



## **FACTBOX-Cambodia's Khmer Rouge regime and tribunal June 21, 2011**

June 21 (Reuters) - A United Nation-backed tribunal investigating the atrocities of Cambodia's 1920s "Killing Fields" era will hear its most high-profile case next week when four of the most senior surviving Khmer Rouge leaders appear in the court. Here are some facts about the Khmer Rouge and how Cambodia is dealing with its legacy:

### **THE KILLING FIELDS**

- Pol Pot's ultra-Maoist Khmer Rouge guerrillas defeated a U.S.-backed government and launched a bloody agrarian revolution in 1975, five years after Prince Norodom Sihanouk was overthrown in a right-wing coup.
- An estimated 1.7 million people -- 21 percent of the population -- were executed or died of disease, starvation or overwork over the next four years in rural labour camps.

### **THE FALL OF THE KHMER ROUGE**

- Vietnamese troops, backed by the then Soviet Union, invaded in late 1978 and swept the Chinese-backed Khmer Rouge from power. The Vietnamese installed a communist government made up mostly of Khmer Rouge defectors, including current Prime Minister Hun Sen. Vietnam withdrew its forces in 1989.
- The Khmer Rouge fled from the Vietnamese invasion to the Thai border and, along with two Western backed non-communist guerrilla factions, battled the Phnom Penh government until a 1991 peace treaty which cleared the way for the return of hundreds of thousands of refugees from Thai camps and a U.N.-run election in 1993. But the Khmer Rouge rejected the polls and kept up a low-level insurgency until their last fighters were defeated or surrendered in 1998.

### **SLOW ROAD TO JUSTICE**

- The 1991 treaty enabled Sihanouk to return as a constitutional monarch and a coalition government dominated by Hun Sen emerged from the 1993 elections.
- In August 1999, two years after Cambodia asked the United Nations and the international community to help set up a Khmer Rouge tribunal, the government said it wanted to maintain overall control of the court.
- The plan languished for years. Draft laws flew back and forth between Cambodia and the United Nations, and the tribunal's legitimacy was questioned in Cambodia.

### **CRUNCH TIME**

- The United Nations gave the go-ahead for a three-year trial in April 2005, but officials disagreed over the legalities of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, as the joint tribunal is known. By mid-2011, the ECCC had spent close to \$110 million.

- They finally agreed on the basic rules of the court in June 2007 and the first full trial, that of Khmer Rouge prison governor Kaing Guek Eav, better known as Duch, began in February 2009. Four more suspects were indicted that year. Attempts to pursue further indictments in 2011, reportedly of two former military commanders, were rejected by co-investigating judges.

#### CONVICTIONS

- The tribunal has delivered one verdict, sentencing Duch to 35 years in prison, commuted to 19 years, after finding him guilty in 2010 of war crimes and crimes against humanity while chief of Phnom Penh's S-21 prison, a former school where more than 14,000 people were tortured and sent off to be killed. He has appealed.

#### ON TRIAL

- Four senior cadres face trial on charges ranging from crimes against humanity and war crimes to murder and torture. They are ex-president Khieu Samphan, former foreign minister Ieng Sary, his wife Khieu Thirith, and another former minister, "Brother Number Two" Nuon Chea.

- Pol Pot, architect of the Khmer Rouge's "Year Zero" revolution, was purged by comrades under Khmer Rouge military chief Ta Mok in 1997. Pol Pot died in their custody in April 1998. Ta Mok was captured after the Khmer Rouge disintegrated in 1998 and died in government custody in 2006.

#### LIVING LEGACY

- Thirty years after the regime fell, more than 20,000 ex-Khmer Rouge soldiers and workers live freely in the country.

- Hun Sen blasted the tribunal after an international co-prosecutor recommended five more suspects be investigated. Hun Sen said arresting more suspects could spark civil war.

- While there is no evidence linking Hun Sen to any atrocities, his government includes many former cadres and is close to China, which analysts say does not want its years of support for the Khmer Rouge to be raked up. (Compiled by Bangkok Newsroom; Editing by Robert Birsell)