

Revealed: The Khmer Rouge's face of torture **May 3, 2009**

CNN reporter Dan Rivers tracks down Ta Chan, the chief interrogator of the Khmer Rouge's notorious S-21 prison camp

A groundbreaking documentary sheds new light on atrocities committed in Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge regime of 1975-1979.

The regime killed a greater proportion of their own people - more than 1.7 million men, women and children - than any other regime in the 20th century.

Five Khmer Rouge leaders are now in court facing justice, including Kaing Guek Eav, also known as Duch, who was head of Security Prison 21 (S21).

But prison interrogator Ta Chan continues to live in a remote Cambodian village. While he has not been charged with any crime, survivors say Ta Chan played a key role at S21.

In exclusive footage from 1996, Ta Chan gives a guided tour of what he said at the time was a recently closed Khmer Rouge prison in the jungle.

Rarely seen footage from 1998 of the last known TV interview with ailing Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot, who led the country into the horrors of genocide, is also shown.

Among the programme's extraordinary moments, a survivor of S21 sees himself on film shot the day he was rescued. At the time, Norng Champhal was a young child whose mother was among those executed.

More than 30 years later, he breaks down in tears as he sees the images and recounts the horror of the death camp. He describes how he survived by hiding in a pile of discarded clothes.

For survivors, feelings for the trials are mixed as both defence and prosecution lawyers reveal the credibility of the UN-backed war crimes tribunal is being jeopardised by the corruption allegations.

While there are no suggestions the judges or lawyers are involved, employees of the court's Office of Administration described pressure to provide kickbacks to

supervisors to keep their jobs. The employees say the combined amounts of the kickbacks were large: 'Thousand dollars. 30 or 40 thousand US dollars a month.'

The Chief of Defence Section of the trial, Richard Rogers, adds: 'It (the trial collapsing) is becoming a real possibility... the victims who've been waiting for 30 years for these trials deserve justice...peace...closure.'

The UN's internal affairs body confirmed to CNN it has investigated the alleged corruption in the court administration, but would not share the results of the investigation.

The Cambodian government also confirmed an investigation, but says no evidence of corruption was found.

Ex-Khmer Rouge: Death was certain in his prison

Incarceration at the Khmer Rouge's most notorious prison was tantamount to a death sentence since not even the movement's supreme leader had the right to release prisoners, the centre's chief told a special tribunal on Thursday.

Kaing Guek Eav, alias Duch, commanded the Phnom Penh prison where as many as 16,000 men, women and children are believed to have been tortured before being sent to their deaths. Only a handful survived.

Duch, 66, is being tried by a U.N.-assisted genocide tribunal for crimes against humanity, war crimes, murder and torture.

'When people were perceived as enemies and arrested and sent to S-21, no one was entitled to release them. Even Pol Pot, the most senior person in the Khmer Rouge, acknowledged that he had no right to release any people,' Duch said.

'That was the party line,' he said.

Duch (pronounced Doik) recalled that one prisoner, a dentist, was arrested and later petitioned Pol Pot to keep him alive so he could treat the Khmer Rouge leaders. He did not say what happened to the dentist.

During the testimony, Duch said that before 1970, the Khmer Rouge had no internal purges and dared not harm people under their control because they needed their support to fight the war against the U.S.-backed central government.

The killings and purges began in 1973, two years before the Khmer Rouge victory in April 1975, he said. Then about a year later, thousands of people were arrested throughout the country and branded as 'state enemies.'

'It is clear that the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) cannot avoid being prosecuted for the crimes it committed,' he said.

'Everyone was involved, including myself, but the senior leaders, they were the direct perpetrators.'

Duch said he never refused or failed to implement orders from above and thus was able to survive.

Duch is the first senior Khmer Rouge figure to face trial and the only one to acknowledge responsibility for his actions. Senior leaders Khieu Samphan, Nuon Chea, Ieng Sary and Ieng Sary's wife, who are all being detained, are likely to be tried in the next year or two.