



## **Khmer Rouge jail boss Kaing Guek Eav turned peasants into killers**

**AFP**

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*The Khmer Rouge regime's prisons chief told Cambodia's UN-backed war crimes court Wednesday how he recruited young peasants to be turned into torturers and killers.*

Duch, whose real name is Kaing Guek Eav, last week apologised at his trial for crimes against humanity, accepting blame for the extermination of 15,000 people who passed through the regime's main prison, Tuol Sleng.

"The initiative to recruit staff was mine... We did not use the word 'killing office' - they were invited to do revolutionary work. And what was the revolutionary work at the time? It was killing," Duch told the court.

The 66-year-old sat wearing a white polo shirt, answering questions about M-13 prison, a secret jungle centre he ran during the 1971 to 1975 Khmer Rouge insurgency against the then US-backed government, before he ran Tuol Sleng.

When M-13 needed staff, Duch said, he would send his deputy to villages to recruit young peasants, who were then subject to approval by the central Khmer Rouge leadership.

Duch has previously told investigators he preferred uneducated young staff "like a blank piece of paper" whom he could instruct to torture confessions of spying from prisoners and then kill them.

The Khmer Rouge were in power from 1975 to 1979, the period when Duch is accused of supervising Tuol Sleng prison and sending thousands of people to their deaths in the so-called "Killing Fields".

The court this week is hearing about M-13 to better understand Tuol Sleng's organising structure.

The former maths teacher has denied assertions by prosecutors that he played a central role in the Khmer Rouge's iron-fisted rule.

Duch faces charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, torture and premeditated murder for his role in the Khmer Rouge. He faces life in jail at the court, which does not have the power to impose the death penalty.

Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot died under house arrest in 1998, and many believe the UN-sponsored tribunal is the last chance to find justice for victims of the regime which killed up to two million people.

The tribunal was formed in 2006 after nearly a decade of wrangling between the United Nations and Cambodian government, and is scheduled to try four other senior Khmer Rouge leaders.