



Cambodia court rejects bail for Khmer Rouge 'First Lady'

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Cambodia's UN-backed genocide tribunal on Monday rejected an appeal by the former "First Lady" of the hardline communist Khmer Rouge government to be released on bail.

Ieng Thirith, 77, the regime's one-time social affairs minister, is one of five top cadres in the sights of the tribunal over atrocities committed during the regime's 1975-1979 rule.

"The appeal is dismissed. The request to be released on bail is inadmissible," said Judge Prak Kimsan, the president of the tribunal's pre-trial chamber.

"There are well-founded reasons to believe that the charged person may have committed crimes with which she has been charged. There is reason to show that people were arrested from her ministry," the judge said.

The judge also cited Ieng Thirith's furious outburst when she first asked for bail in February. She told members of the court that they would be "cursed to the seventh circle of hell."

Ieng Thirith did not appear today's hearing as she was not well enough to get out of bed, her Cambodian lawyer Phat Pouv Seang said.

"We do not agree 100% with the court decision and will try to pursue this issue in the trial," he said.