

OPINION

When Taken Personally, Questions About KR Cannot Be Ignored

I share Ros Sokhet's concern over the credibility of the Khmer Rouge tribunal and its standard of justice in his letter "Nation Should Forget Past, Focus on Future" (Sept 16, page 19).

However, I don't think we should forget the Khmer Rouge's crimes and the tremendous pain and suffering inflicted on the Khmer people.

KR Destroyed The Pearl of Southeast Asia

I strongly disagree with Ros Sokhet's letter (Sept 16, Page 19), which suggested that Cambodians should forget the past.

The past is still relevant. More importantly, it has influenced the

lives of Cambodian people and their leaders.

Cambodia has become what it is today because of the Khmer Rouge. The "Pearl of Southeast Asia" has been destroyed as a result of KR. People around the world know Cambodia for the Killing Fields but nothing more because of the KR. So, why should we forget it?

Justice has not come to Cambodians yet, and we as Cambodians must strive for it. I appreciate the work by Documentation Center of Cambodia staff and management. They have been trying very hard to reveal facts so that the tribunal has sufficient evidence to proceed. Because we want to forget, Cambodia inherits its mistakes and continues to make new ones.

If we look at the Japanese, they still remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki, although it was more than half a century ago and although the relationship between Japan and the US has significantly improved.

Cambodian people who went through the KR regime and whose family members were killed or who disappeared during the regime still cry when they recall, so why should the rest of us forget?

leng Auntouch,
Phnom Penh

Suppose it were me, how would I answer the following questions?

Letter to the Editor

• If I were arrested and put in jail without breaking the law, would I want to know why?

• If my throat was sawed with a palm tree branch and I died a slow, painful death, would I deserve justice?

• If my hands and legs were tied and I were hanged upside down and submerged into a jar of feces and urine until I was choked to death, would I still be happy to see the KR criminals walking freely with impunity?

• If I were beaten with electric cords and my head was covered with a plastic bag until I suffocated, would I want to know who the tor-

turers and their masterminds were?

• If my baby was stabbed with a bayonet or smashed against a tree and killed and my wife was raped and killed, while I was also being tortured and killed, how could I forget this KR crime so easily?

Moetin Chhlean Nariddh,
Phnom Penh

Living KR Offenders Are Unchanged, in Denial

I think we should not consider meeting surviving senior Khmer Rouge leaders important. People seem to be excited by meeting them, as if they feel it is a special privilege or honor—or that they are brave to have met such brutal people.

Victims and foreigners wrote about their impressions of meeting KR leaders as though those people

were very special. But if we consider carefully, meeting the KR is not at all significant in terms of learning anything relevant to our situation now.

The KR is still the KR, which committed crimes against countless people 30 years ago. One of the characteristics of the KR is that they consider truth a fault and a truth. People were killed for the most unimaginably trivial reasons, which the

KR thought as critical.

The KR has not changed. Nuon Chea denies that millions people were killed, as well as the existence of S21. Nuon Chea and others give interviews smiling, as if nothing happened. This is a clear example of the irrationality such people still have. As leaders they have no qualities to admire.

They fought among themselves, they lied to the people and their soldiers, and they made sure they lived and disregarded the lives of others. They do not take responsibility for what happened under their leadership.

Indeed they continue hurting the victims with denials and by trying to confuse them, just as they did in the past, using the same old tricks. With their denials, the remaining KR perplex the already uncertain

people about their own history, which they never had a chance to learn fully.

This is the kind of behavior that led to the deaths of countless people. The KR are hopeless, the worst in all of Cambodia and human history.

We should not fear them. We should consider them as not belonging to Cambodia or anywhere and tell them we wish them dead.

Meeting these leaders means absolutely nothing. Meeting a cyclist driver and listening to his story is much more meaningful.

Kok-Thay Eng,
New Jersey, USA

Country Must Cope With KR To Break Free

I believe that the Cambodian people can quickly progress only after they are set free from the Khmer Rouge regime. For some victims of the KR regime, arresting and cutting into two million pieces

the KR senior leaders—Jeng Sary, Nuon Chea, Khieu Samphan,

leng Thearith, Ta Mok and Duch etc.—will not make them happy. But working to ensure that such a terrible crime will never again happen to them—or to their children or grand children—is a great help. Those who intend to forget about the past are condemned to repeat it.

During my field trip for the Documentation Center of Cambodia I talked to approximately 200 villagers. All were willing to share their experiences of the KR regime. All were happy and felt so relieved to talk about the past. After talking, almost every family invited us to a meal. And they all asked us to stop by if we happened to visit their villages again.

This clearly proves that sharing the pain of the past with good listeners is not a waste of time but a healing process.

Meng-Ty Ea,
New Jersey, USA

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