



**Khmer Rouge jailer says ordered to “smash” prisoners
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Pol Pot's chief jailer told a U.N.-backed tribunal on Thursday thousands of Cambodians were tortured and killed at his notorious S-21 prison under orders from the top Khmer Rouge leadership.

Duch, the first of five Pol Pot cadres to face trial for the 1975-79 reign of terror in which 1.7 million Cambodians died, said the fate of S-21's prisoners was sealed at a meeting of the top leadership chaired by "Brother Number One" Pol Pot.

"The principle was that whoever was arrested and interrogated had to be smashed. That meant be killed," Duch said, quoting from what he said were minutes from the October 9, 1975 meeting.

The 66-year-old former maths teacher, whose real name is Kaing Guek Eav, was chief of the prison also known as Tuol Sleng where more than 14,000 enemies of the revolution were tortured and killed.

With no death penalty in Cambodia, Duch faces life in prison if convicted by the joint U.N.-Cambodian tribunal on charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, torture and homicide.

Duch, who became a born-again Christian years after the Khmer Rouge were ousted by a Vietnamese invasion, has accepted blame for the deaths at S-21 but said he was only following orders.

Duch described on Thursday how S-21 was structured. He reported to then Defense Minister Son Sen, who was killed in 1997 under orders from Pol Pot, who died the following year.

"Pol Pot initiated the policy and Son Sen was there to implement it," Duch said. Most of the S-21 victims were tortured and forced to confess to spying and other crimes before they were bludgeoned to death in the "Killing Fields" outside the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh.

Duch said he forwarded interrogation reports up the chain of command to Son Sen, and later "Brother Number Two" Nuon Chea after he replaced Son Sen as Duch's supervisor.

Nuon Chea and the other cadres to face trial -- former president Khieu Samphan, ex-foreign minister Ieng Sary and his wife -- have denied knowledge of any atrocities. Duch's trial, which began in earnest last month, is expected to run until July.