



Nuon Chea denies Khmer Rouge intended to destroy Buddhism
Kong Sothnarith
December 16, 2011

Jailed Khmer Rouge leader Nuon Chea continued to defend the regime's policies in a major trial on Thursday, saying the movement was not bent on destroying Buddhism, despite the systematic destruction of pagodas across the country.

Those who accuse the Khmer Rouge of seeking to destroy the religion "do not understand Buddhism," he said in testimony before the UN-backed tribunal. Buddhism resides in the heart, and in meditation, he said, not in temples.

Thousands of pagodas were destroyed, along with the banking and education systems, after the regime came to power in 1975.

"The party had no measures to eliminate Buddhism," Nuon Chea told the court under questioning.

However, tribunal attendee Lay Sochea, a monk from Wat Neakvoan pagoda in Phnom Penh, disagreed.

"It's just his pretext," he said. "He demolished Buddhism when he was in power."