

Cambodian premier expects resistance to trial

KOMPONG SPEU, Cambodia (AP) — Pol Pot's former allies may never let him leave Cambodia's jungle alive, fearing what the Khmer Rouge leader may reveal about their roles in his genocidal rule, one of Cambodia's co-premiers said Monday.

Many inside and outside Cambodia fear being implicated if a U.S.-led effort to bring Pol Pot before an international tribunal succeeds, Prince Norodom Ranariddh said.

The prince named no one. However, he clearly was alluding to his co-premier, Hun Sen, a Khmer Rouge cadre until 1977, and to China and Thailand — Pol Pot's allies in a guerrilla war he waged against the Vietnam-installed regime that toppled him in 1979.

"It appears to me that some Cambodians and maybe some countries are not really willing to see Pol Pot alive and brought to justice," the prince told reporters near Kompong Speu, 30 miles south of Phnom Penh.

"Pol Pot will say, 'Those people were involved,' or, 'Those countries were supporting me for years,'" he said.

Pol Pot was in the custody of mutinous guerrillas, according to Gen. Nhek Bunchhay, the government's chief negotiator with the Khmer Rouge.

Nhek Bunchhay has denied rumors Pol Pot is dead, saying he saw the 69-year-old guerrilla leader, weak and ailing, at the Khmer Rouge's northern jungle stronghold in Anlong Veng.

However, it was unclear when — or if — Pol Pot

would be handed over to face trial for the Marxist-inspired policies that led to the deaths of as many as 2 million Cambodians during his 1975-79 rule.

The rival prime ministers in the ruling coalition, Ranariddh and Hun Sen, have petitioned the United Nations to create an international tribunal. But that requires approval from the U.N. Security Council where China, formerly a Khmer Rouge ally, has veto power.

Canada, meanwhile, is considering a U.S. request to take a lead role in bringing Pol Pot to justice. Canadian law allows for prosecution of crimes against humanity that occur outside Canada's borders. However, three similar prosecutions — cases against alleged Nazi war criminals — all failed.

Extradition to Canada also could be a way to get Pol Pot out of Cambodia en route to a U.N. war crimes tribunal. However, Canadian law does not provide for extradition to an international body. So, once in Canada, it could be difficult and time-consuming to find a way to turn him over to U.N. authorities.

"There do seem to be some legal obstacles that would have to be overcome," Jennifer Ledwidge, a spokesperson for the Foreign Affairs Department told the Canadian Press in Ottawa. "We're not certain that Canada can play a major role here."

Ranariddh also called Monday for a royal pardon for

Khieu Samphan, who led about 1,000 guerrillas in a mutiny against Pol Pot after he executed an old comrade, Son Sen.

Khieu Samphan has pledged to back an electoral alliance led by Ranariddh.

“ There do seem to be some legal obstacles that would have to be overcome.”

**Jennifer Ledwidge
Spokesperson for the
Foreign Affairs Department**

The proposal was certain to be opposed by Ranariddh's co-premier, Hun Sen. King Norodom Sihanouk, Ranariddh's father, has said he will not pardon Khmer Rouge leaders unless both premiers agree.

Last year, the king pardoned Ieng Sary, Pol Pot's one-time defense minister and brother-in-law, in exchange for leading the defections of 10,000 guerrillas.

The defections were the beginning of the end for the

Khmer Rouge. Anlong Veng is believed to be their stronghold.

"Ieng Sary was granted an amnesty, so why not Khieu Samphan?" Ranariddh asked Monday. "He caught Pol Pot."

Deciding the future of Khieu Samphan and other Khmer Rouge leaders holding Pol Pot — especially guerrilla commander Ta Mok, known as "The Butcher" for his brutality — are likely to be key in determining when Pol Pot will be turned over.

Hun Sen, a Khmer Rouge cadre until he quit in 1979, has been an object of Khmer Rouge hatred since he helped to lead the regime that Vietnam installed after 1975.


Both Ranariddh and Hun Sen have courted defecting Khmer Rouge guerrillas over the past year. Their military skills and influence over territory under nominal government control could prove decisive in elections next year.

Ranariddh's royalists were part of a resistance coalition dominated by the Khmer Rouge in the 1980s that fought against the Vietnamese military occupation and Hun Sen's government.

Ranariddh and Hun Sen have never overcome the battlefield enmity. They have shared power since a U.N.-supervised election in 1993. The prince's royalists won the most votes but were forced into a coalition with Hun Sen threatened renewed civil war.

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