

Duch Undergoes Operation Under Heavy Guard

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As dozens of military police stood guard around Calmette Hospital Friday, doctors successfully operated on Comrade Duch, former chief of the Khmer Rouge's notorious Toul Sleng prison, his lawyer Kar Savuth confirmed.

After an operation on his enlarged prostate gland, Duch was transferred to Preah Ket Melea military hospital, where he will spend about 10 days recuperating, Military Court Director Ney Thol said "So far he is healthy and there is no problem", Ney Thol said.

Sean Visoth, head of the government's Khmer Rouge tribunal task force, said he was unaware of the operation. He added that he hoped Duch, whose real name is Kaing Guek Eav, will survive to stand trial. "The important issue is that we want Duch to stay healthy and alive because he is one of the important persons testify at the trial", Sean Visoth said.

Duch, 63, has been in solitary confinement since his arrest in 1999, between 1975 and 1979, he was head of S21, where he presided over the deaths of about 14,000 prisoners. He escaped Phnom Penh on the eve of the Vietnamese invasion and was not heard of until 1999, when he was found alive and working for an NGO in northwestern Cambodia.