



Khmer Rouge Suspect Back in Prison After Hospital Stay November 8, 2012

The oldest defendant at Cambodia's court for Khmer Rouge suspects was returned to detention Thursday following two months in hospital after judges ruled the 87-year-old fit to stand trial.

Ieng Sary, who suffers from a number of ailments including heart and back problems, was admitted to hospital in September.

The move sparked renewed fears he would never face justice for his alleged role in the murderous 1975-1979 regime.

A medical expert told the UN-backed court that while the former foreign minister was weaker than before, and his condition would inevitably deteriorate, he was stable and ready for release from hospital.

Ieng Sary was "still very alert" and able to concentrate, Professor John Campbell said, recommending that the accused follow proceedings from a bed in a purpose-built holding cell near the courtroom.

The defendant's wife and co-accused, Ieng Thirith, 80, was freed in September after the court ruled she was mentally unfit to stand trial because she has dementia.

The remaining defendants - Ieng Sary, "Brother Number Two" Nuon Chea and ex-head of state Khieu Samphan - deny charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide for their roles in the deaths of up to two million people.

Ieng Sary is the frailest of them but the poor health of all three octogenarians has cast a cloud over the trial.

The trial has experienced some delays over Ieng Sary's medical woes but was mostly able to continue in his absence in recent weeks after he waived his right to be present for witness statements.

Ieng Sary, known as one of the few international faces of the secretive Khmer Rouge regime, has exercised his right to remain silent during the trial.

The regime wiped out nearly a quarter of Cambodia's population through starvation, overwork and execution in a bid to forge a communist utopia.