

## **KRT Spotlight Returns to Current Leadership**

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The defence team of Brother No 2 Nuon Chea continued in its attempts to link National Assembly president Heng Samrin to its client, and, by extension, the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge regime, during yesterday's Khmer Rouge tribunal.

Despite a brief showdown between Trial Chamber president Nil Nonn and defence counsel Michiel Pestman, when Pestman refused to be seated as ordered, Nil Nonn granted the lawyer 30 minutes to interview his client. That right was taken away from Pestman on Wednesday after the chamber president ruled that Pestman had disrespected the bench.

The defence lawyer used his re-allotted time to ask questions about Nuon Chea's relationship with the future CPP chairman.

The defendant said he had first met Heng Samrin some time in 1959 when he was tasked with serving as Nuon Chea's escort to Vietnam. "He was close to me and he was rather courageous. He provided me with protection," Nuon Chea said, adding that such trips, "sometimes once every two months", up until the country was "liberated" in 1975.

Pestman was rebuffed, however, in his attempt to ask Nuon Chea about the role played by the senior CPP lawmaker in the liberation of Phnom Penh.

"Is it correct that Heng Samrin was a division commander in April 1975 and that he participated in the liberation of Phnom Penh?" Pestman asked.

"Nuon Chea, you may not respond to the question since it is ruled irrelevant," chamber president Nil Nonn interjected.

Yesterday's attempt was the second time this week that Nuon Chea's defence team has tried to link its client to senior CPP lawmakers. On Monday, defence counsel Jasper Pauw produced an academic article, which stated that "various evidence implicates Heng Samrin in war crimes" and that "Chea Sim has been accused of being responsible for the murders of people in the district in which he was secretary".

Also during yesterday's proceedings, co-prosecutors attempted to disprove Nuon Chea's consistent assertions that he never held the position of acting prime minister of Democratic Kampuchea.

Co-prosecutors produced a speech made on the 9th anniversary of the founding of the Revolutionary Army of Kampuchea that two international media outlets attributed to “acting premier” Nuon Chea.

Prosecutors said that, next week, they will introduce “numerous documents” showing “congratulatory messages” to Nuon Chea on his ascent to the premiership, as well as documents he signed as “acting premier”.