

## **Gloves Come Off At Khmer Rouge Tribunal**

**Bridget Di Certo**

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Tempers flared between Ieng Sary defence counsel Michael Karnavas and Senior Assistant to the International Co-Prosecutor Tarik Abdulhak at the beginning of the second day of testimony from leading Khmer Rouge expert David Chandler.

American lawyer Karnavas took Chandler and Abdulhak to task for what he called a “wholly improper” private communication between the two after the closure of proceedings on Wednesday.

Abdulhak fiercely defended the exchange in which he alleged Chandler made a scheduling inquiry and Abdulhak deflected this enquiry to the expert’s minders.

“The counsel for Mr Ieng Sary is effectively seeking to intimidate the witness. He expressed his intention to place [Chandler] under great fire, made off-hand comments about his bias. [This is] a preview of the attack they think they can put him under,” Abdulhak said.

According to court documents, Ieng Sary’s defence objects to the calling of Chandler as an expert on the grounds he is unreliable and biased because of an “inaccuracy in an earlier book” and his previous association with the Documentation Center of Cambodia.

Chandler spent most of the day discussing the lead-up to the Khmer Rouge’s seizure of absolute power over Cambodia in April 1975, articulating how every move of the regime was carefully orchestrated by the high-level collective leadership for whom failure was not an option.

Policies were designed for when the Khmer Rouge came in power, not if they came into power, Chandler said.

“It seemed to observers that [evacuating Phnom Penh] was an unprecedented move, but it came to light later that this had been predicted,” in pre-1975 evacuations, Chandler said. “It was a repetitive pattern that reached a climax in Phnom Penh.”

The policy of purging enemies was also being implemented by the collective leadership of the Khmer Rouge's guerilla movement, Chandler said.

“The significance is that when they were able to do it, Khmer Rouge were eager to put these policies into place, not to test them, but to put them in place full stop, failure was unthinkable. It was the work of traitors,” he said.

Chandler discussed the reign of terror the Khmer Rouge installed through threatening mantra such as “keeping you is no gain, losing you is no loss”.

“Even [King-Father Norodom] Sihanouk knew he was symbolic ... he acted in public as if he was a leader, but he said ‘when the time comes they will spit me out like a cherry pip’,” Chandler recounted from his research.