



Next Khmer Rouge trial possible by end of year January 14, 2010

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia — The second trial to be held by Cambodia's Khmer Rouge genocide tribunal may begin by the end of the year, a spokesman said Thursday.

The tribunal is evidence and took more than 800 statements from witnesses, complainants and the charged persons. seeking justice for the estimated 1.7 million people who died from execution, overwork, disease and malnutrition under the 1975-79 Khmer Rouge regime.

Lars Olsen, a spokesman for the UN-backed tribunal, said the chamber's investigation into four former top leaders of the communist group has been concluded.

He said the co-investigating judges are seeking to issue their formal indictment by September, and that the earliest possible time for the trial would be the end of the year.

The tribunal last year tried its first defendant, prison chief Kaing Guek Eav, for crimes against humanity, war crimes, murder and torture. Its verdict is expected in the next few months.

Kaing Guek Eav, also known as Duch, commanded S-21 prison in Phnom Penh, where up to 16,000 people were tortured and taken away to be killed.

The five suspects being held for the second trial are the Khmer Rouge's top ideologist, Nuon Chea; former Foreign Minister Ieng Sary; his wife, former Social Affairs Minister Ieng Thirith; and former head of state Khieu Samphan. They face charges of genocide in addition to crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Olsen described the conclusion of the investigation into their cases "a milestone."

A tribunal press release said the investigation collected tens of thousands of pages of documentary evidence and took more than 800 statements from witnesses, complainants and the charged persons.