

Trials of Khmer Rouge begin

by UPI

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia -- Trials of Khmer Rouge officials began Monday in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 30 years after the end of the vicious communist reign that left 1.7 million people dead.

The first defendant in the tribunal, Kaing Guek Eav, 66, addressed the court Monday, identifying himself with his name and various aliases, The New York Times reported. He is charged with crimes against humanity, war crimes and various crimes under Cambodian law, including murder. His trial is expected to last four months.

He was the commander at the main prison and torture facility during the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-79). More than 14,000 people died at the prison, which has been converted into a museum.

Four senior Khmer Rouge leaders also were charged by the tribunal -- Noun Chea, chief propagandist and second only to despot Pol Pot; Khieu Samphan, the former head of state; Ieng Sary, the ex-foreign minister, and his wife, Ieng Thirith.

The four were members of the Khmer Rouge Central Committee under Pol Pot, who died in 1998. They are being held in a detention facility next to the tribunal in Phnom Penh, the Times said. Their trials are not expected to begin until next year.

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