

Cambodia: Court rejects genocide appeal of former Khmer Rouge leader



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Judge upholds conviction of Khieu Samphan, 91, head of state for the murderous regime

Today's ruling marks the final decision by the Cambodian court

Two million people died during Khieu Samphan's rule from starvation, sickness and murder

Responding to the Appeals decision by the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) to uphold the guilty verdicts of genocide, crimes against humanity, and grave breaches of the Geneva Convention, against Khieu Samphan, former leader of Khmer Rouge, Ming Yu Hah, Amnesty International's Deputy Regional Director of Campaigns, said:

"Today's ruling should serve as another reminder that accountability for the most serious crimes has no expiration date. "The tribunal has served as an important platform for public discussion of the Khmer Rouge's murderous reign, and as a place where victims' voices can be heard, recorded and publicised. But as today's ruling is set to be the court's last, the work of supporting victims and survivors is not finished. "Impunity for human rights violations remains a serious problem in Cambodia today, and if authorities seek to uphold international law and human rights then they must ensure that their national court system is independent, impartial and able to make justice a feature of Cambodian society rather than an exception."

The Khmer Rouge seized power in Cambodia in 1975 and

governed until 1979. Experts estimate that some two million people died during their rule from starvation, sickness and murder.

Khieu Samphan, aged 91, was the regime's head of state. He was convicted in first instance in 2018 alongside Nuon Chea, the former second in command of the Khmer Rouge, of crimes against humanity, war crimes as well as the genocide of ethnic Vietnamese people.

At the time, both were already serving life sentences after they were first convicted of crimes against humanity related to the forced population movements organised by the Khmer Rouge in a separate ECCC trial in 2014 and confirmed on appeal in 2016. Nuon Chea died in 2019.

The ECCC, known informally as the Khmer Rouge tribunal, has completed only one other case. In 2010 Kaing Guek Eav, known as Comrade Duch, who operated the Khmer Rouge's Tuol Sleng torture chambers in Phnom Penh, was convicted of crimes against humanity and war crimes.

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Press Contacts

1. Press Office

press@amnesty.org

+44 (0) 20 7413 5566

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