

United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
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Chairman Kerry On Cambodia Tribunal Decision

WASHINGTON, D.C. -Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry (D-MA) issued the following statement today in response to the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia's (ECCC) sentencing of Kaing Guek Eav, better known as Duch, to 19 years in prison:

"Today's sentencing helps deliver an important message that we must steadfastly pursue justice for the victims of the world's most horrific crimes. The conviction of the head of the Khmer Rouge's most infamous prison represents a historic, if delayed, step forward for Cambodia. While not without its imperfections, the trial has allowed thousands of Cambodians to witness and participate in judicial proceedings for the unspeakable atrocities suffered by millions.

"I support the ECCC as it moves forward with its investigations and urge all involved to ensure the process lives up to and reflects the imperatives of justice, transparency, and reconciliation for the Cambodian people. These proceedings have touched an entire generation of Cambodians. Some participated directly in the trial as civil parties, tens of thousands of others attended in person, and millions more followed along on TV, radio, or the Internet. The families of Duch's victims have been given the chance to face their abuser and confront their country's traumatic past. I look to this process not only to provide justice, but to allow some closure for the families of the victims."

Duch is the former leader of the infamous Tuol Sleng prison camp run by the Khmer Rouge movement in the late 1970s, and he oversaw the systematic torture and execution of approximately 14,000 people. Chairman Kerry played a role in the creation of the Khmer Rouge tribunal, traveling to Cambodia on a number of occasions to help structure the tribunal in ways acceptable to both the Cambodian government and the United Nations.

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