



KRouge jail chief says had brother-in-law tortured

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The chief of the Khmer Rouge's main prison told Cambodia's UN-backed war crimes trial Tuesday that he had his own sister's husband jailed and tortured after the man was accused of espionage.

Duch said he had his brother-in-law locked up at the notorious Tuol Sleng detention centre to protect himself and his family, adding that the man was later killed by the hardline communist movement.

"I vouched for my younger sister and I vouched to educate her, but I could not do that for my brother-in-law," said Duch, who acknowledges overseeing the extermination of some 15,000 people at the jail.

"As a principle, when the husband was arrested the wife was arrested as well. But my younger sister was not arrested and she is still alive today," he added.

The 66-year-old Duch said the brutal regime initially arrested his brother-in-law on spying charges but then released him and allowed to stay at Duch's house.

But Duch later had the man arrested again and sent to Tuol Sleng, a former high school in the capital Phnom Penh that was turned into a genocide museum after Vietnamese-backed forces toppled the Khmer Rouge in 1979.

Duch said that the man later confessed, apparently under interrogation, to being "a member of the enemy network" since before the Khmer Rouge had come to power and of marrying Duch's sister to spy on him.

He said that after his arrest, his brother-in-law tried to protect the rest of the family from the Khmer Rouge's spiralling paranoia, which involved witchhunts for suspected agents for the CIA, KGB and Vietnam and other groups.

"What he was afraid of was that when he was arrested and handcuffed, he wanted to know whether I would be arrested. Because if I was arrested, then the whole family would be gone," Duch said.

Duch, whose real name is Kaing Guek Eav, is the first Khmer Rouge cadre to face trial at the court but denies personally torturing or killing inmates and he insists that he was not a leading figure in the 1975-1979 regime.

Led by Pol Pot, who died in 1998, the Khmer Rouge emptied Cambodia's cities in a bid to forge a communist utopia, resulting in the deaths of up to two million people from starvation, overwork and torture.

Evangelical minister Christopher LaPel told the tribunal Tuesday that Duch was completely changed after the pastor baptised him in 1996 in a river in western Cambodia.

"After he got baptised I can see him as a completely different person... I can see that he (had been) a person that lived in darkness, sadness, with no joy, no love," said Cambodian-American LaPel.

LaPel told the court that although Duch was hiding his identity at the time, the conversion seemed genuine and the pair have prayed and held Bible study together in prison several times since the former cadre's 1999 arrest.

Former maths teacher Duch has regularly expressed remorse to victims and those who worked under him.

One-time Khmer Rouge ideologue Nuon Chea, head of state Khieu Samphan, foreign minister Ieng Sary and his wife, minister of social affairs Ieng Thirith, are also in detention awaiting trial at the court.