

Duch Ordered Western Prisoners Burned Alive

Chun Sakada

August 5, 2009

Former Tuol Sleng security guard Chheam Soeur told the UN-backed court on Wednesday that Duch had ordered his subordinates to burn alive a Western prisoner in his infamous Khmer Rouge torture center.

Chheam Soeur said he watched three security guards bring the prisoner into the prison courtyard, place vehicle tires over him, and set them alight.

He said he didn't know the identity of the prisoner. Duch, who is facing numerous atrocity crimes charges, told the court Wednesday he ordered a subordinate to kill two Western prisoners by tire-burning.

Chheam Soeur's testimony came as Prime Minister heaped praise on the court's Cambodian officials, saying Wednesday said he "admired" Cambodian judges, prosecutors and lawyers, who worked "better and smarter" than the international side.

The prime minister said he had been watching the hearing for jailed prison chief Duch and had noted that some international judges asked Duch questions but didn't seem to understand the whole story.

Sometimes, he said, Duch made counter-accusations against the judges. Hun Sen was delivering a speech to students graduating the National Institute of Education's Build Bright University.

Meanwhile, the Victims Unit of the tribunal reported Wednesday it had received more than 4,000 complaints from potential witnesses and civil parties to the proceedings against all five leaders in the court's custody, tribunal officials said Wednesday.

Helen Jarvis, the new director of the unit, told reporters Wednesday that 94 of those complaints represented civil parties against Duch's Case, and 103 of them would be used in Case No. 002 at the court, the case against the four senior-most leaders in custody: ideologue Nuon Chea, former president Khieu Samphan, foreign minister Ieng Sary and his wife Ieng Thirith.