



## **Khmer Rouge prison chief: babies were ‘smashed’**

**AFP**

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The former jail chief of the Khmer Rouge regime told Cambodia's UN-backed war crimes trial Monday that his staff had murdered babies by smashing them against trees at a "killing field".

Kaing Guek Eav, better known by his nom de guerre Duch, is on trial for overseeing the torture and extermination of 15,000 people who passed through the hardline communist movement's notorious Tuol Sleng prison.

"The horrendous images of those (babies) smashed against trees, yes, that was done my subordinates," Duch said, referring to paintings depicting the atrocities committed by members of the 1975 to 1979 Khmer Rouge regime.

"I myself do not blame my subordinates, because they worked under me. I am criminally responsible," the 66-year-old added.

The former maths teacher, wearing a grey short-sleeved shirt, was responding to prosecution questions about the regime's policies at Tuol Sleng, where prisoners were often accompanied by their children.

Duch apologised at his trial late March, saying he accepted blame for the extermination of thousands of people at the prison, which served as the centre of the 1975-1979 regime's security apparatus.

But he has denied prosecutors' claims that he played a central role in the Khmer Rouge's iron-fisted rule, and maintains he only tortured two people himself and never personally executed anyone.

Duch faces life in jail if convicted by the court, which does not have the power to impose the death penalty.

Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot died in 1998 and many believe the UN-sponsored tribunal is the last chance to find justice for victims of the regime, which killed up to two million people.

The tribunal was formed in 2006 after nearly a decade of wrangling between the United Nations and the Cambodian government, and is expected to next year to begin the trial of four other senior Khmer Rouge leaders also in detention.