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CIVIL PARTIES PAY TRIBUTE TO DEAD SOULS

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On the eve of the judgment in the trial of Kaing Guek Eav (alias Duch), chief of Tuol Sleng (S-21) prison, civil parties to the case attended a Buddhist ceremony in the courtyard of the prison—now a museum—to pray for the souls of the men and women that perished there and at the killing fields at Choeung Ek. The civil parties and their families lit incense sticks and lay lotus flowers and gifts in honor of their loved ones. This was followed by traditional prayers

led orange-robed monks, who according to belief are able to relay the prayers to the souls of the perished.

It was an especially emotional ceremony for the civil parties and their families as they returned to the site where their loved ones were tortured and sentenced to death. Traditionally, ceremonies like the one at Toul Sleng are held in the familial home or at the site where the loved ones are buried, but sadly, as was the case with so many Cambodians during the era of the Khmer Rouge, many of the bodies of those who disappeared at S-21 and Choeung Ek have never been found and identified. After the ceremony several civil parties and their families spoke to the Cambodia Tribunal Monitor, expressing their anger and pain, but also reiterating their hope that tomorrow's judgment will bring about some sort of justice.

In a strange turn of events, the roof of one of the wings of the former prison collapsed in a storm several days ago. Some have interpreted the collapse as a sign from angry or restless spirits anticipating tomorrow's judgment.