



Torture recalled at Khmer Rouge trial

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The U.N.-backed trial against a former member of Cambodia's Khmer Rouge has elicited testimony of torture, brutality and death at the hands of the defendant.

Kaing Guek Eav, also known as Duch, is the first of five members of the Khmer Rouge to be tried at the tribunal in Phnom Pehn. He is charged with crimes against humanity and war crimes as the commandant of Tuol Sleng prison, where at least 14,000 people were tortured and sent to their deaths, The New York Times reported Wednesday.

Duch said he took responsibility for the torture and killings at the facility, and also expressed "heartfelt sorrow."

In sometimes-graphic testimony, the court heard during the last two weeks descriptions of how toenails were ripped out and listened to a man who said he drank his own urine to survive, the Times reported.

The Khmer Rouge regime caused the deaths of about 1.7 million people between 1975 and 1979.

Most of the witnesses' testimony was uncorroborated, and some faced challenges from the defense and skepticism from the judges, the Times said. In particular, the judges have questioned statements made by witnesses designated as "civil parties," a move that permits alleged victims to join the case and seek reparations from defendants who are convicted.

Duch's trial began in March, but has been slowed by procedural delays and accusations from rights groups of corruption and manipulation by the Cambodian government.