

EWC Promotes Justice and Human Rights Throughout Southeast Asia



Above: The international panel of judges of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), many of whom received pre-trial training through AIJI's programs.

Left: AIJI's trial monitors observed and reported on the first trial of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal at the ECCC.

Photos above and left:
Courtesy of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia



AIJI Director David Cohen (back row, right) and Deputy Director Michelle Staggs Kelsall (left) with the trial monitoring team upon completion of their pre-trial training at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Cambodia.

The East-West Center's Asian International Justice Initiative (AIJI) has been laying the foundation for human rights work at the regional level within ASEAN since 2003.

AIJI is a collaborative project between the East-West Center and the University of California - Berkeley War Crimes Studies Center.

AIJI's project on the Khmer Rouge Tribunal in Cambodia involves a series of monitoring, outreach, and legacy initiatives. The first trial at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), that of Kaing Guek Eav (Duch), officially closed in November 2009. AIJI recruited and trained an international cadre of trial monitors consisting of young lawyers and human rights professionals, who produced weekly summary reports (KRT Trial Monitor) culminating in a final 60-page report detailing the 'lessons learned' from this trial (*available online at: EastWestCenter.org/aiji*).

The 'Duch on Trial' series — a weekly television broadcast produced by AIJI in conjunction with Khmer Mekong Films (KMF), was aired on Cambodian primetime TV, generating a weekly audience of between 800,000 and 3 million viewers (20% of the country's population). *Time* Magazine described the series as a "sleeper hit" and noted that this show became the main way many young Cambodians, who were not taught about the Khmer Rouge in school, "heard about this dark chapter of their country's history for the first time."

In the years leading up to this landmark trial, AIJI conducted trainings for the defense counsel, co-prosecutors, and judges, and worked directly with grassroots NGOs in Phnom Penh to develop outreach programs designed to increase the dissemination of locally-produced information and analysis about the tribunal process.

"The basis for healing is an awareness of the past," stated AIJI Director David Cohen. "AIJI's outreach programs helped people understand the human dimension of what really happened in Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge period." AIJI is set to continue with a combination of training, monitoring, and outreach for the duration of the ECCC's next trial of four senior Khmer Rouge leaders slated to begin in early-mid 2011.

AIJI's 2009 Summer Institute on International Humanitarian Law, held in Bali, attracted lawyers, government officials, journalists, and NGO workers from 15 countries. AIJI's Director David Cohen and Deputy Director Michelle Staggs Kelsall (both in front row, center) coordinated the program.



AIJI has also undertaken justice and capacity-building initiatives in other parts of Southeast Asia. Working in cooperation with the Supreme Court of Indonesia, AIJI has established an on-going judicial and legal training project for judges, prosecutors, and investigators of the National Human Rights Commission, and non-governmental organizations involved in human rights cases.

In 2009, a new partnership between AIJI, the Attorney General's office of Indonesia, and the U.S. Department of Justice, resulted in a customized human rights training program for prosecutors. AIJI also partnered with Indonesia's newly created National Commission on Witness and Victim Protection to provide vital training and support as Indonesia begins to offer these protection services for the first time. AIJI's initial training, held in November, helped prepare the commissioners and a broad representation of the judicial system staff, ranging from police to judges, prosecutors, and other staff.

Building on AIJI's past work in Timor-Leste, having produced reports on the Special Panel for Serious Crimes in Dili, AIJI is currently developing a training program, at the request of the government, for Timorese police investigators and an archival preservation project related to the 1999 violence.

All of AIJI's initiatives over the years have helped build greater capacity at the national level in several Southeast Asian countries, which strengthened the foundation for the establishment of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Human Rights Commission (AICHR) in 2009. To support the work of the commission, AIJI has been actively involved with the creation of The Human Rights Resource Center for ASEAN hosted by the University of Indonesia, which will undertake independent research, networking, and capacity-building initiatives.

"The resource center serves as a unique platform to use models based on AIJI's Indonesia and Cambodia training programs," noted Cohen. "As a result, AIJI's impact continues to expand in Southeast Asia as we adapt these vital national programs for implementation at the regional level." ♦

