



## **Khmer Rouge twisted prisoner's ankles with pliers**

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A woman tortured by the Khmer Rouge testified Wednesday that she has spent most of her life trying to forget the horrors she endured in the 1970s and never spoke of the past, even to her husband and children.

Chin Meth, now 51, told the U.N.-backed Khmer Rouge tribunal that her ankles and wrists still bear scars where she was bound for beatings — attacks that sometimes lasted until she passed out. Her testimony is the first by a female survivor.

"They beat me with a wooden stick. They twisted my ankles with pliers," she said, speaking softly and staring straight ahead. "While they tortured me, they tied my hands behind my back and beat me very seriously. It was terrifying."

Her testimony came at the trial of Kaing Guek Eav — better known as Duch — who headed the regime's notorious S-21 prison in Phnom Penh. Up to 16,000 people were tortured under his command and later taken away to be killed during the Khmer Rouge's 1975-1979 rule. Only a handful survived.

Chin Meth, a former Khmer Rouge soldier, said she was arrested in 1977 and accused of being a spy for the CIA or Russia's KGB — a common accusation leveled at prisoners. She was sent to S-21 and kept there for 15 days of hard torture, she said.

"I told them I have no idea what the CIA or KGB is," she said.

She was transferred to a different prison in Kandal province, about 25 miles (40 kilometers) south of the capital, where other soldiers from her unit were being kept for "re-education."

At the new prison, she was held in a house not a cell and security guards ordered her to look after fruit and vegetable gardens that fed the Khmer Rouge officers. She stayed there until Vietnamese forces invaded to oust the Khmer Rouge in 1979, and then embarked on three decades of trying to forget.

"I did not want to hear anything about my past," she said. "When I got married, I never told my story to my husband and children."

"When I heard the word 'prison,' I felt so much suffering," she said.

S-21, also known as Tuol Sleng, is now a genocide museum with pictures of prisoners lining its walls. Chin Meth said she visited the prison for the first time in November 2007 after filing her initial testimony with the tribunal, which was seeking survivors' accounts.

"I saw my picture, and the pictures of my friends. I almost fainted, but someone caught me," she said.

Duch (pronounced DOIK) told Wednesday's hearing that he doubted Chin Meth spent time at S-21, because the only survivors were prisoners with skills who could serve the Khmer Rouge. All others under his command were sent for execution. He then suggested she might have survived a different prison, known as S-24, which was more of a "re-education" facility.

Three S-21 survivors testified recently. They included two artists who painted propaganda portraits of Khmer Rouge leaders and a mechanic who fixed the officials' cars, tractors and typewriters.

Duch, 66, is the first senior Khmer Rouge figure to face trial and the only one to acknowledge responsibility for his actions. He is charged with crimes against humanity and is the first of five defendants scheduled for long-delayed trials by the U.N.-assisted tribunal.

Senior leaders Khieu Samphan, Nuon Chea, Ieng Sary and Ieng Sary's wife, Ieng Thirith, are all detained and likely to face trial in the next year or two.