a contribution to the protection and prevention of genocide. No matter how peaceful and prosperous we may be today, we must unite to prevent and prevent the return of the genocidal regime. Attending this conference, I feel that I, as well as the Cambodian people who were victims of the Khmer Rouge regime, are getting back justice and right.*

*The three-day conference is very useful and important for the future, especially to make the United Nations deeply aware of the genocide and the true story of the Cambodian people who went through the Khmer Rouge regime by sharing experiences in this conference. Cambodians suffered persecution from the Khmer Rouge, such as starvation and forced labor. Even though the former Khmer Rouge cadres who killed my parents met me every day, I was not angry because I was a Buddhist. I believe that good construction always brings good results, and those who build bad always get bad results.*

*I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Royal Government today and thank you for the peace. First, I urge the Royal Government to publish a document on Khmer history so that the younger generation can learn and remember the Khmer Rouge regime to prevent the genocide from returning in the future. Second, I urge the people and government officials to help prevent the genocidal regime from recurring.*

*Finally, after I attended this conference, I really want to share the knowledge to the people in the village and the Buddhists at the foot of the pagoda to know about the program in the conference and know the words of His Majesty Hun Manet, Director The Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia and Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, President of the Senate of the Kingdom of Cambodia for the past three days.*

***Mam Sroeun, a KR survivor from Kampong Cham province:***

*My name is Mam Sroeun. I am 78 years old and live in Chamkar Samsoep village, Kokor commune, Kampong Siem district, Kampong Cham province. I attended the first conference on "Cambodia's Future Without Genocide" for full three days. For me, I am very lucky to attend the first conference as I am a KR survivor. I did not expect that I could attend such an important and meaningful conference. I listened directly to the speeches of Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei Hun Manet and Samdech Techo Hun Sen. I do not want war and genocide to happen again because the people are so miserable. I will describe the experiences I had during the war and the Khmer Rouge regime to the younger generation to understand our history. Finally, I would like to thank the Director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia and the team for taking care of me. I would like to wish the director to meet the four blessings of the Buddha: age, class, happiness, and strength.*

***Siv Thuon, History teacher from Phnom Penh***

*I participated in the First conference entitled "The Future of Cambodia Without Genocide" from the 20th to 22nd May 2024 at Yutti Techo Hall. There were many participants including KR survivors from many provinces, well-known national and international speakers, youths, and government officials attended this conference. What is amazing is the presence of the opening and closing ceremonies of the two Samdechs with high honors: Samdech Borvor Thipadei Hun*

*Manet, Prime Minister of Cambodia and Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, President of the Senate of Cambodia. It has been almost fifty years since the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime, but the old wounds still hurt, even though the trial of the Khmer Rouge leaders has just ended.*

*All the grandparents present at this conference are very encouraging. Compiling history books and other educational materials based on the horror stories of the victims to share with their descendants through national and provincial trainers is an important bridge to connect experiences in the Dark Ages. Children must participate in the building of a future of Cambodia free of genocide. Since the 1990s, the Documentation Center of Cambodia has made great efforts to collect and compile documents and disseminate additional knowledge through formal and informal teaching, fact-finding magazines, and articles in national and foreign languages.*

*For me, the highlight of the conference was the second day of a panel discussion on genocide education with the participation of foreign experts, survivors, both Buddhists and non-Buddhists, Islamists, and many young students. The points I learned from the group discussion is that the influence of Buddhism in teaching the Khmer Rouge regime is a good strategy to prevent the genocide in the future.*

*Guests sit and listen to tireless speakers in the spacious air-conditioned hall without noise. There are also lively Q&A interactions. The presence of foreign speakers made the participants aware of their suffering, recognized not only by the region, but by the whole world.*

*Establishing such an international conference would take a long time before it could take shape on May 22. Without USAID assistance and the arrangement of the Documentation Center of Cambodia, this conference would not have taken place. Upon returning home, guests will talk about their fortunes and what happened to them and tell their relatives and community where they live.*

***Seng Ly Rattanak, History teacher from Kampong Chhnang province***

*"3 days at Yutti Techo Hall"*

*Memories and memories!*

*From May 20 to 22, 2024, I attended the first conference at the Yutti Techo Hall of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF), a former Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) or the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. I am very proud to be invited by DC-Cam to attend the first conference on "The Future of Cambodia Without Genocide: Protection and Response through Education and Health Care."*

*It is a great honor for me to be able to participate in the conference, which was presided over by Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei Hun Manet, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, and Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, President of the Senate of the Kingdom of Cambodia, representatives of the United Nations (UN) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), as well as many national and international stakeholders. I*

also observed the presence of many survivors in this conference, which made the whole event run smoothly and meaningfully. As a history teacher, I would like to thank you for organizing this meaningful conference.

Presentations at subsequent conferences made it clear that Cambodia's strong position that Cambodia is the owner of the bitter history that occurred in the 1970s, and that Cambodia has tried its best to cultivate the memory of this history to prevent this bitter history from happening on its territory again and disappearing from the world.

Of course, debate on national history is obligatory. The inter-generational dialogue between the younger generation and those who went through the history of the Khmer Rouge is a great advantage that the next generation must work together to eliminate all forms of violence to maintain peace, unity and national development without being disturbed by future atrocities. However, the legal aspects and participation of all national and international stakeholders also reflect the spirit of respect for human rights, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of each country, which requires the preservation of national security without exception. Interference or oppression by other countries to prevent all forms of violence from occurring, as it can be a source of crimes such as war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

My optimistic spirit! I sincerely hope that genocide will not happen again in Cambodia. We must reunite and inspire the spirit of loving peace, solidarity, respect for human rights and participate in national development with high consciousness and responsibility.

*I wish this collaboration would happen and remain effective forever!*

*I wish all national and international partners involved in this work to maintain good relations forever!*

*I wish Cambodia to remain peace and development forever!*

*I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Documentation Center of Cambodia for always giving me the opportunity to participate in important events from the past and recently. Every time, I have gained new knowledge.*

*I promise that I will be involved in disseminating the key recommendations received from the conference and sharing them with those around me to prevent the recurrence of genocide in Cambodia.*

*I would like to wish the Documentation Center of Cambodia, which is a worthy and indispensable player in compiling and disseminating the national history of Cambodia, to achieve a harmonious and full of progress. Thank you!*

**Sam Vichet, History teacher from Kandal province**

*To Director Youk Chhang*

*I am very pleased to be invited to speak at the first conference on "The Future of Cambodia Without Genocide: Protection and Response through Education and Health Care" from May 20-22, 2024 at Yutti Techo Hall, Phnom Penh. The conference was presided over by Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei Hun Manet, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, and closed by Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, President of Senate of the Kingdom of Cambodia.*

*As a national history teacher, I have had the privilege of being a keynote speaker at the third panel discussion on "Youth and Education." This is the first time in my life that I have participated in such a large program with national and international experts. I shared with participants my personal experiences in teaching the Khmer Rouge history using modern teaching methods. In addition, I also gained a lot of good experience and new knowledge from the most meaningful speeches of Samdech and national and international speakers who shared good leadership experiences to participate in discussions on the five main topics: 1) Genocide and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide. 2) Seeking justice for victims and survivors of the Khmer Rouge regime at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia. 3) Youth and education about Khmer Rouge history. 4) The health of Khmer Rouge survivors; and 5) The role of architecture and construction in the psychological reconciliation of Khmer Rouge survivors. Not only that, but I have also gained the knowledge to organize such large programs like this conference.*

*Finally, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Documentation Center of Cambodia, and especially Director Youk Chhang, who always gives me the opportunity to be involved in the work of teaching genocide education. I hope that we will continue to work together forever to contribute to the work of helping our society, especially to contribute to the future of Cambodia without genocide. Sincerely*

***Sreng Karuna is a young Cambodian volunteer from Borey Ou Svay Sen Chey District, Stung Treng Province.***

*I am very excited to attend the first conference, "The Future of Cambodia without Genocide". I would like to thank the Documentation Center of Cambodia for giving me the opportunity to attend the conference and listen to many national and international speakers and experts. I gained new knowledge and learned many stories of the Cambodian people who survived the Khmer Rouge regime, which was a brutal and painful regime for the people. Finally, I would like to thank Uncle Chhang Youk, Director of Documentation Center of Cambodia, for creating this program. Thank you!*

***Tang Vimom, CamboCorps volunteers from Takeo province***

*I am very pleased and proud to be present at the first conference on "The Future of Cambodia Without Genocide" from 20 to 22 May 2024 at Yutti Techo Hall, former Extraordinary Chamber in the Court of Cambodia (ECCC).*

*As a young generation, I think this first conference is very important for the youth and the people who survived the Khmer Rouge regime. I gained more knowledge from all national and international speakers who were all very experienced in the field of genocide work. Not only that,*

*but this conference was also attended by Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei Hun Manet, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia and Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, President of the Senate of the Kingdom of Cambodia. Both Samdech gave me and all the young generation much knowledge. In addition, I was excited and congratulated to see all the older generation who are survivors of the Khmer Rouge regime, attending this conference. Even though Khmer Rouge leaders have been convicted, those stories remain in the minds of Khmer Rouge survivors as many families have lost loved ones and survivors of the regime. Some of the Khmer Rouge suffered paralysis, injuries, and scars to this day.*

*Finally, I would like to thank the Documentation Center of Cambodia for inviting me to this conference and wish Uncle Chhang Youk good health, longevity and strength to continue to help the survivors of the Khmer Rouge regime and those who lost family members during that regime. I also wish the Documentation Center of Cambodia and all its staff good luck, good health and safe travels. Sincerely yours, Tang Viman.*

### **Conclusion:**

According to Executive Director Youk Chhang, “The principal goal of this conference was to establish a forum for a critical analysis of Cambodia’s success and the sharing of ideas and best practices in pursuit of genocide prevention and response through education, healthcare, and other disciplines relevant to the task. In line with this goal, the conference sought to promote dialogue between disciplines and institutions because it is only through mutual understanding, relationships, and commitment that we can truly realize a future Cambodia, Southeast Asian region, and world without genocide.” In this, the conference was an overwhelming success with panels of leading experts in justice, genocide education, and healthcare as well as breakout sessions that allowed survivors and student volunteers to exchange ideas on the future of a world without genocide. From the performances during the breaks of traditional Khmer music to the showing of the well-received documentary *Don’t Think I’ve Forgotten: Cambodia’s Lost Rock & Roll*, the conference embodied DC-Cam’s vision of the future: to document and raise awareness of the history of the Khmer Rouge genocide regime through educational programs, to protect cultural heritage and support Cambodian arts, and to provide access to health services for Khmer Rouge genocide survivors.

This conference should stand as only the beginning of future programs, beginning with a next-step conference for the critical analysis of the word “genocide” and how to measure, study, and ultimately eliminate it from our global future. Another important goal is to further incorporate atrocity crimes prevention, both in the military development system within Cambodia and educational programs that reach beyond Cambodia into the Southeast and South Asian regions. Finally, there should be a continued effort to protect the mental and physical health of survivors of the Khmer Rouge regime.

Photo: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/hkQ46cCi8yMpjBzm6>

Reported by Pheng Pong-Rasy and Kelly Watson

Edited by Jaya Ramji-Nogales, Associate Dean for Research

Temple University, Beasley School of Law (USA) Dated: June 10, 2024.