

Khmer Rouge Member Charged

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Cambodia's international genocide tribunal has charged the former chief of the Khmer Rouge's S-21 prison with crimes against humanity. It is the first charge raised against a top figure of the Khmer Rouge, which was responsible for the deaths of over one million, seven hundred thousand Cambodians between 1975 and 1979.

The suspect, Kaing Guek Iev, has admitted heading the S-21 prison in Phnom Penh where the Khmer Rouge's supposed enemies were tortured and forced to confess to a variety of crimes before being killed. About sixteen thousand people were imprisoned at S-21, but no more than ten are thought to have survived. Kaing Guek Iev kept meticulous records of the victims, which are likely to serve as key evidence in any trial.

Chum Mey, a seventy-seven-year-old prison survivor, said he was glad that Kaing Guek Iev had been indicted. "I want to confront him," he said, "to ask him who gave him the orders to kill the Cambodian people."

Kaing Guek Iev was one of five top Khmer Rouge figures against whom prosecutors filed introductory submissions with the investigating judges, asserting that there is a well-founded basis for criminal liability. Under the tribunal's procedure, the criminal charge initiates a judicial investigation which could lead to an indictment and then the main trial. The names of the other four have not yet been released. The court consists of Cambodian and international jurists and was authorized by the United Nations and Cambodia in 2004.

The United States strongly supports bringing to justice those responsible for the atrocities committed under the Khmer Rouge regime. The United States has provided more than seven million dollars over the past decade for research to document the crimes of the Khmer Rouge.

Virtually all of Cambodia's thirteen million people have relatives who perished under the Khmer Rouge. In order for the country to move forward, it is vital that Khmer Rouge leaders be held accountable for their crimes. Respect for the rule of law and the existence of effective institutions of justice are Cambodia's best defense against future abuses and a fitting memorial to those who lost their lives or loved ones to the Khmer Rouge.