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KR Slogan Was Secrecy Policy

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The Khmer Rouge tribunal continued yesterday with the testimony of former telegraph operator Suon Kanil, alias Neang, who spent his days tapping out telegrams from the Central Zone to Pol Pot's main headquarters in Phnom Penh's Office 870.

Kanil – who joined the revolution in 1971 and worked at a Khmer Rouge printing press before receiving training in telegraphy – explained to the court that the Democratic Kampuchea regime's policy of secrecy, as exemplified in its motto: “No know, no see, no hear, no talk.”

“It means we had to mind our own business,” he said.

For Kanil, minding his own business extended to ignoring the inner workings of the Office 870 command centre, which he was “not entitled to contact” on his own behalf.

“The management or operation at 870 was beyond my knowledge,” he said.

However, Kanil was aware of the procedure for arrest orders, which for upper-level cadres, he said, had to come from the top.

“When the arrests were made, the decision was made from the central committee [in Phnom Penh], because indeed there would be always a decision before an arrest was made, and Ke Pauk only acted on orders,” he said, referring to the deceased high-ranking Khmer Rouge military commander believed to have helped lead a bloody wave of internal purges in the Northern Zone.

Court adjourned at the midday break yesterday, with Trial Chamber President Nil Nonn announcing that the witness scheduled to testify in the afternoon had been in a car accident and hospitalised, and a replacement near Phnom Penh could not be found.

According to a court spokesperson, hearings will not resume until January 8.