Khmer Rouge jailer Duch seeks acquittal & forgiveness
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Ex-Khmer Rouge cadre Duch asked for forgiveness for running a feared jail where thousands died, but maintained he was only following orders as he took the stand for a final time on Wednesday.

Cambodia's UN-backed court sentenced Duch, 68, in July to 30 years' jail for war crimes and crimes against humanity for overseeing the deaths of some 15,000 people at the notorious prison Tuol Sleng - or S-21 - in the late 1970s. Reading from a handwritten note, Duch said he only survived the brutal regime "because I respectfully and strictly followed the orders", even if at times he felt "very depressed".

He asked "for forgiveness of the souls of the victims" and "for the families of those victims to accept my apology", echoing statements made at his original trial before his shock demand to be acquitted in his closing speech in November 2009. In three days of hearings this week, the defence, prosecution and civil parties all appealed against the punishment.

In his final address to the Supreme Court Chamber on Wednesday, Duch said "the senior leaders and those most responsible were others, not me".

Duch's lawyers are seeking a full acquittal and release, arguing that he falls outside the court's jurisdiction because he was "just a minor secretary".

The prosecution wants a life term, commuted to 45 years in jail for time spent in unlawful detention.

He also urged former regime members "to recognise that we joined the movement... to liberate the country, however the party's line was criminal".

Led by "Brother Number One" Pol Pot, who died in 1998, the Khmer Rouge wiped out up to two million people through starvation, overwork and execution. S-21, in Phnom Penh, was at the centre of the regime's security apparatus and thousands were taken from there for execution at a nearby "killing field".

Duch has been detained since 1999, when he was found working as a Christian aid worker in the jungle. He was formally arrested by the tribunal in July 2007.