

# The Phnom Penh Post

## **Ieng Thirith charged with genocide at KRT**

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The Khmer Rouge tribunal on Monday charged former social action minister Ieng Thirith with genocide, a court spokeswoman said, making her the fourth suspect to face the charge.

Yuko Maeda said the case against Ieng Thirith had been expanded to include genocide and war crimes, as well as homicide, torture and persecution under the 1956 Cambodian penal code, which was in effect during the regime. Ieng Thirith had previously been charged with crimes against humanity.

The genocide charge stems from the regime's treatment of Vietnamese and the Cham Muslim minority group, Maeda said.

The tribunal said last week that Khmer Rouge Brother No 2 Nuon Chea, foreign minister Ieng Sary and head of state Khieu Samphan had all also been charged with genocide, marking the first time the charge had been brought against regime leaders by an internationally sanctioned court.

Several scholars have questioned the soundness of applying genocide with respect to Khmer Rouge-era crimes, and others have challenged the case against Ieng Thirith herself.

Laura Summers, a Cambodia expert at the University of Hull in the UK, said in a recent interview that she was "doubtful to this day that there is sufficient evidence for a 'safe' prosecution of at least some of the four defendants for the crimes for which they were charged at the time of their detention".

She added: "It seems to me that evidence of serious criminal action or intent on the part of Mrs Ieng Thirith, who was not a senior party official, might be especially weak."