



Tribunal Suspect Im Chaem Calls Accusations Slanderous
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[Editor's note: Former Khmer Rouge member Im Chaem is among three suspects of atrocity crimes in contentious Case 004 at the Khmer Rouge tribunal. According to court prosecutors, Im Chaem has been implicated in a purge of the Khmer Rouge's Northwest Zone and as head of a security center where an estimated 40,000 people died under the regime. Investigating judges at the UN-backed court have said they have serious doubts as to whether she and other suspects in two cases were among those most responsible for the atrocities of the regime. The judges are in the midst of determining whether these suspects should be indicted and brought to trial. Im Chaem spoke to VOA Khmer in an interview at her home in Anlgong Veng district, Oddar Meanchey province, in July.]

If the court accuses you in this case, do you have any reaction against the prosecutors or your accuser?

No, I don't have much to say, but I want the prosecutor and the reporter to find justice for me because this is a charge on my life. I didn't do it. I just want to emphasize the reason. I don't have any anger or any reaction to have this resolved immediately, but I clearly want justice done. If not, because of this accuser, I'll lose my life.

What do mean, "Lose your life"?

Losing life, like I'm being accused, there are prison terms, and I don't even know about it. If the prosecutor thinks I did bad things he'll bring me to trial and I then wouldn't I lose my life?

Do you think they trumped up the charges or is there any truth to the story? Are there any documents about the case?

I think the person who reported on me totally slandered me. The story is untrue. This is a bad person who plays a game with someone's life.

If the case is brought to court will there be a counter-charge on your part?

I don't know much about suing. Therefore I am counting on you to bring your findings to the prosecutor in order for him to resolve the case to my satisfaction. If not I would be concerned about the charges against other people and myself. I don't know who would want to slander me.

Under the Khmer Rouge why were there so many people killed in the detention camp at Phnom Trayoung? Why would prosecutors bring up this site?

I don't know because when I got there I heard people talking about Phnom Trayoung. They put people with calamity, people who committed faults, there. That's all I know, and I've never seen any of these people, not even once.

What about other prisons in the area? Were you in charge of any one of them at the time?

No. I was not in charge of any prison. I don't know anything, because when I went there it was at the end, and shortly after that the people were all dispersed.

When Tumpaing Thmar reservoir was built, people reportedly weren't given food to eat and were forced to overwork. Did you order the soldiers or the intelligence officers to deny people food and force them to work to death?

No. I don't know. I didn't order people to build Tumpaing Thmar dam. These three are all empty charges. These are very serious charges to bring me to court. That's why I said I have no reason to go to court. But at this moment I am very grateful to you to let me know about these empty charges. I asked for help to solve this issue and to stop asking me all these questions. You can ask me any other questions, but if you ask me these questions, I don't know. I'll stop talking because I don't know.

During that time, the deputy chief of Preah Net Preah district was arrested two days after you took control of Preah Net Preah. Do you know anything about that? Did they kill him?

I met him once; then he disappeared. I didn't investigate further, and I don't even know where they took him.

Does this mean that you weren't involved in the order to arrest people in Trayoung commune or put them in jail in Phnom Trayoung or in any killings?

That I didn't. I don't know because I didn't do it.

Wouldn't it be hard for people to believe you when you said you don't know anything, while you were in charge of an area that had a lot of people killed?

The reason I said I don't know is because I don't know. But if the persons who were in charge before me did something, I wouldn't know, because I went afar just to encourage people to do farming to feed their families. My sole responsibility was to lead people to farm. I don't know of any activities that the people who were in control before me might have done.

Who made the list for the 100,000 names of people in that area? How was it compiled? Why was there a list of names?

The list was given to me when I got there.

Were any persons missing from that list? Why did they bring you the list? How many people did you count at the time?

I saw 100,000 names on the list, but the head count of people I had made from each village added up to only 90,000. There were 10,000 people less than the number of people on the list.

Did they make the list to control the number of people, or for some other purpose?

I don't know for what purpose the people before me were using the list. But when they delivered that list to me I did use it to control the number of people in my district.

Has anyone from the Khmer Rouge tribunal recently come to ask you about what happened in the past, such as the events at Phnom Troyaung?

No. There was a woman from Phnom Penh who said she met three girls at Tumpaing Thmar dam in Preah Net Preah district, but I said I didn't do it. They said I built that dam. I didn't build Tumpaing Thmar dam. So all the accusations leveled at me are false, unsubstantiated and undocumented. Why were the charges so clear at the prosecutor's office? I still have suspicions.

Do you think the suspicion is from not knowing the reasons or from someone who may have reported on you?

I can't be very sure. I can't point the finger to anyone because I'll never know who would've reported on me. So I would like to send a message through you to the prosecutor who wants to find justice to make sure not to accuse people just like that. The person who reports is lying and slandering. This is the point where I'm not happy.

Are you worried over these accusations? Do you have any concern even if the case does not go to court or does not lead to an arrest warrant?

I'm focusing my concern toward the person who accuses me. I don't know who would have done this. The case involves life and death and is politically motivated. It is far different from my practices and actions, like earth and sky.

If the prosecutor uses the report to issue a warrant for your arrest and others, what will you do?

If they come to see me, fine. If they ask me to go to court, I won't go. If they take that person for further clarification, it's fine. As for me, if they come to clarify with me at

home I will say the same thing as I just said. I don't know or I won't say anymore than that. But what will happen to the person who makes these false accusations?

There is confusion between the prosecutors in the sense that the foreign prosecutors want to have the prosecution and the arrest, but the national prosecutor doesn't. Did you know about this?

No. Not at all. About my case, I didn't even know that it involved the prosecutors. I didn't know it at all. Therefore I am grateful to you to have learned about my case today. I thank you very much and wish you good luck. You brought me the news to wake me up from my sleep and to learn that I have been falsely accused.