

All the News Without Fear or Favor

The CAMBODIA DAILY

‘None Were Spared,’ Former Khmer Rouge Prison Clerk Says

Lauren Crothers

November 13, 2012

A former Khmer Rouge prison clerk yesterday described to the Khmer Rouge tribunal how evacuees and Lon Nol soldiers were mercilessly exterminated as the Khmer Rouge began its operation of nationwide evacuations in 1975.

Pe Chuy Chip Se, 57, from Siem Reap province’s Chi Kreng district, told the court that he joined the Khmer Rouge in 1971. By 1975, when the Khmer Rouge began emptying towns and cities around the country, he had already been working as a clerk at a revolutionary security center in Kompong Kdei commune for about three years.

“People detained there were those who committed moral misconduct with young women,” he said. “These people were evacuees. And people who were former Lon Nol officials or soldiers were not brought to the security center, only civilians who committed such crimes,” he said.

And while Lon Nol soldiers were not brought directly to the security center, they were swiftly done away with nonetheless, the witness said, adding that the Lon Nol soldiers were routinely interrogated and then sent for execution. Civilians imprisoned in the security center had a similar fate, he added.

“Everyone was killed; none were spared,” he said. “Everyone was executed together.” The witness said he learned of the killings from those who carried them out, denying that he had taken part in any such acts personally.

“I learned about the executions from people engaged in them and who came and told me what happened,” he said. “I was a clerk; I kept the documents of prisoners. I was a documentary custodian,” he said.

He also described how young people joined the Khmer Rouge in the lead-up to the regime taking control of the country in 1975.

“In 1970, people and residents lived together in their families. Then the Khmer Rouge encouraged people to resist against the Lon Nol administration, so the sons and daughters of villagers separated and went to the forest to join the resistance forces,” he said.

“As for the parents, they could stay at home and join cooperatives. The Khmer Rouge also encouraged young people to join their forces.”

Objections were made by the defense for Nuon Chea to the presence in the tribunal audience of Khmer Rouge historian Henri Locard, author of “Pol Pot’s Little Red Book,” and who had previously interviewed the witness.

But prosecutor Dale Lysak insisted that Mr. Locard’s presence was entirely coincidental, and that the Office of the Co-Prosecutors had not been in contact with the author.

Earlier in the day, Ieng Sary’s lawyer raised the possibility of a severance of Case 002 after an expert witness on Thursday testified that the 88-year-old war crimes defendant was fit to stand trial following a two-month stint in hospital.

A severance of Case 002 would mean that war crimes suspects Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan would continue being tried together, while Ieng Sary would be tried separately.

Addressing the Trial Chamber yesterday, lawyer Michael Karnavas argued that Ieng Sary continued to suffer from a number of ailments that he felt prevented his client from being meaningfully engaged with the trial, adding that he might be forced to file a motion to sever the case if he feels his client is being denied the right to be tried fairly.

“This is an issue that’s not going to go away,” Mr. Karnavas said. “He has heart problems, breathing problems, prostate problems and back problems. Ieng Sary is not going to get better. He may be stabilized, but at his age, the status quo is the best you can do.”

Mr. Karnavas reminded the Trial Chamber that a motion for severance would place further delays on already sluggish movement in the case.

“Were we to [file a motion to sever], the proceedings would have to cease,” he said. “They could not go on while the matter is pending; they would have to come to a grinding halt.

“Most of the time, he’s in the fetal position.... He’s urinating on himself; he is not capable,” he said.

Clair Duffy, a tribunal monitor with the Open Society Justice Initiative, said a motion for severance could come if Ieng Sary’s team argues that its client is unfit to stand, if moving forward with the case could jeopardize the fair trial rights of the other two defendants, or of the number of witnesses Ieng Sary has waived his right to hear runs out.