

Ieng Sary's Poor Health Delays Khmer Rouge Court

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Attempts to fully “stabilise” the health of former Khmer Rouge Deputy Prime Minister Ieng Sary seem to have failed yesterday, prompting the Khmer Rouge tribunal to cancel the day’s testimony after receiving reports the 86-year-old’s health had taken a turn for the worse and failed to improve.

Ieng Sary’s health, though poor, had appeared “stable” at 8:15am, Kem Samsan said, “However, at 10 past nine, he had another problem ... and he was dizzy and fatigued. He said that his memory declined, and that he would not be able to attend the proceedings today.”

Judge Jean-Marc Lavergne asked Samsan to explain Ieng Sary’s symptoms from “a clinical standpoint”, in an apparent bid to find out if accused regime leader was crying wolf.

“I could say that he was feeling dizzy, and I noted that because every time he was walking to the toilet, he had to hold his bed to keep his balance,” Samsan told the court. “When it comes to his loss of memory, I cannot conclude whether it was the case.”

Defence counsel Michael Karnavas said that in light of the developments, Ieng Sary would not be waiving his right to be present at the testimony of witnesses Suong Sikoeun and Ong Thong Boeung, both of whose testimony directly pertains to the octogenarian’s role in the Democratic Kampuchea regime.

“He wishes to participate, albeit from the holding cell, in the examination of these two critical witnesses,” Karnavas said in court, noting that, in better health, Ieng Sary had been an active participant in his own defence, offering advice and opinions to his defence team.

After the adjournment, Karnavas told the Post that the court’s overall treatment of the situation had been “reasonable” but wondered if it would continue to be so reasonable if Ieng Sary’s condition failed to improve.

“Will the court really uphold an international standard, or will they come up with an

inventive measure that will not live up to an international standard?” Karnavas asked, speaking hypothetically about a future situation in which his client’s health had permanently rendered him incapable of participating in his defence.

“If you see how the Ieng Thirith situation has been resolved so far, I think it’s a shameful indictment of the institution,” Karnavas added, referring to the court’s attempts to treat the former social affairs minister’s dementia in hopes of making her fit to stand trial. “[She] cannot meaningfully exercise her fair trial rights, and yet there she is, incarcerated.”