



FACT SHEET

POL POT AND HIS PRISONERS AT SECRET PRISON S-21

Published by The Documentation Center of Cambodia



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Searching for the Truth: Memory & Justice

មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា

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POL POT AND HIS PRISONERS AT SECRET PRISON S-21

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- 1. Cambodia—Politics and Government—1975-1979.
- 2. Cambodia—History—1975-1979.

Funding for this project was generously provided by THE SLEUK RITH INSTITUTE with core support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida).

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Concept: Youk Chhang
Design: Double Happiness Creations
PHOTO CREDITS: Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives and Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archives.

Cover Photo: Pol Pot was born in 1925 (year of the Ox) in Kampong Thom province. His father was a prosperous landowner. At the age of six, he went to live with his brother, an official at the Royal Palace. In Phnom Penh, he was educated at a series of French language schools and as a Buddhist novice.

In 1949, he was awarded a scholarship to study in Paris, but failed to obtain a degree. While in Paris, Pol Pot became a member of the French Communist Party and devoted his time to political activity.

Upon returning to Cambodia in 1953, he taught history and geography at a private high school and joined the clandestine communist movement. He married Khieu Ponnary in 1956. In 1960, he ranked number three in the then-Workers' Party of Kampuchea. He was named its second deputy secretary in 1961 and party secretary in 1963. He later led the Khmer Rouge army in its war against the Lon Nol regime.

Pol Pot became prime minister of Democratic Kampuchea in 1976 and resigned in 1979, but remained an active leader of the Khmer Rouge. He lived in exile, mainly in Thailand, until his death on April 15, 1998. His body was cremated on April 17, 1998.

Printed in Cambodia
January 7, 2011



Child survivors of S-21 Norng Chanphal and Norng Chanly after their rescue, January 10, 1979. They were the last prisoners sent to S-21, arriving with their mother on January 1, 1979. Source: Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives/HTV (Ho Chi Minh Television)



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Cambodian soldiers coming to rescue S-21 survivors, 1979. At the far right is commander Khang Sarin, who became Minister of Interior of the People's Republic of Kampuchea. With help from Vietnamese officials, the PRK Ministry of Interior obtained and preserved many of the official documents that fleeing Khmer Rouge officials left behind. These documents are now part of the DC-Cam Archives. Source: Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives/HTV



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Following the odor of decayed flesh, on January 10, 1979, Vietnamese soldiers drove towards a barbed wired compound that served as the Khmer Rouge regime's highest level security center. At the security center, code named S-21 ("S" for Santebal, the Khmer word meaning "state security organization" and "21" for the walky-talky number of former prison chief Nath), prisoners were brought in, often handcuffed, to be photographed, interrogated, tortured, and executed.

The majority of prisoners taken to S-21 were Khmer Rouge cadre, including high level officials such as ministers, and their family members. They were accused of collaborating with foreign governments, spying for the CIA and the KBG, and hence betraying Angkar.¹ Prisoners were also believed to have conspired with others and thus were forced to reveal their "strings of traitors," which sometimes included over one hundred names.² The interrogators at S-21 based their technique on a list of 10 security regulations which included, "While getting lashes or electrification you must not cry at all."³ Although prisoners often had no idea why they had been arrested, interrogators forced them to confess their crimes.⁴ If they did not confess, they would be subjected to physical and psychological torture. However after having confessed, they were marked for execution.

Initially, prisoners were killed on the grounds of the prison, but as the volume and stench of the corpses rapidly increased and became unbearable, prisoners were then trucked en mass to an open field located 15km away known as Boeung Choeung Ek ("Crow's Feet Pond") to be killed. Waiting at the field was a group of about ten young men led by Teng. Teng, in his early twenties, and his team of teenagers lived in a two-story house that was built on the field in 1977. They were informed ahead of time of the number of prisoners that would arrive at Choeung Ek so that they could dig the graves in advance. According to former S-21 prison guard Him Huy⁵, it was Teng and his team who executed the prisoners once they arrived.⁶

The Tuol Sleng prison, S-21, located in Phnom Penh, Cambodia was a microcosm of the terror, paranoia, and brutality that took place across the country under the reign of the Communist Party of Kampuchea from April 17, 1975 to January 6, 1979. The prison was one of 196 prisons that existed⁷, although Khmer Rouge leaders claimed that Democratic Kampuchea had no official prisons⁸. The shocking figures commonly associated with the prison — 14,000 killed and 7 survivors — rank the prison as one of the most lethal in the 20th century. There is however, not a clear consensus on these figures among experts. Recently, the hybrid Khmer Rouge Tribunal offered their own numbers based on its criminal case involving Kaing Guek Eav, alias Duch, the former head of S-21.

¹ The Khmer Rouge used the term Angkar ("organization" in Khmer) to represent the Khmer Rouge leadership and the Communist Party of Kampuchea.

² Dy, Khamboly. *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)*. Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2007. p. 52.

³ Ibid, p. 50.

⁴ The Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum archives contain 4,186 hand-written and typed confessions while DC-Cam's archives hold 833 confessions.

⁵ Him Huy, aka You Huy, should not be confused with Nin Huy, aka Huy Sre, who was the head of S-24, the Prey Sar prison. Experts have confused the two in the past. For example, Craig Etcheson's *After the Killing Fields: Lessons from the Cambodian Genocide* (Praeger Publishers, 2005), in reference to a document, wrote, "Dated July 23, 1977, it is signed by You Huy (a chief of guards) and authorized by Hor, the deputy of S-21. The form lists biographical details on eighteen prisoners executed that day and, almost as an afterthought, in Huy's handwriting a note at the bottom that adds, 'Also killed 160 children today for a total of 178 enemies killed'" (p.83). The document ("Names of Those Smashed, Section Brother Huy Sre." Document Number D01175, DC-Cam Archives, Phnom Penh, Cambodia) that Etcheson cites however, was in fact written by head of S-24 Huy Sre (Nin Huy), not S-21's prison guard Him Huy (as the title of the document makes clear).

⁶ Dacil Keo's interview with Him Huy, Dec 10, 2010, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

⁷ For a description of the prison system, see "Chapter 8: The Security System" of Khamboly Dy's *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)* (2007), pp.41-47.

⁸ In August, 1978, Pol Pot stated, "We don't have prisons and we don't even use the word 'prison.' Bad elements in our society are simply given productive tasks to do" ("Conversations of Pol Pot with Delegation of the Belgium Kampuchea Society, August 5, 1978." Document Number D00108, DC-Cam Archives, Phnom Penh, Cambodia).





The number of prisoners taken to S-21 ranges from the Tribunal's conservative estimate of at least 12,273⁹ to a scholar's high estimate of approximately 20,000¹⁰. The number of survivors has received less scrutiny however, with most Western media generally accepting the figure of 7 survivors. This figure of 7 has been repeated for over thirty years now, giving S-21 its notoriously brutal image. The origin of this number comes from a 1981 film titled, *Die Angkar* ("The Angkar"), produced by Studio H&S of the former East Germany. In this film, the photograph of seven survivors of S-21 was shown. This photograph has since been featured in notable works including the book, *A Cambodian Prison Portrait: One Year in the Khmer Rouge's S-21* (1998) by S-21 survivor Vann Nath, who has served as a primary source of information for experts and scholars.¹¹ There is some speculation however that 7 survivors were intentionally shown to parallel the 7th day of January, the "day of victory" in which Vietnamese forces overthrew the Khmer Rouge regime.

After several years of research, however, the Documentation Center of Cambodia estimates that at least 179 prisoners were released from 1975-1978 and approximately 23 victims survived after Vietnam ousted the Khmer Rouge regime on January 7, 1979. The release status of the 179 prisoners (of which 100 were soldiers) is based on numerous Khmer Rouge documents and interviews compiled primarily by Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum senior archivist Mr. Nean Yin. Most of the 179 who were released have disappeared and only a few are known to have survived after 1979. Of the 23 who survived after 1979, more than half have disappeared or have died. Several of the survivors who are alive today have recently made the news: Norng Chanphal for being a witness to Case 001 of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, Vann Nath and Chum Mei for being featured in documentary films, and Bou Meng for having a book published about him. In addition, one survivor of S-21 is currently applying for civil party status for Case 002 of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal.

The names below (surname first) provides the most up-to-date record of survivors of S-21, both those released before 1979 and those who survived after Vietnam entered the country. If known, a person's alternate name or nickname is also given in parenthesis.

Child Survivors who were found by Vietnamese soldiers on January 10, 1979:¹²

1. Makara (full name unknown)¹³
2. Name unknown¹⁴
3. Norng Chanly
4. Norng Chanphal¹⁵
5. Socheat (full name unknown)

Survivors who are alive today¹⁶

6. Bou Meng¹⁷
7. Chum Manh (Chum Mey)¹⁸



⁹ The July 26, 2010 Duch Judgment uses the figure of 12,272, while the Tribunal's "Revised S-21 Prisoner List" contains 12,273 names after adding Civil Party Chum Mey. The Tribunal based these figures on the S-21 execution log book along with other documents collected during the investigation of Case 001. The Tribunal notes however that the actual figure could be much higher.

¹⁰ David Chandler in his 1991 book, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution since 1945*, wrote: "The deaths inflicted there — perhaps twenty thousand in all— were decided on before the prisoners reached Tuol Sleng" (p. 285). Since then, countless newspapers and journals (and now Wikipedia) have cited the figure of 20,000.

¹¹ The caption for the photograph of seven survivors (standing awkwardly with arms around each other's shoulders) in Vann Nath's book reads "Seven survivors of Tuol Sleng, 1980: Vann Nath is in the middle" (Bangkok: White Lotus Co. Ltd., 1998, p. 14). Further, in the book's introduction, Nath wrote "I was one of only seven inmates in S-21 who escaped execution." Later in David Chandler's book, *Voices from S-21: Terror and History in Pol Pot's Secret Prison*, he wrote "Since 1979, seven of these survivors have come forward. Their memories, corroborated by those of former workers at the prison, have been invaluable for this study."¹¹ (Bangkok: Silkworm Books, 2000, p. 6). The footnote (21), reads "See in particular Vann Nath, *Prison Portrait*. I am grateful to Sara Colm for introducing me to Vann Nath since 1995..." (p. 163).

¹² The discovery of these five child survivors was captured on video footage by Ho Chi Min City Television (HTV). Two of the five child survivors, brothers Norng Chanphal and Norng Chanly, publically confirmed their S-21 imprisonment status.

¹³ Makara was named by a Vietnamese soldier after the Khmer word for January, when Vietnam ousted the Khmer Rouge in 1979.

¹⁴ This prisoner, a baby, died of exhaustion upon discovery by Vietnamese soldiers on January 10, 1979.

¹⁵ Norng Chanphal was a witness for Case 001 of the Khmer Rouge tribunal involving head of S-21, Duch.

¹⁶ Norng Chanphal and Norng Chanly, listed in the "Child Survivors" section, are also alive today.

¹⁷ Bou Meng is the topic of Huy Vannak's book titled, *Bou Meng: A Survivor from Khmer Rouge Prison S-21, Justice for the Future, Not Just for the Victims*, published by Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2010.

¹⁸ Chum Mey was featured in Documentation Center of Cambodia's documentary film, "Behind the Walls of S-21: Oral Stories from Tuol Sleng Prison" (2007) and Rithy Panh's documentary film, "S-21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine."

8. Heng Nath (Vann Nath)¹⁹
9. Nhem Sal²⁰
10. Touch Tem

Survivors who died after 1979

11. Eam Chann
12. Phann Than Chann
13. Ruy Nea Kung
14. Ung Pech

Survivors who disappeared (witnesses reported that these men were alive after 1979, but since disappeared)²¹

15. Dy Phon²²
16. Eng (full name unknown)²³
17. Leng (full name unknown)²⁴
18. Mok Sun Khun
19. Pol Touch
20. Tuon (full name unknown)

Survivors who are thought to be alive, but status uncertain

21. Name unknown²⁵
22. Pheach Yoeun
23. Sok Sophat

**Prisoners (from Khmer Rouge army division 920) released between 1975-1978 before Vietnam entered Cambodia²⁶
(they have since disappeared)**

24. Bo Boeun (Phal)
25. Chan Chan
26. Chan Chhoeun (Than)
27. Chea Va (Tva)
28. Chhay Sey
29. Chhim Hin (Sey)
30. Chhoeung Soeung
31. Chhum Bun
32. Chhum Than (Cheat)
33. Chin Seng Eam (Voar)
34. Chum Chan (Khem)
35. Chum Mey (Vorn)²⁷
36. Chuob Meng Uor (Chev)
37. Chuon Srey
38. Di Don (Vy)
39. Dib Thau (Rin)



¹⁹ Vann Nath was featured in Rithy Panh's documentary film, "S-21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine."

²⁰ Person claims S-21 prisoner status, but there are no supporting documents.

²¹ Interview with Heng Nath aka Vann Nath.

²² Dy Phon's confession at S-21, cited in Irene Sokha's article in Searching for the Truth (Jan. 2000).

²³ It is possible that this is the same person as #60 (Khuon Tai Eng) or #145 (Khiev Eng) on the list.

²⁴ It is possible that this is the same person as #62 (Kim Leng) and #176 (Roeun Leng) on the list.

²⁵ Documentation Center of Cambodia was informed of a former S-21 prisoner currently living in Ratanak Kiri province but there are no supporting documents.

²⁶ The status of these prisoners has been confirmed through Documentation Center of Cambodia's archives.

²⁷ Not to be confused with Chum Mey #7 on the list.



40. Dieb Phan
41. Duong Chheng Pat (Rit)
42. Duong Sambat (Chum)
43. Ean Hun (Hak)
44. Hay Run (Rin)
45. Ham Cheum (Khom)
46. Hang Han (Huon)
47. Hang Lay
48. Hem Muon (Muon)
49. Heng Ruon
50. Heng (Nea)
51. Hing Muon (Vuth)
52. Ho Phan (Phat)
53. Hun Uy (Chhoeun)
54. Huon Samphai (Muon)
55. Huot Sok (Sokha)
56. Im Boeun (Ly)
57. It Aun
58. Keo Lonh Ret
59. Khem Siem Muoy (Peou)
60. Khuon Tay Eng (Lan)
61. Khut Krauch
62. Kim Leng (Heng)
63. Lach Saom
64. Lach Sarun (Van)
65. Lim Uong (Vin)
66. Lom Lon
67. Mak Thoeun (Thon)
68. Mam Vin (Bol)
69. Meas Lan (Loeun)
70. Meas Noeun (Theng)
71. Meas Set
72. Meun Chin
73. Miech Phon (Phal)
74. Neou Nan (Ol)
75. Nhem Chhon
76. Noem Nem (Sim)
77. Nok Nan (Nem)
78. Nou Chhoeun (Sit)
79. Nouv Samneang (Van)
80. Oeur Phat (Roeun)
81. Pak Thiev (Thon)
82. Pan Kung
83. Pat Fy (Yang)
84. Pech Soam
85. Pen Tak (Van)
86. Phal Nhoeun (Khan)
87. Phauk Sam (Sim)



88. Phon Sun (Srun)
89. Poan Pin
90. Prak Samnang (Tep)
91. Prik Chhon (Rung)
92. Prum An (Rai)
93. Prum Leap (Yan)
94. Sam Mak (Rin)
95. Sam Rith (Hang)
96. San Mab (Ma)
97. Seng Hun (Hat)
98. Seng Yan (Oeun)
99. Siek En (Kren)
100. Soam Phon (Nan)
101. Soeng Tha (Vorn)
102. Srei Yun (Sdaeng)
103. Suon Oeun (Der)
104. Suos Ram (Pheap)
105. Suy At
106. Suy Kim Sat (San)
107. Suy Than (Sim)
108. Svay Kenh (La)
109. Te Na (Thy)
110. Tep Sary (Ran)
111. Thab Ruon
112. Thy Than
113. Thlang Rin (Rum)
114. Uk Van
115. Um Voar (Yi)
116. Un Sao (Sen)
117. Van Ngauv (Pan)
118. Ven Chamroeun (Yen)
119. Yan Yeun
120. Yang Khe (Seang)
121. Yem Yoeun
122. You Han (Phal)
123. Yu Mon



132. Chhim Pauch
133. Chou Pin
134. Dai Peng
135. Ea Chhai Pauv
136. Ea Ho
137. Ea Kok
138. Han Nhauv
139. Hem Sambath
140. Hin Chy
141. Hong Chin
142. Ik Chheng Eang
143. Im Phal
144. Im Saom
145. Khiev Eng
146. Khlauk Sran
147. Khon Kuoy
148. Kim Sruo
149. Kong Van Tha
150. Kong Van Than
151. Kruy Cheat
152. Kry Sok Heng
153. Lao Seng Kim
154. Long Neng
155. Men Ol
156. Meun Yeng
157. My Sry
158. Min Kan
159. Muo Pech
160. Muong Ny
161. Muy Ruos
162. Ngin Hon
163. Nhem Man
164. Noeu Pheap
165. Pa Chhun Try
166. Pao Chheng
167. Pech Muom
168. Pech Phuong
169. Phay Yim
170. Phan Yoeun
171. Pheng Oeun
172. Pong Pan
173. Prach Torn
174. Proeung Sy Leang
175. Ring An
176. Roeun Leng
177. Sa Ke
178. Sa Sam Ang
179. Sam Sas

Nguyen Thi Pha



Prisoners released from 1975-1978 before Vietnam entered Cambodia²⁸

(only a few are known to have survived while the vast majority has disappeared)

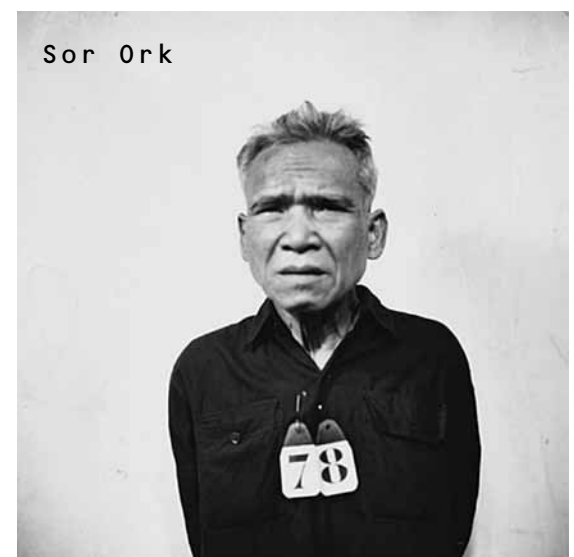
124. Beng Pum
125. Bou Ngorn Ly
126. Cheng Srorn
127. Chhean Vik
128. Chheang Pech
129. Chheang Praing
130. Chhem Chan
131. Chhiev Sun Heng

²⁸ The status of these prisoners has been confirmed through Documentation Center of Cambodia's archives.

- 180. San Khmao
- 181. San Song
- 182. Sao Voeun
- 183. Saom Song Heang
- 184. Saut Chhorn
- 185. Seang Kry
- 186. Seth Kal Khann²⁹
- 187. Sim Yeng
- 188. Sin In Ny
- 189. Sla Dek
- 190. Ta Chy Veng
- 191. Tao Kim Huy
- 192. Thong Nget
- 193. Tim Kim Eang
- 194. Tim Sy
- 195. Ting Hay
- 196. Tit Chuon
- 197. Tit Kan
- 198. Try Chak
- 199. Try Chea
- 200. Van Yeng
- 201. Ven Sovan Ny
- 202. Yun Loeun



²⁹ Seth Kal Khann, who has an Arab father and Lao mother, was sent to S-21 with his family and an Indian family on April 11, 1976. The published report, "People's Revolutionary Tribunal Held in Phnom Penh for the Trial of Genocide Crime of The Pol-Pot-Ieng Sary Clique (August 1979)" (Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1990), gives an arrest date for Seth (April 11, 1976) but not an execution date. Documentation Center of Cambodia's senior researcher Dany Long discovered and interviewed him on August 27, 2008. In the interview, Seth states that he was imprisoned for a month, made to write an autobiography, and beaten. His family was kept in a separate room. After a four-hour meeting with Khmer Rouge cadres, Seth and his family were sent back to Prek Dach commune, Leuk Daek district, Kandal province, where they had been evacuated to on July, 1975.



The Documentation Center of Cambodia is dedicated to researching and documenting the Khmer Rouge era and encourages other researchers, Cambodian and foreigners alike, to do the same in order to seek the truth of what happened at S-21 and during the entire period of Democratic Kampuchea. It is likely that after this document is published, there will be more claims to verify.

KEO Dacil was born in Cambodia shortly after the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime and grew up in America after several years of living in a refugee camp in Thailand and the Philippines. In 2006, she received a M.A. degree in Political Science from UW-Madison and is now a doctoral candidate in the Department of Political Science at UW-Madison. There, she was a teaching assistant for five semesters and an associate lecturer for the course “Politics of Southeast Asia.” She is currently in Cambodia conducting dissertation field work on the local dynamics of genocide during the period of Democratic Kampuchea through a fellowship from the United States Institute of Peace (Jennings Randolph Peace Scholarship Dissertation Program).

YIN Nean is a senior archivist at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum. He has been working at the museum since 1979. He is responsible for cataloguing, microfilming and digitizing materials in the confession and photo archives, an endeavor supported by Cornell University in 1992, and later by the Cambodian Genocide Program (CGP) at Yale University and the Documentation Center of Cambodia from 1995-2000. Mr. Yin was trained in documentation in the United States (at Yale University and Rutgers University), Indonesia, and Japan. Since 2006, he has been providing documents to the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. Presently, he is writing a book in collaboration with Documentation Center of Cambodia titled, History of the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum: A Memorial Site. This monograph focuses on the transformation of Toul Sleng from a torture center to a Genocide museum and as a site of conscience. It presents a chronological survey of S-21 through various political periods since the discovery of S-21 by Vietnamese troops on January 10, 1979.

MEMORY AND JUSTICE



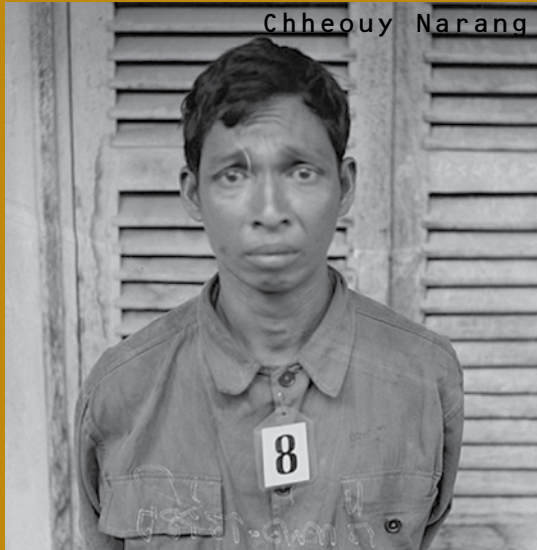
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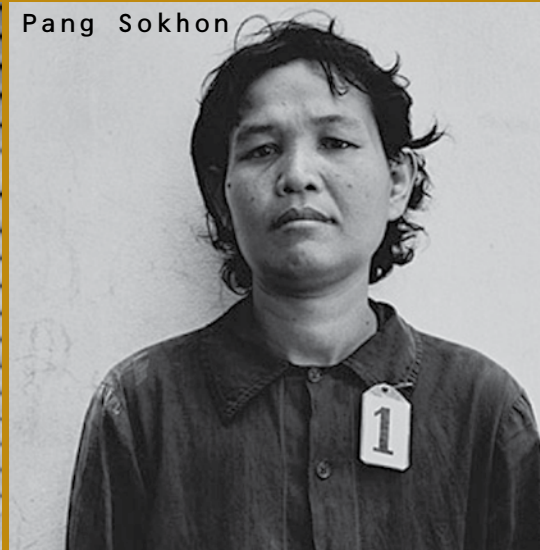
Chan Kim Srun



Ham Hang



Chheouy Narang



Pang Sokhon



Chraeng Sam Ol

