

## Additional KR Arrests in Cambodia's Hands, Hor Namhong Says

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Foreign Minister Hor Namhong told a visiting French diplomat yesterday that only Cambodia can decide how many additional suspects the Khmer Rouge tribunal will prosecute. The minister's words came just one day after Human Rights Watch blasted the tribunal for being in thrall to the government, and called for the resignation of the court's two investigating judges.

During a meeting with French Ambassador Christian Connan and Charles-Henri Brosseau, the French Foreign Ministry's deputy director for Southeast Asia, Mr Namhong thanked France for its financial support of the tri-

bunal, but emphasized that pursuing additional Khmer Rouge suspects was a decision for Cambodia to make.

Mr Namhong's statement was relayed to reporters by his eldest son, Hor Sothoun, who is a permanent secretary at the Foreign Ministry.

"On the issue of the arrest of more Khmer Rouge leaders, this is a Cambodian issue," said Mr Sothoun, quoting his father. "If we just keep arresting more Khmer Rouge leaders, how can we reconcile Cambodia and develop Cambodia? This issue must be decided by Cambodia. It affects Cambodia's future, and no other countries can tell Cambodia what to do."

Prime Minister Hun Sen and other senior government officials

have long insisted that the court will not be allowed to proceed with two cases in which five mid-level Khmer Rouge suspects are accused of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

France has donated a total of \$6.5 million to the court since its inception. An embassy official said the tribunal was just one of many topics covered at yesterday's meeting.

"[Mr Namhong] reiterated [the] Cambodian government's concerns, notably on stability of the country if investigations on cases 003 and 004 lead to charges," French Embassy First Secretary Laurence Bernardi said.

Human Rights Watch, a New York-based rights group, said on Monday that the judicial investiga-

tions in cases 003 and 004 had been shoddy, and called on the UN to launch its own independent investigation into accusations of political interference at the court.

The office of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon did not respond to questions on whether it planned to launch such an investigation, but said in an e-mail that it believed the work of the judges should be allowed to proceed without "external interference" from the UN or donor states.

"The United Nations will not comment on issues which remain the subject of judicial consideration, nor speculate on actions that should or should not be taken by the judges or prosecutors in any case," Martin Nesirky, Mr Ban's spokesman, said in an e-mail.