



Khmer Rouge Trial Waits on Accused to Recover **May 23, 2012**

Cambodia's Khmer Rouge war crimes tribunal was postponed on Wednesday until next week to allow the oldest of the three former regime leaders on trial to recover from bronchitis.

Trial hearings have been on hold since Ieng Sary, 86, was rushed to hospital with breathing difficulties last Thursday. He was discharged on Tuesday but doctors said he still needed a few days' rest in the detention facility.

Ieng Sary, the regime's former foreign minister, is the most frail of the trio in the dock for their roles in the deaths of up to two million people in the late 1970s.

One of his doctors gave a gloomy assessment of his health in court on Wednesday, telling judges that the patient, who has heart and back problems, has "chronic health issues" and while he can be stabilized, "his condition can only deteriorate".

Health fears have long hung over the court with the octogenarian defendants all suffering from varying ailments, but this marks the first time their trial has been hit by significant illness-related delays since it opened in November.

The UN-backed court will reconvene on Monday when judges will change the schedule and call a witness whose testimony is not expected to impact on Ieng Sary's case, presiding judge Nil Nonn said.

Ieng Sary's lawyer Michael Karnavas said his client had no objection to missing testimony from less relevant witnesses.

"He does not wish to hold up the proceedings," Karnavas said, but he stressed that the defendant did not waive his right to be present for other witnesses whose testimony might "touch upon him either directly or indirectly."

Ieng Sary and his co-defendants — "Brother Number Two" Nuon Chea and former head of state Khieu Samphan — deny charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

Known as one of the few international faces of the secretive Khmer Rouge regime, Ieng Sary has exercised his right to remain silent during the trial.

The 1975-1979 regime oversaw one of the worst horrors of the 20th century, wiping out nearly a quarter of the population through starvation, overwork and execution in a bid to forge a communist utopia.