

Forum: SASMUN VIII

Committee: United Nations Human Rights Council (Historical)

Topic: The 1991 Paris Peace Agreements

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Introduction

As of October 23rd, 1991, delegates from 19 nations across the world gathered in France to debate the 1991 Paris Peace Agreements, to finally decide how to address the decades of war, violence, and genocide transpiring in Cambodia. This summit will be the culmination of roughly 2 years of negotiations between foreign and local powers within Southeast Asia, marking the conclusion of more than 13 years of conflict, which has devastated the Cambodian population (CIC).

The delegates will have to take into consideration the years of widespread refugee displacement, genocide, and failed negotiation attempts that have occurred, to allow them to reach an effective solution that fully addresses all facets of the human rights violations that have happened (CGG). To do so, the delegates could focus on proposing some solutions, including: creating a ceasefire between all conflicting parties to prevent further bloodshed, establishing an overseeing UN body in Cambodia to help the country transition into peace, facilitating the repatriations for immigrants and refugees, etc.

If successful, this resolution could be the defining factor that sets the precedent for how the UN addresses international conflicts, especially when global powerhouses like the USA, the Soviet Union, and China are involved in the conflict. By cooperating to create a resolution that addresses the conflict within Cambodia, the delegates will be setting the tone for international peace negotiations for decades to come.

For clarification, the start date of this debate is on the morning of October 23rd, 1991, so the real Paris agreement has not officially been signed or created yet. Any reference or mention to

the real 1991 Paris Peace Agreements will be ignored by the chairs, as within this context, it has not been written yet.

Additionally, this committee will focus purely on the 1991 Paris Peace Agreements, meaning that the trial and prosecutions of the Khmer Rouge officials will not be debated, as the real Khmer Rouge Tribunals happened much farther in the future.

Definition of Key Terms

Paris Peace Agreements (PPA)

A series of treaties and conventions that were created and officially signed on the 23rd of October 1991 to address the violence and instability present within Cambodia.

Ceasefire

An agreement made between all military and political parties to temporarily suspend all fighting, violence, and military campaigns, to hopefully reach a more permanent solution through negotiations in the future.

The Khmer Rouge

The Cambodian Communist movement, which controlled Cambodia from 1975 to 1979, and was responsible for orchestrating mass killings, forced labour, and famine that led to the death of approximately 2 million people.

Democratic Kampuchea

The name of the Cambodian state under the Khmer Rouge, internationally recognised by the UN until the 1980s, despite its involvement in the genocide.

ASEAN

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, with member states including Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK)

The pro-Vietnamese government present in Cambodia after the Vietnamese invasion and intervention in 1979.

Cambodian Civil War

The prolonged internal conflict involving the PRK, the Khmer Rouge and Resistance groups within Cambodia.

Genocide

The systematic extermination of ethnic, national or religious groups.

Killing fields

Refers to the numerous sites across Cambodia where the Khmer Rouge systematically executed and buried over a million people.

Toul Sleng prison

Also known as security prison 21 (S-21), the Toul Sleng prison was the most notorious prison and torture centres operated by the Khmer Rouge in Phnom Penh.

Background Information

Prehistoric Times

Going back to the first centuries CE, Cambodia was mainly composed of several kingdoms, with a diverse cultural makeup, including Chinese, Indian, and Vietnamese influences. From there, we saw the birth of the Khmer state (Angkor), as well as the emerging influence of Buddhism, Hinduism, and other minor religions.

The Introduction of Foreign Powers

In the 1590s, the Tai (now known as the Thai) invaded the capital city of Lovek, ushering in a period of Cambodian weakness that has remained to the present day. The meddling of both the Tai and Vietnamese also lead to a loss of Cambodian territory and sovereignty. After the major foreign powers settled, Cambodia became a Siamese (Thai) protectorate, in which all Vietnamese troops

agreed to leave the country. This period was marked by several rebellions and general state instability under the rule of King Duong.

In 1863, Cambodia's new King Norodom signed a treaty granting France control over Cambodia's foreign affairs, weakening Siamese influence. This sparked a rebellion from 1884 to 1886, and though the uprising was suppressed, the French slowly stripped the Cambodian monarchy of all its power, reducing King Norodom to a figurehead by 1897. The French protectorate continued until the 1930s, when the emergence of media within the state brought back mild nationalism. Throughout the entirety of the French protectorate, there was limited innovation and development within infrastructure, healthcare, and other public services, as the government instead put most of its focus on preserving its political control.

During WWII, the Japanese forces occupied Cambodia, but at first, primarily left administrative control to the French. However, the administration was overthrown by the Japanese in March 1945, near the end of the war, which provided Cambodians with greater autonomy. The autonomy didn't last very long, seeing as the French then returned to Indochina in October 1945, arrested the appointed leader, and reestablished control. That didn't last very long either, as a series of political debates led to Cambodia officially declaring independence in 1953, where Norodom Sihanouk became the appointed leader of the state.

An Independent State

Sihanouk's government was recognised at the Geneva Conference in 1954, which prevented other parties from gaining any regional power. He formed the Sangkum Reastr Niyum political party, which became dominant in Cambodia until the late 1960s. Throughout this period, Cambodia remained in a prosperous economic state, with the cosmopolitan Phnom Penh at the head of ushering in a period of growth in business and education. Despite this, Sihanouk faced increasing opposition over the years, largely due to his authoritarian measures and manipulation of 'democratic' elections.

In 1963, Saloth Sar, later known as the dictator Pol Pot, fled Phnom Penh to take refuge near the Vietnamese border, where he started building the organization later known as the Khmer Rouge. Meanwhile, Sihanouk declared neutrality in the Vietnam War in the 1960s, cutting off ties with the USA, and instead secretly favouring the Vietnamese, whilst colluding with China. By 1969, due to

oppressive governance and authoritarian rule, Sihanouk's power over the people had diminished, and conflict between parties had increased throughout the nation. The fights between Sihanouk's army, the communist guerrillas, and the anticommunists eventually led to a civil war.

The Civil War

Sihanouk was removed from office by the National Assembly as head of state in March 1970, and Lon Nol, who had previously been working under Sihanouk, then took control of the government. Sihanouk then allied with the Chinese and Cambodian Communist forces to retake power. During this time, Lon Nol's new government tried to rid Cambodia of all Vietnamese communist troops, which tragically resulted in being fully dragged into the Vietnam conflict, causing major casualties and death. Due to a miscommunication, the USA also heavily bombed areas of Cambodia in the name of clearing out the communist Vietnamese troops, despite accidentally killing thousands of innocent civilians instead. In 1975, the Lon Nol government collapsed. Subsequently, communist forces immediately entered Phnom Penh and forced its inhabitants to abandon the city and start an agrarian lifestyle in the rural areas. Thousands died of starvation and disease in these forced marches.

Democratic Kampuchea

Over the next six months, Cambodia underwent drastic changes, such as but not limited to the abolishment of money, markets, property, schools, hospitals, offices, monasteries, etc. In April 1976, Sihanouk resigned as head of state, and Pol Pot (formerly known as Saloth Sar) became prime minister. In the following years, following the ideals of Maoist China, the government of Cambodia made its population into an unpaid labour force, seeking to significantly increase agricultural yields. The change was drastic for many Cambodians, forcing them to transition from a prosperous urban life to a fully rural agrarian life.

The Cambodian Genocide

Experts estimate that anywhere between 1.5-3 million people were killed from 1975 to 1979 under the rule of the Khmer Rouge. With all the history of foreign occupation, the Khmer Rouge began a campaign of cleansing Vietnamese and Chinese nationals, Muslims, and Buddhist monks by targeting refugee camps and religious sites. Pol Pot and his subordinates also targeted everyone who seemed educated, which included killing lawyers, doctors, and professors, up to the point where

everyone who wore glasses automatically became a target. Around 9/10 of these individuals were killed during the period of the Khmer Rouge rule.

All these people, along with people deemed 'traitors', were brought to extermination camps, like Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek, to be tortured and killed. Each of these camps was run by individuals like Comrade Duch, who alone was held responsible for 12,272 deaths. When mass killings were orchestrated, hundreds and even thousands were brought to the killing fields, blindfolded and gagged, where they were murdered and buried in fields, whilst loud patriotic music was blasted to cover the screams. The babies of the adults were killed by having their heads bashed against Chankiri trees, after which they were thrown into the fields along with their parents. Additionally, they relocated the majority of people to communal farms, where work conditions were harsh, leaving many to starve or work to death. This erased more than 21% of the country's population at the time, and destroyed any industries outside of agriculture (CGG).

During all this destruction, the international community remained largely uninterested, especially the USA, after its debacle with the Vietnamese years prior. However, after the release of the film "The Killing Fields" in 1984, which was an adaptation of the Khmer Rouge story, the international community finally acknowledged the regime and condemned them for the severity of their crimes (Britannica).

Vietnamese Invasion

The Vietnamese, well aware of the violence committed against their nationals, invaded Cambodia again in December 1978 and replaced the government with more moderate communists aligned with Vietnam's ideals. Under Vietnamese puppetry, the Cambodians slowly recovered, and basic public services reopened.

Present Day

Despite improving circumstances, various political groups were still at large within the country, backed by foreign powers like the USA and the Soviet Union, who wished to oppose the Vietnamese influence. This included the Khmer Rouge, who became a guerrilla organization, Sihanouk and his followers, and the noncommunist Khmer People's National Liberation Front. The continuous clashes between these groups created large tensions that are present within Cambodia up until the present day, on October 23rd, 1991 (Britannica).

Negotiations, which had intensified in 1989 and culminated in the following 2 years, led to the eventual decision for all affected groups to convene in Paris on October 23rd, 1991.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- **United Nations General Assembly Resolution 34/22 (1979).** Condemned the Vietnamese occupation and called for Cambodian self-determination as well as urging international humanitarian support. (UNGA)
- **International Conference on Kampuchea (ICOK) (July 1981).** A multi-nation forum designed for diplomatic consensus, although it failed to reach conclusive terms. (UN)
- **Annual UN General Assembly Resolutions (1979–1989).** Repeatedly reaffirmed the need for a political solution in Cambodia, condemned foreign occupation, and recognized the tripartite coalition (including the Khmer Rouge) as delegates of Cambodia. (UNHCR)
- **The Paris Conferences on Cambodia, first session (1989),** brought together 19 countries and 4 Cambodian factions, although ending in stalemate due to disagreements internally and internationally. (Haas, Michael)

Timeline of Events

Date	Event
1975 - 1979	Khmer Rouge Regime commits genocides and atrocities across Cambodia
January, 1979	The Vietnamese invasion ousts the Khmer Rouge, beginning the Cambodian-Vietnamese war, and igniting the Cambodian-Vietnamese civil conflict
1980	Civil war between the Vietnamese-backed government and three main resistance groups; the Khmer Rouge, royalists, and republicans, as the conflict draws in major regional and global powers
late 1980	Easing Cold War tensions and shifting geopolitical alliances encourage the Vietnamese forces to retreat to introduce new diplomatic incentives aimed to end the conflict

July 13-17, 1981	The international Conference on Kampuchea takes place in New York
September 1989	Vietnam withdrawals completely from Cambodia, giving way to negotiations and international peace talks
1989 to 1991	The Paris Conferences on Cambodia are held, with international mediation, key agreements such as reaching principles on ceasefire and political frameworks for Cambodia

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