



Victims upset as Khmer Rouge leader walks out June 28, 2011

Cambodia: Top Khmer Rouge leader on trial for genocide and other atrocities walked out of Cambodia's UN-backed court on Tuesday for a second straight day, to the dismay of survivors.

"Brother Number Two" Nuon Chea, wearing a woolly hat and his trademark sunglasses, refused to stay for proceedings that will focus on preliminary legal objections by co-defendant Ieng Sary, a former foreign minister.

"I will walk out and return to my detention facility," Nuon Chea said, adding he would only return to "actively participate" when his own case was discussed. The 84-year-old was then escorted out by three security guards.

The four accused face charges including genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes over the deaths of up to two million people from starvation, overwork, torture or execution during the Khmer Rouge's brutal 1975-79 rule.

Nuon Chea's defiant actions mirrored those on the first day of the trial on Monday, when he left the courtroom in protest at the handling of the investigation and legal proceedings, saying he was "not happy".

The four elderly defendants are allowed to be absent if they refuse to cooperate. Their complex trial, expected to take years, is seen as vital to healing the traumatised nation's deep scars, and the regime number two's walk-out upset Khmer Rouge survivors.

"Nuon Chea is a bad person. I am quite disappointed with his behaviour," said farmer Thein Ouen who was one of hundreds watching the hearing from the public gallery.

"I think he does not want to take part in the trial. We want him to tell us the truth about the Khmer Rouge, but he is trying to hide it."

The other three accused, who also include former head of state Khieu Samphan and one-time social affairs minister Ieng Thirith, remained seated and appeared to be paying close attention the proceedings.

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.