

Witness Recounts Life At Khmer Rouge Prison Centre
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The team for “Brother No. 2” Nuon Chea renewed efforts yesterday to probe into the role that current Foreign Affairs Minister Hor Namhong played at the Khmer Rouge detention camp Boeung Trabek in the late 1970s.

Lawyer Andrew Ianuzzi cited passages from a memoir written by the day’s witness, Ong Thong Hoeung, who was detained at Boeung Trabek on two separate occasions.

The passages in *I Believed in the Khmer Rouge* place Namhong – who had, like the witness, returned to Cambodia from abroad – in a group of privileged prisoners who were “faithful servants of Angkar”, the name given to the Khmer Rouge leadership.

Another sentence described Namhong, who was the Cambodian ambassador to Cuba from 1973 to 1975, as a “docile” instrument of camp leaders.

Several objections from the prosecution ended the line of questioning almost as soon as it began. Namhong, a former prisoner at Boeung Trabek, has responded vehemently to previous allegations that he ran the facility.

Nuon Chea’s defence team filed a complaint with the court on Tuesday claiming that remarks written by Namhong and published in the Post last week accusing the lawyers of “stirring up controversy” about the issue amounted to government interference.

Despite the suggestive descriptions of Namhong in his book, Hoeung gave testimony yesterday that clearly distanced him from Khmer Rouge leadership in Boeung Trabek.

“I don’t think that Mr Hor Namhong was ever a cadre of the Khmer Rouge,” he said. “I never had a document with me that Hor Namhong was one of the members of the Communist Party of Kampuchea, and I don’t think at that time that Hor Namhong ever knew of the existence of S-21.”

“And I am not acting in the defence of him but in the defence of justice,” added Hoeung, who was among the intellectuals lured back to Cambodia from France to aid in the revolution, only to end up

in camps.

Earlier, Hoeung, who flew from his home in Brussels to testify, gave emotional testimony about the massive personal losses he incurred under the Khmer Rouge.

His was separated from his family. His parents were executed. Brothers, sisters-in-law, nieces and nephews also died. The house in his hometown was demolished.

And then there was the hunger. He remembers seeing someone so desperate for food that he picked off the skin of a dead cow and ate it.

The only close family that survived, he said, were his wife, sisters, and one niece.

“It is still in my vivid memory although it is over,” he said.

Court resumes on Monday.