



Ieng Thirith ‘unfit’ for trial, defense lawyers say
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Defense lawyers for jailed Khmer Rouge leader Ieng Thirith told the UN-backed tribunal on Thursday that her serious mental conditions should prevent her being tried.

Speaking on the second day of hearings before the court’s Trial Chamber, attorney Diana Ellis said mental assessments of Ieng Thirith showed “strong indicators of incompetence to deal with the trial process.”

“There is no doubt at all that Ieng Thirith has no ability to recall events in her life to stand trial before this trial chamber,” she said. “The accused should be found unfit to stand trial.”

Mental health experts told the Khmer Rouge tribunal on Wednesday that ailing Ieng Thirith, the former social affairs minister of the regime, had “serious” health issues that could prevent her from standing trial, including Alzheimer’s and poor memory.

Ieng Thirith, who is 79, is charged with atrocity crimes including genocide, alongside Nuon Chea, Khieu Samphan and Ieng Sary. All four are expected to face trial next year.

On Wednesday, medical experts told the court’s Trial Chamber that she suffers from serious memory impairment that makes it difficult for her to assist her defense team.

“We found that she can’t even recognize the house where she was living,” Huot Lina, one of the medical examiners, told the court.

Medical experts said her current mental state would prevent her from fully participating in a trial, even by video link.

However, they said it was possible to improve her condition, if the court finds her able to stand trial, by employing a geriatrician and check-ups every three months.

The findings come as the court struggles with accusations of political interference and the broader fear that it will be unable to try the four defendants before they are too old or infirm.