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Commune Chiefs: Where Was UN From 1975-1979?

Prak Chan Thul

Kandal Province-Criticism of the UN for failing to help Cambodia when it was under Khmer Rouge rule dominated a question-and-answer-session at the Khmer Rouge tribunal premises Tuesday that was attended by more than 500 commune chiefs. Yu Min, chief of Bati district's Trapaing Krasaing commune in Takeo province, said the killings between 1975-1979 only occurred because the UN and the international community ignored the situation. "From now on, I ask the UN to work carefully," he said. Pruos Son, a commune chief from Kandal province, accused UNTAC troops of being too cowardly to penetrate Khmer Rouge areas during the early 1990, while other commune chiefs demanded to know why the Khmer Rouge was allowed to hold a seat at the UN during the 1980s. Sean Visoth, the tribunal's director of administration, fielded some of the questions, saying the UN had not intervened because Cambodia was sealed off and little information was available to outsiders. "The world was in a Cold War situation. Some countries pretended not to know anything," he said. Michelle Lee, the tribunal's UN-appointed deputy chief of administration, did not respond to the commune chiefs' remarks.

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