

Hun Sen Accused of ‘Crimes Against Humanity’



Hun Sen (L) and his wife Bun Rany (R) greet supporters in Phnom Penh, June 27, 2013.

AFP

A Cambodian overseas opposition group has filed a complaint with the International Criminal Court (ICC) accusing Prime Minister Hun Sen of “crimes against humanity.”

In filing the complaint with the ICC, the Denmark-based Khmer National Liberation Front (KNLF) blamed Hun Sen for wide-ranging “crimes” before and after he came to power in 1985, including the deaths of Cambodians when he was briefly a battalion commander during the notorious Khmer Rouge’s rule in the 1970s.

In a letter to The Hague-based ICC dated June 20, the group also blamed Hun Sen and his ruling Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) for what it called illegal imprisonment and forced evictions of Cambodians during his time in power.

“We are seeking justice for Cambodians,” Sam Serey, the KNLF president, told RFA’s Khmer Service on Tuesday.

Cambodia’s Council of Ministers spokesman Phay Siphon told RFA that the government was not concerned by the KNLF complaint, adding that the request to the ICC was just a stunt “aimed at defaming Hun Sen.”

He said the government will allow the court to proceed with the complaint so that it could “uncover the truth” which would show that there is no evidence linking Hun Sen to any crime.

“[The KNLF] will be ashamed if they can’t find any evidence supporting the alleged crime,” he said.

Khmer National Liberation Front President Sam Serey in a photo taken July 2, 2013.

Photo courtesy of Sam Serey.

Allegations



In its complaint, the KNLF said “severe human rights issues [and] freedom violations” had been committed by Hun Sen and that the group had “gathered a lot of support” in an effort “to resolve human rights violations and crimes against humanity.”

The alleged violations, it said, “put pressure on and against Cambodians by threatening their lives, murdering, imprisoning, and forced evictions and land grabbing,” the complaint said.

“If the international court finds that Hun Sen is guilty, then he must be held responsible,” Sam Serey said.

Hun Sen came to power following the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, which brought about the fall of the notorious Khmer Rouge regime. Opposition parties have regularly accused the long-ruling prime minister of being a puppet installed by the Vietnamese government.

The KNLF also linked Hun Sen to the assassinations of a number of Cambodian activists and journalists, forced evictions, and land grabs over the last 10 years, and the jailing of political opposition leaders.

It said the government had tried to cover up responsibility for a 2010 stampede that killed 400 in Phnom Penh and had smothered investigations into a widespread epidemic of food poisoning last year, as well as the more than 2,000 deaths by traffic accident annually in the country.

“There is much injustice for millions of innocent Cambodian people, who have been persecuted and killed. Justice has not been [sought] for them ... until now and no perpetrators and criminals have been arrested or brought to trial for their crimes so far,” the complaint said.

The court acknowledged receipt of the complaint in a letter dated June 24, saying it would “give consideration to this communication, as appropriate, in accordance with the provisions of the Rome Statute of the ICC”—a statute that Cambodia is bound to abide by.

The court did not provide a date for when it would decide whether to proceed with the case.

Second complaint

The KNLF complaint is the second alleging “crimes against humanity” to be brought against Hun Sen at the ICC since U.S.-based Sourn Sereyratha, who leads the Khmer People Power Movement (KPPM), filed a case against the Cambodian leader in June last year.

That complaint was later dropped after the ICC requested additional evidence from the KPPM to move forward with the case.

The KPPM complaint to the ICC alleged that the Cambodian government has forcibly evicted more than 100,000 people from land the group says they have “legal title” to, and that members of the government are personally profiting from the use and sale of such land.

The U.S.-based group cited “credible reports” of beatings, unjustified imprisonment, and killings of individuals who question or legally resist the forced evictions.

The KPPM’s complaint is believed to have upset Hun Sen’s government.

Cambodian radio station chief Mam Sonando was arrested in July 2012 soon after he returned home from witnessing and reporting on the filing of the complaint at the ICC on June 22. He was released three months ago after a court quashed his conviction for alleged involvement in a secession plot.

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