



KRouge regime's 'smash' policy

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The former Khmer Rouge prison chief told Cambodia's UN-backed war crimes court on Monday that the hardline communist regime's entire policy was based on 'smashing' its enemies.

Duch - better known by his nom du guerre Kaing Guek Eav - is on trial for overseeing the torture and extermination of 15,000 people who passed through the regime's notorious main prison.

'The policy of smash the enemies was the (Khmer Rouge) party's policy,' Duch told the court as it resumed after a two-week break.

'The term smash means arrest secretly, and then people who were arrested would be interrogated, tortured, and then executed secretly without the knowledge of their family members,' he said.

Duch is charged with crimes against humanity, war crimes, torture and premeditated murder over the extermination of thousands of people between 1975 and 1979 at Tuol Sleng prison and the nearby 'Killing Fields.'

'The policy of smashing was global. After 17 April 1975, people were arrested and smashed en masse and some were sent to S-21,' he said, using the regime's codename for the torture centre.

The former maths teacher's answers came in response to questions by the judges over the regime's policies.

Duch apologised at his trial late March, saying he accepted blame for the extermination of thousands of people at the prison.

But he has denied prosecutors' claims that he played a central role in the Khmer Rouge's iron-fisted rule, and maintains he only tortured two people himself and never personally executed anyone.

Duch said on Monday that confessions of prisoners were sometimes framed in order to arrest more people. 'I did not have anything to measure whether the confession was true or not,' he said, adding that people who were arrested by the party had to be regarded as enemies.

Duch faces life in jail at the court, which does not have the power to impose the death penalty.