



K. Rouge prison chief says he was duped by UN

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The former Khmer Rouge prison chief told Cambodia's war crimes court on Wednesday that UN rights officials duped him into confessing and tried to take him away to be tried in a Belgian court.

Born-again Christian Duch, accused of overseeing thousands of executions, has apologised for his crimes and claimed in earlier testimony that "Christ" had led journalists to track him down.

But he later said he had been tricked into giving a recorded confession a decade ago. Duch -- whose real name is Kaing Guek Eav -- was arrested by Cambodian authorities in May 1999, shortly after photojournalist Nic Dunlop found him hiding in a western Cambodian town.

On Wednesday he said that during questioning by journalists and UN officials in a hotel room before his arrest, local United Nations human rights worker Christophe Peschoux made him think he was obliged to talk.

"Mr Peschoux didn't have any permission from the government yet but acted like a thief who came to me," Duch told the court.

"The United Nations should be more well behaved, and not the way Mr Peschoux treated me," he said, adding that the official shouted at him during several days of interrogation.

Duch apologised last month when his trial started at Cambodia's UN-backed court, accepting blame for overseeing the extermination of 15,000 people who passed through the regime's Tuol Sleng prison, also known as S-21.

But he told the court Wednesday his interviewers gave him 50 dollars to cross into neighbouring Thailand in a plan to have him tried for his crimes in Belgium.

"The international police would arrest me and then I would be sent to Belgium," Duch said, adding he gave the officials a "gentle rejection".

"I asked, if I was to go to prison in Belgium, could my relatives visit me? How could they find the air fare to come visit me?"

Peschoux, now the country representative for the UN's human rights agency in Cambodia, could not immediately be reached for comment.

In earlier testimony Wednesday Duch said he believed Jesus Christ had guided journalists to track him.

"I told Nic Dunlop, 'Christ brought you to meet me.' Duch told the court.

"I said, 'Before I used to serve human beings but now I serve God.'"

Duch told the court he confessed to his role in the 1975 to 1979 regime after hearing Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot state that Tuol Sleng prison never existed.

"I could not bear what Pol Pot said so I had to show my face," Duch said.

"For S-21, I was the chairman of that office. The crimes committed at S-21 were under my responsibility," he added.

Although Duch says he oversaw the brutal prison, he has maintained he never personally executed anyone and has only ever admitted to abusing two people.

The former mathematics teacher has also denied prosecutors' claims that he played a central role in the Khmer Rouge's iron-fisted rule.

Duch, 66, faces life in jail over charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, torture and premeditated murder for his role in the Khmer Rouge. The court does not have the power to impose the death penalty.

Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot died in 1998, and many believe the UN-sponsored tribunal is the last chance to find justice for victims of the regime, which killed up to two million people.

The tribunal was formed in 2006 after nearly a decade of wrangling between the United Nations and Cambodian government, and is scheduled to try four other senior Khmer Rouge leaders.

But the court has been marred by corruption claims and talks between UN and Cambodian officials ended earlier this month without agreement on anti-graft measures.