



KRouge defendant says he won't testify in trial
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PHNOM PENH — A top ex-Khmer Rouge leader charged with genocide and other atrocities said Wednesday he will not take the stand during his long-awaited trial at Cambodia's UN-backed war crimes tribunal.

"With full knowledge of proceedings pending against me and my rights, I voluntarily, knowingly, and unequivocally put the trial chamber on notice that I will not testify," defendant Ieng Sary, 86, told the court in a statement.

The move would likely disappoint Cambodians who hope the trial will shed some light on the country's 1975-79 "Killing Fields" era.

Former foreign minister Ieng Sary and three other senior regime members deny the array of charges against them -- including war crimes and crimes against humanity -- for the deaths of up to two million people.

Their highly-anticipated joint trial is the tribunal's second and most important case. Opening statements are scheduled for November 21 and the presentation of evidence is to start on November 28.

"We are not boycotting the trial," stressed defence lawyer Michael Karnavas, explaining that the announcement was "out of courtesy" so the court can make the necessary scheduling arrangements.

Trial monitor Clair Duffy from the Open Society Justice Initiative funded by US billionaire George Soros said Ieng Sary's silence would be "a disappointment" to Khmer Rouge survivors.

"Cambodians generally come to the court to see these people and hear what they have to say," she said. "But the accused have a right not to say anything."

As the top Khmer Rouge diplomat, Ieng Sary was frequently the only point of contact between Cambodia's secretive communist rulers and the outside world, researchers say.

In its historic first case, the court last year sentenced former Khmer Rouge prison chief Kaing Guek Eav to 30 years in jail for overseeing the deaths of some 15,000 people. The case is now under appeal.

Led by "Brother Number One" Pol Pot, who died in 1998, the movement emptied Cambodia's cities and abolished money and schools in a bid to create an agrarian utopia before they were ousted from the capital by Vietnamese forces.