



## **KRouge defendant vows to help court find ‘truth’ June 30, 2011**

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia — A top ex-Khmer Rouge leader on trial for genocide on Thursday vowed to cooperate with Cambodia's UN-backed war crimes court to reveal the truth about the country's "Killing Fields" era.

"I personally am not fully knowledgeable about everything, but I will try from the bottom of my heart to make sure that everything is fully revealed," said Khieu Samphan, the former head of state of the brutal regime.

"This is the most important moment for me and for my compatriots who are eager to know and understand what happened between 1975 and 1979."

Along with "Brother Number Two" Nuon Chea, ex-foreign minister Ieng Sary and his wife, one-time social affairs minister Ieng Thirith, Khieu Samphan faces charges including genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The elderly defendants are the most senior surviving members of a regime whose reign of terror led to the deaths of up to two million people from starvation, overwork or execution. The four deny the accusations against them.

As their trial entered its fourth day with a debate about witness and expert lists, the defence complained that the court had failed to admit many of their proposed witnesses.

Khieu Samphan, dressed casually and reading a brief prepared statement, urged judges to accept his key witnesses "in order to have a fair trial and so that the truth and my honesty and fairness can be revealed".

The 79-year-old also paid his respects to the hundreds of Cambodians, including many monks, who packed the court's public gallery, and acknowledged them with a traditional greeting -- the first suspect to do so.

The public face of the Khmer Rouge, Khieu Samphan has never denied the horrors suffered by the Cambodian people.

But he claims he was an intellectual and a nationalist and knew little, until long afterwards, of the devastation that was wrought under the regime.

Led by "Brother Number One" Pol Pot, who died in 1998, the movement emptied

Cambodia's cities and abolished money and schools in a bid to create an agrarian utopia before they were ousted from the capital by Vietnamese forces.

The initial hearing is set to conclude on Thursday, with full testimony to follow in the coming months.