



## **In Hearing, Ieng Sary Defense Seeks His Release July 28, 2011**

Defense lawyers for Ieng Sary, the former Khmer Rouge foreign minister, said Tuesday he should be released from the UN-backed tribunal, claiming he was already tried for genocide under the Vietnamese occupation when the movement was ousted in 1979 and was protected by an amnesty deal years later.

In the second day of a preliminary hearing that marks the opening of a landmark trial of four former Khmer Rouge leaders, defense told the court its attempt to try Ieng Sary amounted to double jeopardy. Ieng Sary was tried in absentia at the Vietnamese court and sentenced to death for genocide, in what most legal experts consider an illegitimate trial.

Ieng Sary went on to help lead the Khmer Rouge in a guerrilla insurgency that lasted nearly two decades. He defected with 20,000 soldiers in 1996, under a broad government amnesty. Legal experts say the current tribunal is unlikely to accept the defense arguments, given the wide array of serious crimes he is now facing.

Ieng Sary is charged with war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and other crimes related to the Khmer Rouge leadership, under which up to 1.7 million Cambodians died. He has denied those charges, as have defendants Nuon Chea, Khieu Samphan and Ieng Thirith.

In interviews with VOA Khmer, former Khmer Rouge cadre who were visiting the court Monday said they want their former leaders to be freed or have reduced sentences, in part due to their old age.

Khim Kheng, 53, a former cook and cleaner at the foreign affairs ministry, led by suspect Ieng Sary, said she only saw him commit good acts.

“He told us to save food in order to help poor people in rural areas,” she said. “About torturing his own people, I never saw that.”

In meetings held at the ministry, Ieng Sary discussed poverty reduction and development, she said. He never discussed a policy of killing, and when the Khmer Rouge was ousted, all of the officials from the ministry were still alive.

Um Ros, 82, a former Khmer Rouge soldier in the Southeastern Zone, said soldiers there did not have a policy of killing but built boats for people to use for fishing. The

killing was the work of soldiers in the Southwest Zone, led by “The Butcher” Ta Mok, he said.

“My first request is that Duch and Khieu Samphan be freed, because the two of them were used by the top leaders,” he said. “Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, Ta Mok and Nuon Chea should be punished heavily, because they ordered people killed.”