



Khmer Rouge verdict to go live July 1, 2010

PHNOM PENH - THE verdict in the trial of Khmer Rouge prison chief Duch will be broadcast live across Cambodia when it is delivered later this month, the UN-backed court said on Thursday.

Duch is the first leader from the hardline communist regime to face international justice and observers have stressed the need for proceedings to be open to ordinary Cambodians, many of whom lived through the brutal rule.

During his trial the 67-year-old, whose real name is Kaing Guek Eav, acknowledged responsibility and begged forgiveness for overseeing the torture and execution of more than 15,000 people at the notorious Tuol Sleng prison.

Tribunal spokesman Reach Sambath said the broadcast would help to 'stop the return of mass killing' in Cambodia. He said millions of people from across the country are expected to tune in to major television and radio stations for the verdict on July 26.

'The live broadcast will offer great opportunities for millions of Cambodians who were the victims of the Khmer Rouge regime to be involved in the process of justice,' he said. 'The information of the judgement will offer a public debate toward justice and national reconciliation.' The hearing is expected to last for several hours.

Up to two million people were executed or died of starvation, disease and overwork as the 1975-1979 Khmer Rouge movement emptied cities and enslaved the population on collective farms in its bid to create a communist utopia. Duch, whose trial began last February, is charged with crimes against humanity, war crimes, torture and premeditated murder. Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot died in 1998. The joint trial of four more senior regime leaders is expected to start in 2011.