

The Phnom Penh Post

Key ECCC testimony delayed

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June 10, 2009

Judges defer statements by former S-21 staff as Duch blames Pol Pot for harnessing a 'criminal' mix of communist theories

Key testimony from the only other S-21 staff to be called so far to Cambodia's Khmer Rouge tribunal was delayed Tuesday, while former prison chief Kaing Guek Eav blamed a "criminal" mix of communist ideologies for the atrocities that occurred under the regime.

Presiding Judge Nil Nonn said that recent courtroom debates had taken "a lot of time" in explaining the postponed appearances of former Tuol Sleng deputy chief Mam Nai and guard Him Huy, who were expected to provide eye-witness statements.

Nil Nonn said the pair would be invited back to the stand "when the facts related to [these witnesses] arise".

Their turn to speak was postponed shortly after their former boss, who is better known by his revolutionary name Duch, launched into a further explanation of the regime's ideology

'Criminal' mix

Duch told the UN-backed court that Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot, who died in 1998, applied a mix of communist ideas to orchestrate extreme social reforms.

Duch described this as a "criminal" mix of the theories of Marx, Lenin and China's "Gang of Four".

Duch argued that the regime had "more seriously cruel policies than those of [the] Gang of Four of China" since it enslaved the population on collective farms and began carrying out mass killings immediately after seizing power.

Duch went on to dispute testimony from last month in which Khmer Rouge scholar Craig Etcheson, author of *The Rise and Demise of Democratic Kampuchea*, presented a list of prisoners who appeared to have been released from Tuol Sleng.

"The people who were arrested and sent (to Tuol Sleng), they were all killed," Duch said, refuting the idea that the list cast him in a more favourable light.

Further remorse

He added that he would "not betray [his] remorse" by blaming other people for his crimes in an unprompted pledge that drew objections from civil party lawyers, who said his comments were off topic.

Their objection, however, was overruled by the judges.

"All the crimes I will be responsible for," the 66-year-old former maths teacher said.

"I will not betray my remorse, and I will not just let my remorse fade away," he added.

"I am in such pain. I always say, a wrong decision for one minute can lead to sorrow and remorse for the entire life.

"I am responsible, ideologically and psychologically, for the results suffered by the entire population of Cambodia," he said.

The mea culpa was one of several Duch has made since formally apologising in March for his role in the regime.

Tuesday's session marked the second day of proceedings following a weeklong recess during which defence lawyers for other former leaders voiced concerns pertaining to corruption, security and a potential conflict of interest at the court.