

Punishment for torturer 'too short,' say Catholics

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Thirty-five years in jail for a former Khmer Rouge prison chief found guilty of murder, torture and crimes against humanity is simply too short, say Catholic Cambodians.

"Duch should be in jail for his whole life," said Eung Try, 60, whose six brothers and sisters died during the regime's brutal 1975-1979 rule in Cambodia.

Duong Savong agreed. "Compared to other criminals, Duch's verdict seems too short," said the catechist.

Sixty-seven-year-old Kaing Guek Eav, better known as Duch, and the former chief of the infamous Tuol Sleng or S-21 prison, was sentenced by a joint UN-Cambodian court today.

He was found guilty of war crimes and causing the deaths of more than 14,000 people.

"I think justice has been meted out to him and the victims," said Salay Sangkhem, 58, whose family members died during the regime's rule.

"It is an international court with Khmer and international prosecutors, so I think the verdict can be accepted."

Duch was arrested by Cambodian authorities in 1999. At that time, he reportedly claimed to be a "born-again" Christian. He was formally charged and detained on July 31, 2007.

His trial was the first international tribunal on atrocities committed under the regime.

About 1.7 million people died from starvation, torture and in labor camps during its rule.

Other Khmer Rouge leaders awaiting trial are Nuon Chea, former president of the National Assembly; Khieu Samphan, former head of state; Ieng Sary, former foreign minister; and Ieng Thirith, who was in charge of social welfare under the Khmer Rouge.

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