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Ta Mok Denied Transfer to Calmette Hospital

BY PHANN ANA AND ERIK WASSON

The exact physical condition of ailing former Khmer Rouge military commander Ta Mok was unclear Friday as medical personnel revealed that doctors had attempted to move Ta Mok from the military hospital to Calmette Hospital but were denied permission to do so.

Family members also said Friday that they were denied access to the military hospital.

Lawyer Benson Samay said Thursday that his client had fallen into a coma and was near death but a doctor at Preah Ket Mealea military hospital said on condition of anonymity that Ta Mok was conscious but refusing food and water.

"He has a pain in the throat but he refuses our treatment," the doctor said after attending an urgent meeting led by the hospital's director Ly Sovann on Friday.

The doctor claimed that a team of five physicians treating Ta Mok wanted to move him to Calmette Hospital, which, he said, has better facilities, but were denied permission by authorities at Calmette. He also claimed that members of the medical team are not signing papers related to Ta Mok's care in order to shield their identities. Ly Sovann could not be reached for comment.

Dr. Heng Taikry, the director of Calmette, confirmed that at some point the military had requested to transfer Ta Mok, but he had refused the request due to security concerns.

"I refused to let him in...because it would be difficult for us to control him. We would need security guards to protect him." he said.

Heng Taikry said that Calmette decided to send a doctor and specialized equipment to Preah Ket Mealea instead. He confirmed that consulting doctors are withholding their names.

Nine relatives of Ta Mok arrived in Phnom Penh on Friday from the provinces but were refused entry to the hospital, Uk Samen, 48, a niece of Ta Mok said.

"I am shocked by their decision." she said. Niece Ven Ra said that the family was negotiating with the military court to obtain permission for a visit later on Friday.

Adhoc investigator Chan Soveth said that doctors told him Friday morning that they were pumping fluid from Ta Mok's lungs. Ta Mok has been diagnosed with tuberculosis.

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