



## **Cambodians told Khmer Rouge security camps designed to kill**

**Luke Hunt**  
**April 23, 2009**

In Cambodia, the trial of one of Pol Pot's surviving henchmen has been told how security camps designed by the Khmer Rouge and operating as early as 1971 were designed from the outset to torture and kill.

More than 200 villagers who lived around camp M13 attended the court to hear evidence from Kaing Guek Eav, known as Duch, on how their district was used as a prototype for death camps that would later be constructed by the Khmer Rouge.

M13 was built in a communist-controlled area in 1971 while the Khmer Rouge were still fighting the U.S.-backed Lon Nol government. Four years later Pol Pot and his ultra-Maoists came to power and established 196 death camps across the country, including the dreaded S21.

Duch initially ran M13, and is on trial for crimes against humanity after overseeing the extermination of more than 16,000 people while at the helm of S21 between 1975 and 1979.

Seventy-year-old Khai Sorn lived near M13, but as a result life was tough and her days on the family farm were numbered. She says during the Pol Pot regime life was very hard because the people were not allowed to stay at home and she was forced to live in the jungle.

Duch described the camps as a security office. He said each one, including S21 and M13 had a duty to detain, to torture, to interrogate, and finally to smash and kill.

Tribunal spokesperson Helen Jarvis said the villagers were trucked in as part of broader attempts to open the legal process to the public and the victims of Khmer Rouge regime. But she says they may have gotten more than they bargained for.

"... that has to be shocking for anybody," Jarvis said. "Indeed, I think the villagers probably did not expect they would hear something quite that straight forward when they arrived here today."

About two million people, or a third of Cambodia's population, died under the Khmer Rouge. But ongoing conflicts and international politics meant efforts to find some kind of justice were delayed until earlier this year.

Duch is the first senior Khmer Rouge figure to face trial. He is the only one of five in custody to acknowledge responsibility for his actions. The others are likely to be tried in the next year or two.