



Khmer Rouge leader appeals UN detention

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THE Khmer Rouge's former head of state has appealed against his detention by a UN-backed tribunal over his alleged role in Cambodia's genocide.

Khieu Samphan, 76, was the last of five top regime cadres arrested by the court in November. He has been charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Famed French lawyer Jacques Verges, who has defended some of the world's most notorious figures, and his Cambodian co-lawyer Say Bory filed the appeal, the tribunal spokesman said.

"Khieu Samphan's co-lawyers have filed an appeal against the detention order," spokesman Reach Sambath said.

The appeal has already been forwarded to the tribunal's pre-trial chamber, which will decide whether to grant him bail.

The spokesman declined to say on what grounds the appeal was filed, and Khieu Samphan's lawyers were not immediately available for comment.

Khieu Samphan has denied his alleged role in the regime's atrocities, saying he was never part of Khmer Rouge's inner-circle and had no decision-making powers.

The court's investigating judges said he "facilitated and legitimated, at the highest level, the continued perpetration of criminal acts throughout Cambodia."

They said Khieu Samphan could flee the country or intimidate potential court witnesses if he were free.

Up to two million people were executed, or died of starvation and overwork as the communist regime emptied Cambodia's cities, exiling millions to vast collective farms in a bid to forge an agrarian utopia.

The Khmer Rouge also abolished money, religion and schools.

Five former regime leaders have been detained so far by the tribunal alleged roles in the Khmer Rouge's brutal 1975-79 rule. Trials are now expected to begin in mid-2008.