



Lawyers for Cambodian Khmer Rouge commandant appeal his detention

August 29, 2007

Phnom Penh - Lawyers for the first man to be formally charged ahead of joint UN-Cambodia trials of former Khmer Rouge leaders lodged an appeal against his pre-trial detention, the court's media office said Wednesday. In a statement issued through the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) public affairs' office, the court confirmed the appeal had been lodged Thursday by lawyers Kar Savuth and François Roux on behalf of former S-21 prison commandant Kang Kech Ieu, alias Duch.

"Co-lawyers ... lodged a notice of appeal against the Order of Provisional Detention issued against Duch by the Co-Investigating Judges on 31 July 2007," the ECCC statement said. "The case file has been sent to the Pre-Trial Chamber, which will deal with the matter expeditiously."

Duch has been formally charged with crimes against humanity. Up to 14,000 people are believed to have been tortured or died at S-21, also known as former Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot's secret prison.

Contacted by telephone Wednesday, Kar Savuth declined comment on the grounds for the appeal, saying the matter was one for the pre-trial chamber to decide, although he added he expected a speedy decision.

Duch, 66, is currently the only former leader of the movement in detention. He was jailed in 1999 after he was discovered by photographer and author Nic Dunlop working for an aid organization in the north-western province of Battambang.

Cambodian law stipulates a maximum six-month pre-trial detention period, and legal experts have questioned whether Duch's prolonged detention may complicate the prosecution's case.

The 56-million-dollar proceedings, budgeted to take three years to complete, are expected to try a handful of aging and often ailing former leaders of the ultra-Maoist movement.

Up to 2 million Cambodians are estimated to have died under the regime's brutal 1975-79 Democratic Kampuchea regime. Pol Pot died at home in 1998. Former military commander Ta Mok died in hospital of age-related complications last year.