

Bail Denied in Cambodia War Crimes Trial

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PHNOM PENH, Cambodia -- A U.N.-backed genocide tribunal ordered a former Khmer Rouge prison chief kept in detention Monday on charges of crimes against humanity.

After an hour of deliberations, the tribunal said Kaing Guek Eav, also known as Duch, might try to flee or threaten witnesses.

Defense lawyers had demanded his release last month, arguing his rights were violated because he has spent more than eight years in jail without trial.

Duch was arrested in 1999 and detained at a Cambodian military prison on war crimes charges before his transfer to the tribunal's custody in July.

The five-judge panel presided over by Chief Judge Prak Kimsan ordered Duch kept in detention, saying that if he were released, his life could be in danger or he might try to flee and could pose a threat to witnesses.

The decision by the panel made up of three Cambodian judges and two U.N.-appointed foreigners was unanimous, said Helen Jarvis, the tribunal's public affairs chief.

Canadian prosecutor Robert Petit had told the judges at a Nov. 21 hearing that if Duch was released, he could be harmed by both "accomplices wishing to silence him and by the relatives of victims seeking revenge."

Chea Leang, a Cambodian prosecutor, said Duch's trial may begin in mid-2008 but gave no specific date.

Francois Roux, Duch's lawyer from [France](#), said the defense team plans to raise the custody issue again during the trial.

Duch, 65, oversaw the S-21 prison, which has since been converted into the popular Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum.

As many as 16,000 men, women and children were tortured at S-21 before being transported out of Phnom Penh and executed. Only 14 people are thought to have survived.

The Khmer Rouge has been blamed for the deaths of an estimated 1.7 million people during their rule from 1975 to 1979. Some observers fear the group's surviving leaders might die before being brought to justice. The movement's notorious chief, Pol Pot, died in 1998.

Duch is one of five former Khmer Rouge leaders held in connection with the Communist regime's brutal rule of Cambodia. He became the first defendant to appear before the tribunal's judges.

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