

At Tribunal, US Author Outlines Role Of Khieu Samphan In The Khmer Rouge
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Jailed Khmer Rouge leader Khieu Samphan held the “highest position” possible within the Khmer Rouge but wielded little power, a US expert on the the regime told the UN-backed tribunal on Tuesday.

Khieu Samphan, who is on trial for atrocity crimes alongside two other aging regime leaders, was the former head of state, said David Chandler, a leading scholar and author on the Khmer Rouge.

However, that position “was not the equivalent to the person or the people who exercised power in Democratic Kampuchea,” he told the court, referring to the regime by its official name.

Prosecutors have been working to connect Khieu Samphan, the former head of state; Nuon Chea, the regime’s chief ideologue; and Ieng Sary, its foreign minister, in joint criminal activity for their leadership roles in the regime.

Khieu Samphan’s position existed in the constitution of the regime, but “we know absolutely nothing about what came with it,” Chandler said. “The Communist Party of Democratic Kampuchea had more power than the institutions mentioned in the constitution.”

There was also a semblance of a separation of powers in the regime, but only to have it not appear as a totalitarian state, he said. “A lot of operations were secret,” he said. And the structure of the regime had “a lot of overlapping power, of jurisdiction.”