



## **Elderly K.Rouge suspect loses court appeal**

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PHNOM PENH — Cambodia's UN-backed war crimes court said on Tuesday it had rejected a request to free ailing former Khmer Rouge leader Ieng Sary from custody ahead of his genocide trial.

Judges said the continued detention of the 85-year-old, who was a foreign minister during the regime's "Killing Fields" era, was necessary to prevent him from fleeing.

One of the few public faces of the secretive movement, Ieng Sary faces charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, in relation to two million deaths from starvation, overwork and executions between 1975-1979.

"The Trial Chamber rejects the accused's request for release," a statement from the court said, adding that "he shall remain in detention until the Chamber's judgment is handed down".

The decision was widely expected because the release of the high-profile suspect would have caused an outcry in Cambodia.

Ieng Sary's defence lawyers argued earlier this month that their client's detention was illegal because his case had not been heard before the end of a court "deadline".

But judges dismissed the argument using a different interpretation of the timeline.

Ieng Sary's trial -- alongside his wife and ex-social affairs minister Ieng Thirith, "Brother Number Two" Nuon Chea and former head of state Khieu Samphan -- will begin on June 27 with an initial hearing, the court said Monday.

All four have now unsuccessfully sought release from custody. They have been held at a purpose-built detention facility near the court since their arrests in 2007.

Their highly-anticipated trial, the tribunal's second, is expected to be long and complex with all four disputing the charges against them.

Aged between 79 and 85, the former regime leaders suffer from various health ailments, fuelling concerns that not all of them will live to see a verdict.

Ieng Sary has been hospitalised several times for a heart condition.

In its landmark first case the court in July sentenced the notorious former prison chief Kaing Guek Eav, better known as Duch, to 30 years in prison. The case is now under appeal.

Led by "Brother Number One" Pol Pot, who died in 1998, the Marxist Khmer Rouge regime emptied cities and abolished money and schools in a bid to create an agrarian utopia.