

Cambodian tribunal set to try Khmer Rouge leaders **June 27, 2011**

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia -- Now old and infirm, four of the top surviving members of the Khmer Rouge's ruling elite are about to face justice, decades after their plans for a Communist utopia in Cambodia left an estimated 1.7 million people dead by execution, medical neglect, overwork and starvation.

On Monday a U.N.-backed tribunal, comprising Cambodian and foreign jurists, will begin trying them on charges including crimes against humanity, war crimes, genocide, religious persecution, homicide and torture. With Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot long dead, this may be the nation's best chance to hold architects of the "Killing Fields" and the enslavement of millions of Cambodians accountable, though all four say they are innocent.

Nuon Chea, 84, was Pol Pot's No. 2 and the group's chief ideologist. Khieu Samphan, 79, was its former head of state. Ieng Sary, 85, was its foreign minister, and his 79-year-old wife, Ieng Thirith, was minister for social affairs.

Together, they form what the tribunal calls Case 002. The chief jailer of a notorious Khmer Rouge prison was convicted last year in the breakthrough Case 001. Political and financial pressures on the tribunal are raising doubts over whether there will ever be a Case 003.