



**FORMER GUARD PROVIDES FACT-PACKED TESTIMONY REGARDING OPERATIONS AT TUOL SLENG AND CHOEUNG EK**

**July 16, 2009**

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Recent photo of Him Huy with his wife and child  
*Photo by Heng Sinith*



Him Huy (front row, fourth from right)  
and other S-21 prison guards, 1977  
*Courtesy of Toul Sleng Genocide Museum/ DC-Cam Archives*

54 year old Him Huy returned to the witness stand today and testified in great detail about operations at Tuol Sleng prison (S-21) and the killing fields at Choeung Ek, both secret facilities run by the Accused Person, Kaing Guek Eav (alias Duch). Given that Duch claims limited knowledge of day-to-day operations and the other witnesses were confined to very small areas, it was refreshing to hear the accounts of an observant guard who had various responsibilities in various locations. Him will continue his testimony on Monday.

**Him Never Exercised His Right to Remain Silent, But His Lawyer Was Silent All Day**

Yesterday, Him only appeared long enough to request time to consult his lawyer regarding his right against self-incrimination. In light of this, it is curious that during

nearly six hours of questioning today, he never exercised his right to remain silent and admitted to executing at least one person at Choeung Ek.

Him's lawyer, assigned to him by the ECCC's Witness and Expert Support Unit, did not speak during today's proceedings, although it is still unclear if he is entitled to speak. According to ECCC Public Affairs, the lawyer is advising, rather than representing, his client on the limited issue of self-incrimination. This morning, President Nil Nonn asked Him if he would like his lawyer to remain in the courtroom, where he was already seated, or if he would like him to wait outside. Him said he wished his lawyer to remain in the courtroom. The President then instructed Him that he should only seek his lawyer's advice on self-incrimination issues and answer all other questions on his own.

### **Operations In and Around S-21**

In 1972 or 1973, Him was forced to join the military and, after being trained, was transferred from unit to unit. On April 17, 1975, Him's unit helped the Khmer Rouge "liberate" Phnom Penh. After that, he worked in the rice fields under Comrade Hor, Duch's eventual deputy, who recruited him to work at S-21.

Him's "defense section" unit was stationed in a small building just outside the S-21 complex to guard the entrance and receive prisoners as they arrived. Him's unit also carried out arrests, picked up previously arrested prisoners, and transported prisoners to Choeung Ek. When none of these duties called, they raised poultry. Him started out as an ordinary guard and was later promoted to chief of his unit after some of his colleagues disappeared. As chief, he patrolled the S-21 grounds and buildings to ensure guards were discharging their duties vigilantly.

Him's unit received orders from Duch through Hor to carry out arrests in Phnom Penh. Him would go to the Phnom Penh Central Market at night time to arrest enemies lured there by Khmer Rouge cadre under false pretenses. Him's unit also went out to the countryside to transport prisoners that had been arrested by their respective military unit or government ministry to S-21. On two occasions, Duch ordered Him to transport about 15 uniformed Vietnamese soldiers to S-21. The "city messenger" also brought Cambodians who had just returned from abroad to S-21 under false pretenses and Him's unit arrested them there.

When people were transported to S-21, they were shackled, blindfolded, handcuffed, and made to sit down in a truck. Prisoners were not allowed any freedom of movement to relieve themselves as that would increase the risk of escape. Travel in Cambodia at the time required permission papers and, on at least one occasion, Him was given such a letter from Hor signed by Duch's superior, Son Sen.

Upon arrival at S-21, everyone passed through the small building just outside the compound gate. For those not yet arrested, Him's unit brought the soon-to-be prisoners into the room, had them sit at a table, and then arrested them. Sometimes 50 or 60 prisoners arrived together, in which case only one prisoner was handled at a time. All

prisoners were registered by name and photographed with a serial number before being passed off to another unit responsible for classifying the prisoner with regard to his importance and assigning him to a cell accordingly. At this stage, some of the least important prisoners were sent to Prey Sar re-education camp (S-24) instead of S-21.

With regard to detention conditions, Him confirmed that prisoners were bathed by guards who sprayed hoses into the cells. This technique was used because it did not create a risk of escape. Him confirmed the food rations were inadequate and prisoners were “very thin,” explaining that only one and a half ladles of gruel were given to prisoners twice daily. He said that women were considered too weak to revolt, so they were kept unshackled with free hands in a large locked room along with their young children.

Him never personally observed an interrogation session, but explained that all prisoners were detained, interrogated, tortured, and killed. He said many prisoners died in their cells from torture wounds and were buried subsequently in the S-21 compound. Those who survived were executed one or two weeks after completing their interrogation.

According to Him, the purged S-21 staff, important prisoners, Vietnamese POWs, foreigners, and children were all executed near the S-21 compound, rather than at Choeung Ek. They were removed from their cells at night time, one by one, after being told they were being taken to a new home. They were walked to the edge of a pit where they were forced to kneel down. Next, guards used oxcart axles to strike the backs of prisoners’ necks before using knives to slash their throats. Prisoners were then stripped of any remaining clothing and their handcuffs were removed for future use. Prisoners were kicked into the pits and buried immediately.

As for numbers, Him recalled three or four light-haired foreigners with big builds being burned with tires on a paved road after their execution near S-21. He said Duch could be correct that 345 Vietnamese were imprisoned at S-21 and opined they were all killed near the compound. Him guessed that 50 to 60 children between 1 and 8 years old were killed near the compound.

According to Duch, no one was ever released from S-21. Him confirmed this point generally, but stated he once saw a group of Thai prisoners released for reasons unknown to him.

Him explained that the ranks were purged heavily at S-21 with perhaps 200 arrested out of 400 staff. The majority of the S-21 staff came from Division 703. In 1977, many Division 703 cadres from the field were interrogated and their confessions implicated their former colleagues who had become S-21 staff. Him was not aware of what alleged offenses those people had committed and only knew that “people kept disappearing.” He said that sometimes guards who had committed minor offenses were sent to S-24 for re-education. Him explained that in his early days at S-21 he would roam freely and chat with colleagues, but after the purges started everyone was being monitored so movements and conversations were restricted.

## **How Executions Were Carried Out at Choeng Ek**

Him provided the most detailed testimony to date on operations at Duch's killing fields at Choeng Ek.

After being given a list of names by Hor, Him's unit would remove those prisoners from their S-21 cells around 6:30 p.m. and walk them to a covered truck where they sat shackled and blindfolded for the thirty-minute ride. They were told they were going to a new home. Him was responsible for checking the 60 to 100 prisoners' names off the list before the 4X4 trucks and land rovers headed for Choeng Ek.

Upon arrival, the unit at Choeng Ek was ready to receive the prisoners. First, they switched on a generator to power ten fluorescent lights used to illuminate human targets in the dark. Prisoners were forced to wait in a concealed area beneath a big house. They were taken out one by one to the pits where the same execution procedure from S-21 was employed: oxcart axles were used to strike the backs of prisoners' necks and then knives were used to slash their throats. Clothes and handcuffs were removed. Prisoners were kicked into the pits and buried immediately. Given the large number of prisoners and dark working conditions, "it took hours" to kill everyone, sometimes until 2 a.m. During this process, a man once escaped, but was later recaptured.

While Duch testified weeks ago that he only visited Choeng Ek once when forced by his superiors, Him testified that Duch visited Choeng Ek at least twice. On one occasion, Duch stayed until all the prisoners were executed. While Him previously told the co-investigating judges that Duch taught him execution techniques at a meeting, Him backed away from this crucial statement today, saying he now thinks it was Hor who gave the instructions. Moreover, Him previously told the co-investigating judges that Duch once specifically instructed him to execute a man. Him backed away from this statement as well, claiming that he was not sure if it was Duch or Hor, but it was definitely either Duch or Hor. Generating some solid courtroom drama, Judge Lavergne asked Duch to stand and asked Him, "Who is this?" Judge Lavergne inquired again, more forcefully, if it was Duch who ordered Him to execute a man. Him tried to justify his confusion by explaining it was dark at Choeng Ek and guards had to rush around to kill everyone by dawn.

## **S-24**

In late 1978, Him was sent, along with two groups of men, to S-24 to work in the rice fields, dig canals, and build dams. From his brief testimony on the subject, it was unclear whether he was detained as a prisoner there or was simply working there. He claimed he slept normally at night and was not locked in his room. He was not told why he was sent there. Him remained at S-24 until the Vietnamese took Phnom Penh in January 1979.

### **Protective Measures Denied**

The Trial Chamber announced its denial of witness KW10's request for protective measures.

The Witness and Expert Support Unit (WESU) provided the Chamber with a confidential risk assessment and determined not to recommend protective measures because the witness, a former interrogator at S-21, is well known to the public and could be readily identified even if he testified in closed session. The Chamber agreed with WESU, noting that KW10 has made himself widely known to the public such that protective measures would not be effective. Moreover, his family, friends, and neighbors are already aware of his background.

Under Internal Rule 29, upon request or its own initiative, the Chamber may order the use of protective measures to protect witnesses "whose appearance before them is liable to place their life or health or that of their family members or close relatives in serious danger." The Rules provide for such measures as proceeding *in camera*, using pseudonyms, and distorting a witness's voice and appearance.