

Letter to the Phnom Penh Post: Justice requires precision rather than confusion

By Prince Sisowath Thomico
Letter to the Phnom Penh Post
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Dear Editor,

Justice and history both demand precision. Precision regarding the events, the dates and the contexts, as well as precision with respect to the involvement of individuals in those events.

Instead, an article in The Phnom Penh Post on February 16 titled “[Blueprint for forced labour](#)” is nothing but all about confusion.

Consequently, for the sake of justice and history, it is necessary to restore the facts in their historical context.

The article states: “. . . a translated version of the document appeared to implicate now-King Father Norodom Sihanouk in ordering the executions of two prominent Khmer Rouge leaders, Hu Nim and Hou Yuon, in 1977.”

There are two major inaccuracies in that sentence.

After his return to Cambodia on December 31, 1975, then-Prince Sihanouk asked to resign from his position as the formal chief-of-state of Democratic Kampuchea.

On April 1, 1976, his resignation was accepted by Angkar and he was replaced by Khieu Samphan from then on.

It is widely known — and acknowledged — that even during the short time he was chief-of-state of Democratic Kampuchea, Prince Sihanouk held no power.

So, how could he, with no power and while he had been under house arrest in the Royal Palace since 1976, have been implicated in the execution of Hou Youn and Hou Nim in 1977?

Furthermore, official Khmer Rouge documents also established that Hou Youn was killed some time in 1975, after the Khmer Rouge had taken power.

So how could Prince Sihanouk have ordered the execution in 1977 of somebody who had been dead since 1975?

The article also states: “In audio-visual footage presented by civil-party lawyers yesterday, Khieu Samphan also claimed it was he who was instrumental in bringing then-Prince Norodom Sihanouk into

an alliance with the Khmer Rouge.”

Once again, that sentence lacks the essentials: when was Khieu Samphan supposedly instrumental in bringing then-Prince Sihanouk into an alliance with the Khmer Rouge?

On March 23, 1970, five days after he was ousted by a coup, Prince Sihanouk created the United National Front of Kampuchea and made an appeal to the people of Cambodia to join it in order to fight the Lon Nol regime.

During those five days between the putsch and his appeal to the people, Prince Sihanouk had no contact with Khieu Samphan or any other Khmer Rouge leaders.

This means no negotiations ever took place between the Prince and the Khmer Rouge to form a so-called alliance that actually never existed.

The historical, undeniable truth is that it was the Khmer Rouge who joined the United National Front of Kampuchea — without meeting with Prince Sihanouk.

So, making believe that Khieu Samphan brokered an alliance between Prince Sihanouk and the Khmer Rouge can be interpreted as a trick to implicate him, against every piece of evidence, in whatever happened after April, 1975. This is clearly a political stance.

The lack of precision, the untruthful facts or events reported in that article show how much the Khmer Rouge tribunal has become a land of confusion.

Instead of bringing justice, instead of establishing historical truth, which it was supposed to do, the Khmer Rouge tribunal is now blatantly showing what it really is: a political ring.

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