

Court Begins Reparations Campaign
Kong Sothnarith
February 20, 2012

The Khmer Rouge tribunal has launched a campaign to raise public awareness of reparations it brings to victims of the infamous S-21 prison in central Phnom Penh.

The court has put together a document collecting a series of confessions and apologies made by the prison's director, Kaing Guek Eav, alias Duch, during the UN-assisted court's legal proceedings

"It is crucial to show Duch's confession and responsibility to the victims," said Neth Pheaktra, a spokesman for the court.

The supreme chamber of the Khmer Rouge tribunal has sentenced the 69-year-old prison director to life in jail and ordered a publication of the verdict and his apology as part of reparation.

The conclusion of the case marks the first final verdict the court has made during six years of work.

Three other top leaders - chief ideologue Noun Chea, former head of state Khieu Samphan, and foreign minister Ieng Sary - are on trial in a separate case. None of them has acknowledged responsibility for atrocities committed during the Khmer Rouge's 1975-79 rule of Cambodia. An estimated 1.7 million people died during the period from starvation, disease, execution and overwork.

The 27-page document released by the tribunal shows Duch expressing remorse.

"I acknowledge the responsibility, especially, torture and the killing," said the document referring to confession Duch made during his first trial in early 2009. The document is now available online on the court website.

Before the final verdict earlier this month, Duch originally had been sentenced to 35 years in prison by the Trial Chamber, and he was slated to serve about 19 years behind bars.

"His apology was just a small part of justice," said Bou Meng, one of the few survivors of S-21.

However, Bou Meng said he is satisfied with the life sentence.

Chum Mey, another survivor, said few Cambodians have access to the Internet and that most victims will not have access to the tribunal's new public document.

The court says it will increase its national outreach through more public screenings of the court's proceedings.

Im Sophea, head of coordination of Victims Support Section, said the court is printing 10,000 copies of Duch's confession and apologies to distribute locally and abroad.