



More may confess crimes

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A genuine confession by the Khmer Rouge regime's former jail chief might bring more ex-cadres to admit crimes, an expert witness told Cambodia's UN-backed war crimes tribunal on Monday.

Richard Goldstone, ex-chief prosecutor at international courts dealing with Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, was testifying at the trial of Duch, who acknowledges overseeing the killing of some 15,000 people at Tuol Sleng prison.

'If in fact the court finds the confession and remorse genuine... this will be a very important factor that will have positive features,' he told the court via video link from UN headquarters in New York. 'I think it's an important example that will hopefully induce other people to come forward,' he said.

Duch, whose real name is Kaing Guek Eav, is one of the few Cambodians who have accepted responsibility and begged forgiveness for abuses that took place under the 1975-1979 regime's hardline communist rule.

But while the former maths teacher has cooperated with the court, he has not admitted to several allegations that he personally tortured and killed Tuol Sleng inmates and maintains he did not have a leading role in the regime.

Whether or not judges regard Duch's confession as genuine will likely determine the length of his sentence from the court, which does not have the power to impose the death penalty.

Mr Goldstone said that when the judges sentence Duch they ought to weigh the nature of his crimes, the interests of Khmer Rouge victims and the general interests of Cambodian society.

'I think there's almost as many reactions (to international tribunals) as there are victims,' he said.

'While many victims are dissatisfied with the justice they've seen or heard at these tribunals, others have had a more positive reaction and have been able to begin the healing process,' he added.