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Lawyer Says Jailed Ta Mok Is Seriously Ill

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A lawyer for former Khmer Rouge commander Ta Mok said Tuesday that his aging client is seriously ill and receiving inadequate medical treatment, and urged the Military Court to allow him to be treated outside prison.

Benson Samay said the former Khmer Rouge military strongman, who is one of the likely candidates for prosecution in the Khmer Rouge tribunal, is suffering from worsening respiratory problems and is currently unable to walk.

"He has a coughing disease and it is becoming more serious," Benson Samay said.

He asked the Military Court on Friday to allow Ta Mok to be treated outside the military prison where he has been held since 1999, but has not yet received a reply, he said. "The outside hospital would pay more attention and we can take care of him day and night."

Beson Samay said that the doctor provided by the Military Court is not providing Ta Mok with regular checkups.

Military Court President Ney Thol confirmed that Ta Mok can hardly walk, but said he has been treated following Benson Samay's request and is now feeling better.

"If he becomes seriously ill, we will allow him to go to the hospital," Ney Thol said, adding that doctors have analyzed Ta Mok's blood and found nothing serious. Ta Mok's niece, Ven Ra, said by telephone from Pailin that she is concerned about her uncle's health.

"I am afraid if he dies in prison, it will be an injustice for him because he cannot defend himself in front of the court, to help find the real killers," she said.

She added that she is concerned about Ta Mok's safety under the care of government officials.

Tribunal spokesman Reach Sambath said he could not comment on Ta Mok's medical care because it is not yet the tribunal's responsibility.

Ney Thol said he does not believe Ta Mok will die before standing trial.

"I don't have that impression. He is still firm," Ney Thol said.

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