

**Day of reckoning for Pol Pot's henchman
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Chum Mey walks slowly through the corridors of Tuol Sleng - once a school and a prison, now a museum - past thousands of black-and-white photos, the unsmiling portraits of the Khmer Rouge's victims in this place.

He stops at faces he recognises, pointing out friends, colleagues, a relative he saw for the final time through barbed wire.

Over four years in the late 1970s, it is reckoned that more than 12,000 men, women and children passed through Tuol Sleng prison in central Phnom Penh and were murdered by the Khmer Rouge.

Most were tortured here into confessing crimes they could not have committed, and into implicating others in them, before being loaded on to trucks and driven to the notorious "killing fields" of Choeung Ek, where they were bludgeoned to death with ox-cart axles.

On Monday more than 30 years since the fall of the Khmer Rouge, the man who ran Tuol Sleng prison, Kaing Guek Eav, known as Comrade Duch, will be sentenced for the crimes committed here.

Known as Pol Pot's executioner-in-chief, he will be the first Khmer Rouge figure to be held accountable for the crimes of the ultra-communist regime that killed an estimated 1.7 million people, a quarter of Cambodia's population, between 1975 and 1979.

Duch has confessed to his crimes, telling the court last year: "I am solely and individually responsible for the loss of at least 12,380 lives."

And there seems little doubt in Cambodia that he will be sentenced to life in prison, the heaviest penalty the court can impose. At the very least, it is presumed, Duch will be ordered to serve a crushing sentence of several decades, one that will ensure the 67-year-old never leaves prison alive.

His sentencing is of enormous interest across the country. More than 30,000 Cambodians attended the purpose-built international court over the course of Duch's nine-month trial. His sentence will be broadcast on TV live around the country.

"I want the court to give Duch a life in prison," Chum Mey says through an interpreter. "He must never be allowed out, so that the younger generation cannot follow suit. It cannot happen again."

He stops now at the tiny cell, barely a metres by 1.5 metres, which was his for nearly a year. He was shackled by his ankles here, taken out only to be interrogated, tortured, or put to work.

Chum Mey is one of only 12 people known to have walked out of Tuol Sleng alive.

He was saved by his ability to repair sewing machines. It kept him alive long enough for Vietnamese troops to storm the Cambodian capital, ending four years of bloodstained Khmer Rouge rule. "I was not going to be saved, I was only lucky. I was waiting for my day. I knew that I would have to do my work, and then I would be killed."

He recounts the tortures used to extract false confessions from prisoners, and to force them into implicating others as CIA spies.

He was beaten with bamboo rods, forced to eat faeces, given electric shocks to his ears and had his toenails ripped out with pliers.

Others were waterboarded, hung upside down, and had their hands crushed in clamps. Children were thrown from third-storey balconies to their deaths. Prisoners were presumed guilty, effectively "already dead", Duch has said.

Despite Duch's courtroom confessions and his pleas that he be allowed to apologise in person to his victims' families, Chum Mey cannot forgive him.

He is angry most at Duch's lack of remorse.

"When he went into the dock, he only paid respect to the judges, he did not pay respect to the victims, [he did] not acknowledge [us]. It shows his cruelty still exists."

In court, Duch is an ordinary old man. He has been calm and polite, but his evidence has been littered with casual references to "smashing" people considered "enemies of the state". The former high-school maths teacher said he was ordered to kill prisoners at Tuol Sleng against his wishes, and obeyed out of fear he would be killed if he refused. But he did not directly implicate those who will follow him before the court.

"I cannot forgive him, because what he testified was not true," says Chum Mey, who gave evidence in court against his former jailer. "He only blamed those who already die, he did not testify against those still alive. That is injustice that he did not tell the whole truth."

Beyond Duch's sentence, the future of the internationally sponsored Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia - the Khmer Rouge tribunal - and, in particular, who comes next before it, is a sensitive issue for the country.

The next case, 002, will try, simultaneously, the four most senior Khmer Rouge cadres still alive. Nuon Chea, known as Brother Number Two, was the Khmer Rouge's second-in-command and chief ideologue. Ieng Sary was foreign minister and his wife, Ieng Thirith, the minister for social affairs. Khieu Samphan was the titular head of state.

But the defendants are old, the youngest 78, and some seriously ill. Ieng Sary has suffered at least one major heart attack, and Khieu Samphan a stroke.

It will be mid-2011 before their trial is ready to proceed, and likely "2014, maybe 2015", according to the UN, before it is concluded.

"There is a high likelihood that one or more of the charged persons will be unfit to plead or will die before the conclusion of their trial," the court's international co-prosecutor, Australian William Smith, has said.