



Khmer Rouge Jailer to Testify in Key Trial Next Week

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A former Khmer Rouge jailer imprisoned for life by Cambodia's war crimes tribunal will take the stand again next week to testify in the trial of three ex-regime leaders, the court said Tuesday.

Kaing Guek Eav, better known as Duch, will be the first high-profile witness in the landmark proceedings, which aim to bring justice for the deaths of up to two million people under the Khmer Rouge's 1975-79 reign of terror.

"Duch is expected to be called for testimony on Monday afternoon," a spokesman for the UN-backed court, Lars Olsen, told AFP.

The 69-year-old was last month handed a life term on appeal for overseeing the deaths of some 15,000 people as head of the notorious S-21 torture prison.

His one-time superiors "Brother Number Two" Nuon Chea, ex-foreign minister Ieng Sary and former head of state Khieu Samphan deny charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide in what is the court's second trial.

Duch, a former math teacher, is considered a key witness in the case against the trio, but with his own fate now sealed it is unclear how talkative he will be when he takes the stand.

"I hope he will co-operate with the court because he has shown his co-operative manner from the start," Kang Ritheary, one of Duch's lawyers, told AFP.

During his trial, Duch tried in vain to seek acquittal by arguing that he was only following orders, including from his direct supervisor Nuon Chea.

Observers say the two men are on bad terms with each other, and Duch has in the past said that Nuon Chea blamed him for not destroying documentary evidence from S-21 before the Vietnamese invaded and ousted the Khmer Rouge.

Duch is currently being held in the same detention facility as the other accused, and civil party lawyers recently asked for him to be kept away from Nuon Chea to avoid any pressure or interference.

Nuon Chea's defence team told the court last week that their client had no intention of pressuring the witness, and said the 85-year-old was himself fearful of being attacked by Duch.

Led by "Brother Number One" Pol Pot, who died in 1998, the Khmer Rouge wiped out nearly a quarter of the population through starvation, overwork and execution in a bid to forge a communist utopia.