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Khmer Rouge Leader 'Treated in Bangkok'

Ieng Sary, the former Khmer Rouge Brother Number 3, suffered heart trauma on November 20 and was flown to Bangkok where he received treatment for just over a week, the Phnom Penh Post newspaper is reporting this morning.

The newspaper quotes "a physician in Pailin with close ties to the family."

Ieng Sary, now 77, returned to his home in Phnom Penh on Nov 28, where he remains "seriously ill," said the newspaper, adding that his family is gravely concerned for his life.

Ieng Sary was the best known Khmer Rouge during the Pol Pot regime, where he served as foreign minister. He and his wife Khieu Pommary also were in the hierarchy of seven communists who ran Cambodia during their reign of terror from 1975 until January, 1979.

In any case, Ieng Sary always seemed likely to escape prosecution planned by a Cambodia-based, mixed local-and-international tribunal for the fast-dying Khmer Rouge leadership.

As always, prosecutors preparing to charge Khmer Rouge leaders in court had no information.

Peter Foster, spokesman for the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) also told the Phnom Penh Post that the ECCC would not comment on individuals, however notorious, who have not been charged, the newspaper reported.

Ieng Sary was sentenced to death in absentia by the 1979 "people's court" organised immediately after the Vietnamese invasion overthrew the Pol Pot regime.

Prime Minister Hun Sen, himself a former Khmer Rouge commander who turned against the movement and defected to Vietnam, organised a royal pardon for Ieng Sary in 1996 after the Pol Pot follower officially defected to the government with hundreds of ex-Khmer Rouge fighters.

One of the key issues meant to be resolved by the ECCC's draft internal rules was whether pardons—such as that received by Sary—would be honoured or whether such individuals could potentially face new charges.

On Nov 25 the ECCC announced that the plenary session had failed to approve the draft rules because of a failure to reach consensus on certain key points.

"There is no guarantee that he will even be charged," Foster said. "People have assumptions, but the investigators don't even tell us [the press office] which cases they are building," according to the Phnom Penh Post report.

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