



Khmer Rouge trial begins despite ‘political pressure’

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The four most senior former members of the Khmer Rouge regime still alive will go on trial today at a genocide tribunal that has been shaken by allegations that it has buckled under political interference. It is expected the hearing will highlight uncomfortable details about the role of nations such as the US, China and the UK in supporting the Maoist-inspired rebels and even creating the circumstances in which they swept to power.

The trial in Phnom Penh will see four ageing former rebel leaders brought before the court where they will face charges of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and murder. The defendants – the regime's second-in-command, Nuon Chea, the former foreign minister, Ieng Sary, the former social affairs minister, Ieng Thirith, and the ex-head of state, Khieu Samphan – all deny the charges.

"We are addressing probably the most serious crimes committed since the Second World War – 1.8 million people at least were killed in the space of [four] years – and I think the Cambodian people still expect answers," Andrew Cayley, the international co-prosecutor in the case, said last night from the Cambodian capital. "Certainly, the relatives of those who perished and the handful of those survivors who are left are seeking justice."