



Ex-KRouge interrogator recounts torture techniques

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A former interrogator at the main Khmer Rouge prison told Cambodia's UN-backed war crimes tribunal Tuesday how staff were taught to torture prisoners using electric shocks and suffocation.

Prak Khan, 58, was testifying against Khmer Rouge prison chief Duch, who is accused of overseeing the torture and execution of around 15,000 people held at Tuol Sleng prison, also known as S-21, in the late 1970s.

"We were taught how to torture the prisoners and to avoid the prisoners dying; otherwise the confession would be broken and we would be punished," Prak Khan told the court.

The witness, who was assigned to be an interrogator in late 1976 after being initially hired as a prison guard, said Duch and other high-ranking Khmer Rouge cadres often taught torture methods.

"We were trained how to whip the prisoners with the sticks, on how to electrocute, (and) on how to use the plastic bag to suffocate them," Prak Khan said.

"Detainees would be told not to make loud noises, not to curse or exchange swear words, or to shout slogans. And they were also warned not to scream while being tortured," he added.

Prak Khan said interrogators would torture prisoners until they confessed to spying on the Khmer Rouge regime and provided names of others in so-called espionage networks.

In earlier testimony, Duch admitted he did not believe that confessions obtained through torture were accurate.

The 66-year-old Duch, whose real name is Kaing Guek Eav, has accepted responsibility for his role governing the jail and begged forgiveness near the start of his trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

But the defendant has consistently rejected claims by prosecutors that he held a central leadership role in the Khmer Rouge, and says he never personally killed anyone.

Led by Pol Pot, who died in 1998, the Khmer Rouge emptied Cambodia's cities in a bid to forge a communist utopia. Up to two million people died of starvation, overwork and torture or were executed during the 1975-1979 regime.