



SOCIETY

# One Year After Building Collapse, Verdict Delayed for Reinvestigation

2 min read

Dit Sokthy | Wed Jan 13, 2021 5:36 pm



Rescuers search for survivors of a building collapse in Kep province on January 4, 2020. (VOD)

[responsivevoice\_button voice="US English Female"]

KAMPOT CITY — The Kampot Provincial Court on Wednesday morning ordered a reinvestigation into a building collapse case more than a year after the incident killed 36 people, including six children, and injured 23 others, mostly construction workers.

The decision was announced by Presiding Judge Men Vannak in front of five survivors present at the scheduled verdict hearing against two building owners charged with manslaughter last year. The defendants, Ek Sarun and his wife Chhiv Sothy, **who were released on bail**, were not present.

Ae Kosal, 33, said after the hearing that fewer and fewer survivors like him were attending the court sessions as time went on. The uncertainty of the court process caused families to worry, he said.

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worry, he said.

“I thought it would be finished this time, but it still isn’t,” Kosal said.

He still felt pain when doing heavy work or riding a motorbike, including to the court, he added.

Another survivor, Sam Kim Eang, 56, said he still needed treatment for injuries suffered in the collapse, including to the head.

“The investigation has already gone on for more than one year, and the victims are still waiting — we don’t know what month or year [it will end],” Kim Eang said.

He wanted to see the court speed up the process in order to provide justice for him and other victims, he said.

Court spokesperson Mann Boret said he did not have the judge’s written decision about the reinvestigation in hand and could not be reached later on Wednesday.

Am Sam Ath, monitoring manager for rights group Licadho, called on the courts to bring the case to its conclusion in a timely manner, saying it would help victims’ families with healing. Prolonging the process would make it harder for them to receive justice, he said.

“Everyone is waiting for justice and compensation for them, and a further delay will make them hopeless,” Sam Ath told VOD.

Last week, a survivor spoke of marking the one-year anniversary since the death of her relatives in the collapse, and of returning to work at construction sites.

The seven-story, under-construction building in Kep city collapsed in January last year, with officials telling VOD that the construction was started without a license and was only permitted to build up to six stories.

In the wake of the incident, authorities called for inspections of construction sites across the country and an end to the practice of workers living on building sites.

In June 2019, 28 people were also killed and 26 others injured when an under-construction building in Sihanoukville collapsed on top of them. The Preah Sihanouk provincial governor resigned, but was reassigned to another government role a few days later.

*(Translated and edited from the original article on VOD Khmer)*



📍 BUILDING COLLAPSE, COURTS, KAMPOT, KEP

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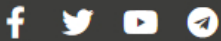
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**CONTACT US**

- ✓ [english@vodhotnews.com](mailto:english@vodhotnews.com)
- ✓ 023 726 845 - **Hotline:** 092 92 19 02 / 060 50 50 50
- ✓ House #14A, Street 392, Sangkat Boeung Keng  
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