



## **Khmer Rouge interrogator feared for his life** **July 15, 2009**

*Senior Khmer Rouge interrogator says even he feared the regime would kill him*

A senior interrogator at the most notorious Khmer Rouge prison told a genocide tribunal Wednesday that even he feared the regime would one day turn on him and order his execution.

He testified at the trial of Kaing Guek Eav \_ better known as Duch \_ who headed the S-21 prison in Phnom Penh. Up to 16,000 people were tortured under Duch's command and later taken away to be killed during the Khmer Rouge's 1975-1979 rule. Only a handful survived.

The interrogator, 76-year-old Mam Nai, told the U.N.-backed court that he was overcome by fear when Duch (pronounced DOIK) stripped him of his main duties after prisoners said he had visited their homes \_ socializing prohibited by the regime.

Mam Nai said that regardless of their loyalty or high-rank, Khmer Rouge officials could be arrested and executed on suspicion of being traitors. Mam Nai himself was allegedly responsible for interrogating and torturing high-ranking members of the Communist Party of Kampuchea accused of plotting against the regime.

An estimated 1.7 million Cambodians died of hunger, disease or were executed during the Khmer Rouge reign of terror in the mid-1970s. The regime was toppled by a Vietnamese invasion in 1979.

"When Duch told me I was implicated and later removed me from my interrogation task, I was so worried that probably Duch no longer trusted me and he would find some kind of pretext to arrest me," Mam Nai said.

In testimony Tuesday, he denied using torture to extract confessions from S-21 prisoners \_ a stark contrast to Duch's earlier recitation of the grisly techniques routinely used.

Duch, 66, is the first senior Khmer Rouge figure to face trial and the only one to acknowledge responsibility for his actions. He is charged with crimes against humanity.

Senior leaders Khieu Samphan, Nuon Chea, Ieng Sary and Ieng Sary's wife, Ieng Thirith, are detained and are likely to face trial in the next year or two.

Mam Nai said while at S-21 prison even his wife never knew of his work because the regime demanded that its members maintain total secrecy.