



Amnesty does not save K. Rouge defendant: court
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PHNOM PENH — Cambodia's UN-backed war crimes tribunal has rejected a plea from the Khmer Rouge regime's former foreign minister that he is protected from genocide charges by a 15-year-old royal pardon and amnesty.

Ieng Sary, 86, angered victims of the regime with his claim during a hearing in late June that he should not be tried because he was absolved in 1996 in return for leading a mass Khmer Rouge defection.

But the court said in a statement, dated November 3 and released on Monday, that the scope of application of the amnesty excludes the crimes of genocide, torture and grave breach of the 1949 Geneva conventions.

While the royal decree might have been a "useful negotiating tool" for ending the conflict, it was not accompanied by any truth or reconciliation process for the 1975-79 "Killing Fields" era, it added.

Ieng Sary was sentenced to death in absentia for genocide in a 1979 show trial conducted by the Vietnamese-backed government that followed the end of the Khmer Rouge reign of terror.

He received a royal pardon and amnesty upon surrendering to the government.

Ieng Sary and three other defendants face charges including genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes over the deaths of up to two million people from starvation, overwork, torture or execution during the Khmer Rouge's brutal rule.

Their highly anticipated joint trial is the tribunal's second and most important case. Opening statements are scheduled for November 21 and the presentation of evidence is to start on November 28.

Led by "Brother Number One" Pol Pot, who died in 1998, the movement emptied Cambodia's cities and abolished money and schools in a bid to create an agrarian utopia before they were ousted from the capital by Vietnamese forces.