



## Noun Chea's Condition Worsens in Hospital



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PHNOM PENH - Khmer Rouge leader Noun Chea remains in the hospital, and the UN-backed Khmer Rouge tribunal has announced no more hearings for this week.

Son Arun, a lawyer for Nuon Chea, 86, who is on trial with two other leaders for atrocity crimes including genocide, said his health had declined after his hospitalization for acute bronchitis Sunday.

“The report from the doctors to [hospital] administration said that Nuon Chea had gotten better, but that is not accurate,” he said. “I met with him, and he has gotten worse and weaker.”

An update on scheduled hearings is expected Wednesday, but court monitors say Nuon Chea's hospitalization is a reminder for the need of a speedy trial.

“This is the fear, of course, that many survivors have: that the accused will never live to see judgment,” said Anne Heindel, a legal adviser for the Documentation Center of Cambodia. “I wouldn't speculate on the status of his health, but of course it would be a major loss for Cambodians and their understanding of the Khmer Rouge period if the trial is not completed and we do not hear all the evidence against Nuon Chea, as well as his lawyers' arguments to those accusations.”

The court will hold hearings on the health of Nuon Chea and former foreign minister Ieng Sary in March. If they are disqualified, that leaves only Khieu Samphan, the former nominal head of state, to face trial in only the second case to be tried at the court.

“And obviously the story will be much more narrow and incomplete in terms of the responsibility of the leadership for what happened,” Heindel said.

Nushin Sarkarati, a staff attorney for the Center for Justice and Accountability, told VOA Khmer that Nuon Chea's hospitalization is "another reminder that swift justice is imperative, not merely to determine the innocence or guilt to the accused, but to establish a historical record of the war before the key actors are gone."

"The court should expedite its judgements as soon as possible," said Latt Ky, a tribunal monitor for the rights group Adhoc. "All of the defendants have almost the same poor health condition from one day to the next."

If the top leaders of the Khmer Rouge are not partaking in the trial process, the tribunal will not be meaningful, he said.

Khmer Rouge survivors, too, say they worry. Sum Rithy, 60, who lived through confinement at a security center in Siem Reap province, told VOA Khmer the court risks disappointing people across the country.

"If the court speeds up its procedures, then I believe there will be justice for the victims," he said. "But if the court works as it is today, I don't have hope there will be any justice for victims, or for those who died."

*<http://www.voacambodia.com/content/nuon-chea-condition-worsens-in-hospital/1584242.html>*