

# The Phnom Penh Post

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## **S-21 Survivors Still Struggle Vong Sokheng and Bridget Di Certo February 1, 2012**

As a survivor of horrific detention, interrogation and torture at Phnom Penh's S-21 interrogation and detention facility, Chum Mey is no longer interested in the promises of long-delayed justice from the Khmer Rouge tribunal – he is interested in money.

“I can sell 5 to 30 magazine biographies a day,” 81-year-old Chum Mey said, squinting into the sun.

“I will spend less time out at the court because the tribunal is biased towards the suspects and does not take care of the victims,” he said, adding: “I am old now and I don't have much time to save money, therefore I have to make money from selling my story.”

Chum Mey, and fellow S-21 survivor, artist Bou Meng, said they each make between US\$50 and \$100 profit a day selling their biographies to tourists visiting what is now the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum.

“I participated in the 77 days of hearing during the trial of Duch,” Chum Mey said.

“But I compare my current living conditions against those of Duch – who is living in prison and has a good bed and good health care.”

While the Documentation Centre of Cambodia has assisted Chum Mey to publish his biographical magazine, Khmer Rouge tribunal public affairs officer Huy Vannak penned Bou Meng's biography, which he began selling last year around the start of Case 002.

“At this former torture centre, I survived because of my paintings, and now I am surviving here by selling my biographies,” said Bou Meng, who, like the recently deceased Vann Nath, was kept alive so that his artistic abilities could be used by the Khmer Rouge regime.

Huy Vannak said he authored the book to help bring some measure of reprieve to long-suffering survivor Bou Meng.

“I am happy to see Bou Meng make some benefit from my book and to improve his living conditions in the future and as the author, I am not looking for any of his income,” Huy Vannak told the Post.

When Vietnamese forces swept through Phnom Penh on January 7, 1979, they found

only seven survivors shackled in the detention facility that had interrogated, tortured and ultimately executed more than 12,000 people

Bou Meng and Chum Mey are the only two survivors who are still alive. While Bou Meng was kept alive by the murderous regime for his artistic abilities, Chum Mey's clever technical skills made him a useful asset at the centre, where both were spared a deadly fate.

However, sitting outside his humble book stand, Bou Meng said he feels nervous to hear talk of a sentence reduction for former S-21 chairman, Kaing Guek Eav alias Duch.

Duch's lawyers have appealed the sentence against him and have asked the tribunal to acquit their client and release him. "I no longer care about the tribunal, because that court ignores me," Bou Meng said.

The Khmer Rouge tribunal hands down its decision on Duch's appeal this Friday.