OSU Cambodian students oppose Khmer Rouge's participation in government

By Debra Worrell
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OSU students from Cambodia said they are very pleased with the progress being made toward peace in their country at meetings in Paris.

Twenty countries are attending the peace-plan meetings aimed at finding a solution to end two decades of conflict in Cambodia.

The students also think the Khmer Rouge, a guerrilla group, should be eliminated from any part of a new government.

Kiriroth Som, president of the OSU Cambodian Student Organization, said he emigrated from Cambodia in 1981 to escape the Vietnamese Communist government.

Som, a sophomore majoring in political science, said he is glad some progress is being made at the meetings and hopes they result in an election for a new government.

SOM SAID, "I despise the Khmer Rouge." He said they are like Nazis and should not be part of Cambodia's government.

"If they (Khmer Rouge) are involved in the government, they may kill innocent people again," he said.

The main rivals in the Cambodian conflict are the present government, ruled by Vietnamese-backed Prime Minister Hun Sen, and the non-Communist resistance leader Prince Norodom Sihanouk.

Hun Sen wants to keep his own regime, along with a non-partisan council that would organize elections.

Sihanouk wants an interim government composed of the four groups in conflict, which include the three factions of the resistance coalition (the Khmer Rouge is one) and Hun Sen.

THE UNITED States backs Sihanouk, but threatens to withdraw aid if the Khmer Rouge is given a dominant role in the new government proposed by Sihanouk.

During the Khmer Rouge's nearly four-year rule in the 1970s, hundreds of thousands of Cambodians were killed. Their rule ended with the 1978 Vietnamese invasion.

Contrary to Western analysts who have estimated that 60,000-70,000 Vietnamese troops are left in Cambodia, Hun Sen said Monday that 26,000 Vietnamese troops remain in Cambodia and would all be gone by Sept. 27, 1989.

SOM SAID the Cambodian people need a government that has the people's interest in mind and not political power. Cambodians are peaceful people and obey with "their heads down," and so need a government they can trust, he said.

In an election most people would vote for Sihanouk, but Som said, "I wouldn't vote for him." He said Soan Sann, another non-communist faction leader, would be his choice.

"After finishing my education, I want to return to my country to teach my people and help in any way I can," Som said.

Sopheap Sip, an OSU nursing student, said she wants to return to Cambodia if and when there is a government for the people. Sip emigrated from Cambodia in 1981 to enjoy the freedom of democracy and flee from the Vietnamese invasion.

Sip said she is very pleased that countries are attending the peace talks, finally working to resolve the conflict in Cambodia.

SHE SAID the United States should send peace troops because the Vietnamese cannot be trusted to leave peacefully on their own. She wants the United States to send medical and financial aid "to help Cambodia get back on its feet," she said.