

# The Phnom Penh Post

## **LETTER TO THE EDITOR: Khmer Rouge trials offer chance to gain insight**

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**December 8, 2009**

Dear Editor,

Last month, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), tasked with prosecuting crimes committed during the period of Democratic Kampuchea, concluded Case 001.

The case investigated Duch, or Kaing Guek Eav, who was the prison chief of S-21, where approximately 14,000 people were forced to confess under torture and ultimately executed. As the Khmer Rouge regime's highest-level security centre, S-21 imprisoned mostly Khmer Rouge cadres and party officials.

Throughout the length of the case, it was evident that Duch was unremorseful, despite his public apology at the onset of the trial in February.

Indeed, some victims viewed his apology with skepticism and expert observers saw it as a strategy for a lesser sentence.

His concluding remarks last week affirm this and his attempt to use the Court as his last battle to defend his belief in the Khmer Rouge revolution.

His words and thoughts remain strikingly inhumane in the eyes of survivors; he has not changed in the least.

The Court's next case, Case 002, is the most political and historically important one because it involves the four highest-ranking Khmer Rouge leaders who are still alive today: Nuon Chea, Ieng Sary, Ieng Thirith and Khieu Samphan.

Many questions concerning Democratic Kampuchea's rule have not been answered. These leaders have not admitted any responsibility for the crimes during this period and instead have blamed lower cadres and others.

Abundant information exists, however, that demonstrate their culpability, including numerous documents detailing their actions and witnesses who can testify to the

formation and implementation of these actions.

Therefore, this trial offers an important chance to uncover and analyse how Khmer Rouge leaders made decisions that caused the deaths of nearly 2 million Cambodians.

Case 002 could provide long-awaited answers to questions that many Cambodians have had regarding Democratic Kampuchea.

Additionally, this case has the potential to offer some justice and relief from the immense pain and suffering bore by victims through the punishment of those responsible.