



Khmer Rouge verdict expected in early 2010

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A verdict in the trial of the Khmer Rouge's chief jailer — its first senior leader to face justice — is expected early next year, the tribunal's spokesman said Thursday.

Kaing Guek Eav — better known as Duch — headed the Khmer Rouge's notorious S-21 prison, where up to 16,000 people were tortured and later taken away to be killed. He is charged with crimes against humanity and his trial began in March, more than 30 years after the ouster of the ultra-communist group, whose 1975-1979 reign left an estimated 1.7 million Cambodians dead.

"We expect that Duch's hearing can finish by the end of September or early October and a verdict will be announced early next year," tribunal spokesman Reach Sambath said.

The U.N.-assisted tribunal has been dogged by delays caused by internal disputes and corruption allegations that repeatedly forced it to push back the start of proceedings.

The tribunal is a legal hybrid, operating under the framework of Cambodian law but with mixed teams of Cambodian and U.N.-selected foreign prosecutors, defenders and judges.

Duch (pronounced DOIK), 66, 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, Ieng Thirith, are detained and likely to face trial in the next year or two.