

## Defendants



**Salot Sar, Pol Pot:** served as Prime Minister of Democratic Kampuchea and leader of the Khmer Rouge

**Born:** May 19, 1928

Pol Pot was born into a wealthy family and educated in Cambodia and France. Originally involved in anti-colonial political activity, Pol Pot sought to create an authentically Cambodian communist party. He was instrumental in the formation of the Workers Party of Kampuchea (WPK) and eventually became the party leader. The WPK moved its organizational center to the forests of northern Cambodia, where Pol Pot spearheaded efforts within the party against Vietnamese influence prevalent in Cambodian communism at the time. The WPK eventually was renamed the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) which came to be called the Khmer Rouge. CPK openly opposed the Sihanouk government. When the military overthrew Sihanouk and installed Lon Nol as the head of state, Pol Pot saw an opportunity to attack. The Khmer Rouge defeated Lon Nol's army in 1975, and Pol Pot assumed the position of Prime Minister in 1976. Determined to achieve agrarian collectivization, Pol Pot initiated the mass exodus from city centers into the countryside. This mass relocation resulted in thousands of deaths. Pol Pot's adoption of Maoist ideals prompted the development of a social system in which people were categorized as either "base people" or "new people." Pol Pot initiated policies to target for elimination the "new people"—intellectuals, professionals, urban-dwellers. At his instigation the Khmer Rouge conducted widespread purges and massacres. His agricultural policies caused additional hundreds of thousands of deaths. After the Vietnamese invasion in 1979, Pol Pot returned to the jungles and led the Khmer Rouge until he "retired." He was arrested and subjected to a "show trial" in 1997. At the conclusion of this process he was subject to house arrest for life. He died on April 15, 1998.

Source: BBC News, [Pol Pot: Life of a Tyrant, 14 April 2000](#).



**Khang Khhek Ieu ("Duch"):** Head of Special Security for Khmer Rouge; served as commandant of the infamous prison "S-21" ("Tuol Sleng").

**Born:** November 17, 1942

**Charges:** Crimes against humanity; torture. Trial set to begin early 2009.

Duch was the head of "Santebal," the national security wing of the Khmer Rouge. In this capacity, Duch may be directly connected to the abuse or murder of 15,000 Cambodians.

Duch was an early member of the Khmer Rouge leadership. From 1971 to 1974, prior to the Khmer Rouge takeover, Duch held Khmer Rouge prisoners in a facility named "S-21." After the Khmer Rouge overthrew the government, Duch moved S-21 closer to the capital and reestablished the prison in a former high school outside of Phnom Penh which came to be known as "Tuol Sleng." In this notorious facility, Duch and his security officials allegedly extracted forced confessions of political opponents through torture. Victims reportedly admitted they were "agents of foreign powers," which provided a rationale for their executions. The family members of political targets were also killed. On one day in 1977, 114 women who were either married or related to previously executed men were executed. A note signed by Duch in response to an inquiry about the disposition of nine children arrested because of political associations of their families, simply stated "kill them all." Other documents provide evidence that Duch oversaw experiments performed on prisoners and prisoners' bodies involving torture tactics. Duch has confessed to killing prisoners personally in the waning days of the Khmer Rouge. As the Vietnamese invaded, Duch remained in S-21, trying desperately to destroy all documents revealing his role in the Khmer Rouge regime. He escaped to Thailand in 1979.

In the 1980s and early '90s, Duch lived in Cambodia in hiding as a teacher as under the name of "Hang Pin," in a town near the Thai border. In 1995, his wife was murdered during an attack on their home. Shortly thereafter Duch converted to Christianity. He joined an evangelical church and become a lay pastor. In 1999, he turned himself in to the authorities. His trial is anticipated to begin in early 2009.

Source: Ben Kiernan, "[Notes from a slaughterhouse](#)," *Bangkok Post*, 30 May 1999.



**Nuon Chea, "Brother Number 2":** Chief political ideologist of Khmer Rouge; served as Pol Pot's "right hand man."

**Born:** July 7, 1926

**Charge:** Crimes against humanity.

Nuon Chea worked with the Cambodian Communist party from its 1960 inception. He served as the Deputy Secretary of the Central Committee and a member of the Standing Committee. This high status made him Pol Pot's "right hand man." He is accused of playing a leading role in crafting the Khmer Rouge's policy of targeted execution. In order to consolidate the Party's ideology, Chea led its efforts to target political opponents. Many of the details of Chea's role have been provided by Duch's statements since his arrest. According to Duch, Chea orchestrated mass "purges" within the party. These purges involved direct orders from Chea to kill particular political opponents. Further, Duch testified that Chea directed his activities at S-21. According to Duch, on one occasion when the prison was overcrowded, Chea recommended killing 300 arrested soldiers, rather than interrogating them and obtaining forced confessions to expedite processing. In 1998, Nuon Chea surrendered, publicly "confessed," and was given amnesty. His confession infamously lamented the deaths of Cambodians alongside the deaths of animals killed in the transition to the Khmer Rouge's classless society. After the collapse of the Khmer Rouge, he lived in a small village near the Thai border where he was arrested on September 19, 2007. Chea currently awaits trial in custody.

Sources:

Stephen Heder and Brian Tittmore, [\*Seven Candidates For Prosecution: Accountability For The Crimes Of The Khmer Rouge\*](#), War Crimes Research Office, American University, June 2001.

Seth Mydans, "[Former Khmer Rouge Leader Arrested](#)," *New York Times*.



**Ieng Sary:** Deputy Prime Minister of Foreign Affairs of Democratic Kampuchea from 1975 and 1978.

Born: October 24, 1925

Charges: Crimes against humanity; war crimes

Ieng Sary, sometimes referred to as “Brother Number 3” in the Khmer Rouge regime, began his association with Pol Pot while they studied together in France. Sary was also related to Pol Pot by marriage when he wed Khieu Thirith, the sister of Pol Pot’s wife. Sary fled to the jungles of Cambodia with Pol Pot to escape persecution from the Sihanouk government. He later went to Beijing where he actively supported groups that

would ultimately be instrumental in overthrowing Cambodia’s government and installing the Khmer Rouge to power. Once the Khmer Rouge assumed control of the country in 1973, Sary returned to Cambodia and was a leader in foreign policy.

Sary oversaw the recruitment of former non-Communist diplomats into the Communist party. Many of these diplomats participated in ideological training. However, many were arrested by the foreign ministry and sent by Sary to S-21 where they were executed. Sary made frequent public statements in which he encouraged “smashing” opponents of the regime. “Smashing” reportedly was a euphemism for systematic executions. These statements allegedly demonstrate his complicity with and encouragement of atrocities. There is evidence to suggest that Sary was instrumental in attaining coerced confessions from some prisoners of the Khmer Rouge. Sary also played a key role in convincing expatriate Khmer intellectuals to return to the country, upon which many were executed. In 1996, Sary was pardoned after his defection from the Khmer Rouge. He and his wife were arrested on November 12, 2007. They both await trial.

Source: Stephen Heder and Brian Tittmore, [\*Seven Candidates For Prosecution: Accountability For The Crimes Of The Khmer Rouge\*](#), War Crimes Research Office, American University, June 2001.



**Ieng Thirith:** Served as Former Minister of Social Affairs of Democratic Kampuchea

**Born:** c. 1932 (birth day is unknown)

**Charges:** Crimes against humanity

Ieng Thirith, originally Khieu Thirith, was educated in France. There she met and married Ieng Sary, a man who would become foreign minister under the Khmer Rouge. Her sister married Pol Pot. She fled to the jungle along with her husband and Pol Pot when the Communist Party faced persecution in Phnom Penh. Upon the Khmer Rouge's ascension to power, Thirith became Minister of Social Affairs and head of Democratic Kampuchea's Red Cross. During the Khmer Rouge-instituted transition to an agrarian society, Thirith was assigned the duty to tour the country and evaluate health conditions. She noted the widespread health crisis that was developing and blamed it on "anti-revolutionary" forces throughout the country. This prompted a series of "purges" by Pol Pot resulting in numerous executions. Thirith allegedly helped orchestrate purges throughout the country as well as targeted for execution those within the Ministry of Social Affairs. Thirith and her husband were arrested on November 12, 2007. They both await trial. Thirith allegedly suffers from dementia.

Source: "[Ieng Thirith: A pioneer among female leaders of the Khmer Rouge,](#)" *International Herald Tribune*, 12 November 2007.



**Khieu Samphan:** served as President of Democratic Kampuchea

**Born:** July 27, 1931

**Charges:** Crimes against humanity, war crimes

Khieu Samphan, educated in France, returned to Cambodia in 1959 and wrote for a leftist newspaper. The government closed the newspaper and arrested Samphan. He was forced to remove his clothes in public and be photographed. He was elected to the National Assembly in 1962. When political tensions increased, Samphan disappeared into the jungle to join Pol Pot's growing army. Though assigned to the largely ceremonial role of President of Democratic Kampuchea, Samphan was a close affiliate of Pol Pot. One of his primary functions in the government was to serve as a public spokesman for the Party. His rigorous defense of the regime's policies has led to accusations that he is one of the primary instigators of the Cambodian genocide. He also gave speeches denouncing "foreign infiltration," and there is evidence to suggest he had intimate knowledge of the purges being instituted throughout the country. Samphan's participation in the Party continued after the Vietnamese invasion. In 1985, he assumed leadership of the Democratic Kampuchean faction formerly led by Pol Pot. He withdrew from Phnom Penh when the Khmer Rouge was excluded from elections in 1993. He lived in relative peace until he was arrested on November 13, 2007. He also wrote a history of Cambodia in which he highlighted Pol Pot's commitment to social justice. He awaits trial.

Source: Stephen Heder and Brian Tittmore, [\*Seven Candidates For Prosecution: Accountability For The Crimes Of The Khmer Rouge\*](#), War Crimes Research Office, American University, June 2001.



**Chhit Choeun, Ta Mok, “Brother Number 5,” “The Butcher”:**  
served as Khmer Rouge Secretary of the Southwest Zone

**Born:** c. 1926 (birth day unknown)

Chhit Choeun, who became known as “Ta Mok,” was born into a wealthy family and became a Buddhist monk. He left the order when he at age 16 to join in the resistance to French rule. He became a member of the Khmer Rouge in 1964, and quickly rose to become a leader in the Central Committee and a general. When the Khmer Rouge came to power, he was appointed the military leader in the Southwest Zone. There he earned the nickname “Butcher” because of the mass purges he allegedly oversaw. One purge allegedly resulted in 30,000 deaths. Evidence links Ta Mok to ordering arrests and executions in the Southwest Zone. He also may have known of other mass executions and failed to stop or encouraged the atrocities. Documents indicate Ta Mok ordered subordinates to “smash” particular opponents of the regime. After the fall of the Khmer Rouge, Ta Mok continued to direct Pol Pot’s army in the northern area of Cambodia. After a split with Pol Pot, Ta Mok arrested the former leader who died, reportedly of a heart attack, in his custody in 1998. Ta Mok was arrested on March 6, 1999. He died in custody of a respiratory ailment on July 21, 2006, while awaiting trial.