

មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា

DOCUMENTATION CENTER OF CAMBODIA
Phnom Penh, Cambodia
www.dccam.org -- www.cambodiatribunal.org

**The Duch Verdict: A DC-Cam Report from
former Khmer Rouge strongholds of Samlot and Pailin**

Witnessing Justice, Village Screenings of the First Khmer Rouge Verdict
of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Court of Cambodia (ECCC)

August 16-17, 2010

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Duch's church in Samlot. Photo by: Anne Heindel

Screenings held in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and funded by U.S. Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) with the core support from USAID and Sweden. OSI, Denmark, Australia and Norway provided the screening materials.

**“If anyone sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed;
for in the image of God has man been made,”**

the Bible: Genesis 9:6.

I. Overview

The Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam)'s Living Documents Program recently held forums about the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC)'s first verdict in two former Khmer Rouge strongholds: Pailin town, Pailin Province on August 16, and Sguot village, Samlot district, Battambang Province, on August 17.

On July 26, the ECCC issued its judgment against Kaing Guek Eav *alias* Duch for crimes committed in connection with the S-21 detention center. DC-Cam hosted live and replayed screenings of the verdict pronouncement in seven provinces to collect participants' reactions.¹ It also sought to evaluate the reaction to the Duch verdict and encourage discussion about its meaning in advance of the trial of Nuon Chea, Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary, and Ieng Thirith—the four most senior living Khmer Rouge leaders.

Although limited to one detention site, the Duch trial provided the first opportunity for Cambodians to hear public discussion and debate on policies of the Democratic Kampuchea period that resulted in the deaths of nearly two million people in only three years, eight months, and twenty days. Duch's confession of his crimes and the court's judgment of his actions can be meaningful even for survivors unconnected to S-21, as they speak to the responsibility of the many other prison chiefs still living who will never be held accountable for similar acts.



Women looking through DC-Cam's *Searching for the Truth* magazine and new booklet on Case 002 of the ECCC at the Samlot forum in Samlot district, Battambang.

The residents of Samlot and Pailin offer unique perspectives on the verdict and who bears responsibility for the abuses of the Democratic Kampuchea era. Samlot, where Duch converted to Christianity and was discovered living under an assumed name in 1999, hosts a large Christian community, whereas Pailin is overwhelmingly Buddhist. They were two of the last Khmer

¹ See "The Duch Verdict: A DC-Cam Report from the Villages," at http://www.dccam.org/Projects/Living_Doc/pdf/The_Duch_Verdict-A_DC-Cam_Report_from_the_Villages.pdf

Rouge strongholds and are home to many former KR cadre and their families.

After screening the ECCC verdict pronouncement, the Living Documents Team led an exchange of views on the judgment and Duch's 30-year sentence among the more than 100 participants—including students, teachers and parents, both victims and perpetrators—attending each forum. Discussion centered around two questions:

- (1) How does the Duch verdict contribute to forgiveness?
- (2) How does the Duch verdict contribute to genocide education?

In addition to eliciting participants' personal reactions to the judgment, the team solicited their religious perspectives.

The team screened two films at both locations: "Behind the Walls of S-21" and "Tuol Sleng 1979." It also distributed copies of the Duch verdict, DC-Cam's booklet entitled

Genocide: The Importance of Case 002, Searching for the Truth magazine, the textbook "A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)," and ECCC materials.



Monks and community members attending Duch's verdict and film screening in Wat Kaong Kang, Pailin sub-district, Pailin city.

The Living Document's Program seeks to increase the participation of ordinary Cambodians in the work of the ECCC, help them better understand DK history and the court's legal processes, and provide them with an opportunity to see court proceedings and to speak to court officials. Since ECCC proceedings began in 2007, the Program has brought around 10,000 people, including 1,500 commune chiefs and nearly 400 Cham Muslim religious leaders, to Phnom Penh to receive legal training, observe proceedings at the ECCC, and participate in discussions about what they have seen. In addition, the Program holds forums about the ECCC around Cambodia. More information about the program can be found at http://www.dccam.org/Projects/Living_Doc/Living_Documents.htm.

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II. Pailin Screening



View of Pailin city from Phnom Yat mountain.

Pailin is located in the Northwest of Cambodia, just kilometers from the Thai border. Before the Cambodian civil war in 1970, Pailin was a small town made up primarily of ethnic Burmese Kola people, who were wealthy due to the abundance of gems in the area, primarily rubies and sapphires. According to many anecdotal accounts, until the late 1990s, gems were so plentiful in the region that it was possible to find

them lying on top of the ground after a heavy rain. When the Khmer Rouge took over the country in 1975, they attempted to drive the Kola out of the area. Instead of moving south toward Battambang, they attempted to move toward the Thai border to escape. As a consequence, they were massacred en mass and very few survived. It is not clear how many live today in Cambodia; a small number live in the United States,² providing funding for Wat Kaong Kang where the verdict screening was held.

The Khmer Rouge moved to and controlled the Thai border area after the Vietnamese chased them out of Phnom Penh in 1979. Though primarily based in Thai territory, they also operated within Cambodia from Anlong Veng in the north down through the Cardamom Mountains all the way to Koh Kong province in the south. Pailin became a staging area for regular battles between KR soldiers and Peoples' Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) soldiers, supported by Vietnamese forces, until the early 1990s. Due to this protracted conflict, the area of Pailin, like much of the border area, was some of the most heavily land mined in the country. After most Vietnamese troops left Cambodia in 1989, Khmer Rouge cadre and soldiers seized the area. From then until 1996, the KR held almost uninterrupted control of the district and it became one of their major strongholds.

² See Khamly Chuop, Examining the Cambodian View of a Khmer Rouge Tribunal, *Searching for the Truth Magazine* Special English Edition, Third Quarter, 2003 (analysis of the ECCC by a Kola living in the US).

In 1996, the second co-prime minister struck a deal with Ieng Sary to win his defection to the new Royal Government of Cambodia. In return for Ieng's surrender with around 10,000 supporters (comprised of a reported 3,000 soldiers and 7,000 civilians—possibly amounting to as much as half of the KR's military strength), Ieng received a limited pardon from the King, and Pailin was made a semi-autonomous special economic zone under Ieng's control. By 1998 the city had its first bank. Local officials were given the authority collect and use all city revenue until 2001. Y Chhean, a former Khmer Rouge commander and Pol Pot bodyguard became municipal governor, and Ieng Vuth, Ieng Sary's son, became deputy governor. Y Chhean, a member of the Cambodian People's Party (CPP), is also a member of parliament. They retain these positions today. They and Sok Pheap, a former KR military commander, were instrumental in breaking the power of the Khmer Rouge from within by integrating KR soldiers into the national army. Most soldiers merely switched uniforms, or wore some combination of the two. This was part of Prime Minister's "win-win" policy for disarmament and reconciliation, through which "those who integrated into the government became the government."

After he defected, Ieng Sary founded a political party called the Democratic National Union Movement, including membership from Pailin, Malai, and South and North Sisophon. All top officials were former Khmer Rouge. Ieng Sary attempted to distance the party from the Pol Pot faction, claiming that the new party had no ideology or party apparatus but was established "for the necessary purpose of Reconciliation, Unity and to Stop Fighting." Yet the party included a central committee, comprised seven members including Y Chhean, Chairman; Sok Pheap, Vice Chairman; and Ieng Vuth, member. Moreover, eight divisions of KR soldiers each had three representatives on the "permanent committee for each battle field." After setting up these committees, the leadership "would step ahead towards courage its spirit for the strengthening the Talk Process in purpose of Stopping the Complete Bloodshed in Cambodia for her lovely People of Cambodia" (sic). The movement appears to have disbanded after the defections of Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan, but it never formally dissolved so its status today remains unclear.

From the beginning of the 1990s until the early 2000s, the KR, including primarily Ieng Sary and his loyalists, exploited Pailin's abundant natural resources. After his defection, Ieng Sary controlled most of the KR border trade and sold concessions to Thai companies for large-scale gem excavation operations. After the 1996 reintegration, brothels, gambling, and drug trafficking became a feature of the local economy, and the area suffered from delinquent youth. By the beginning of

the decade, most of the area's gems and once abundant timber were gone and the formerly booming economy suffered from a lack of alternative investment. In 2008, with tensions building between Cambodia and Thailand over control of Preah Vihear temple, KR troops were actively recruited to protect the border area, this time to fight against Thai instead of Cambodian government troops.

As of 1999, a reported 25,000 KR defectors lived in Pailin, including ten of the 12 most significant KR leaders. For that reason, many thousands of former KR and their children live in Pailin to this day, although a near equal number of new people have also moved in seeking business opportunities. Close to 50% of students, including just a few years ago the children of Pol Pot and Khieu Samphan, are related to former KR members. For this reason, before the arrest of Khieu, Nuon Chea, and Ieng Sary, teaching Khmer Rouge history was challenging. Because of reduced KR influence and the removal of these leaders from the community, tensions raised by the new curriculum have been reduced, if not erased. Still, it will take time for the expanded coverage of the KR period to make an impact here. Children of former KR soldiers for the most part receive only partial histories and justifications of having acted for the "national good" from their parents. It can be daunting for the students and teachers to reconcile those accounts with the new official version of the history, which names some former Pailin residents as perpetrators. But complete rejection of Khmer Rouge studies is no longer possible. Last year questions about KR history were included in final secondary school exams for a second year in a row, making study of this topic now mandatory.

Wat Kaong Kang



Wat Kaong Kang, Pailin city, where Duch's verdict screening and forum took place.

DC-Cam's Pailin verdict screening was held at Wat Kaong Kang. Wat Kaong Kang is unique compared to other Buddhist pagodas. The structure of the temple and its bright colors show influences other than Cambodian. According to one of the monks, the architecture was strongly influenced by the Burmese Kola people who migrated to this part of Cambodia after the Thai-Burmese War centuries ago. They built their own community in the

Pailin area and took part in the construction of the pagoda about 84-85 years ago. The head monk named Lok Ta Ouv was not Burmese himself, but collaborated with the Burmese community in its creation. Despite their near extermination during the KR period, some Kola people occasionally visit, offer financial support to the wat, and are able to read the scriptures on the walls today.

Participant's views of verdict

On August 16, DC-Cam screened two Tuol Sleng films and the Duch verdict, and held a discussion at the Wat. Seng Sitha, a history teacher who has participated in DC-Cam's Genocide Education program, and Savina Sirik, DC-Cam's Living Document's team leader, facilitated the forum. Nop Pol, a representative of Buddhism for Development, assisted the discussion.



Local villagers and monks viewing Duch's verdict from a white screen in the dining hall of Wat Kaong Kang, Pailin sub-district, Pailin city.

Around 100 people watched the verdict and film screenings, 30 of whom were Buddhist monks. Most accepted the legal sentence of 30 years, minus 11 years time served, and felt that it was long enough because it would bring Duch to the end of his life, or at least to an advanced age by the time of his released. Moreover, they did not believe that the sentence was vindictive. They expressed that it is what Duch must receive under human law for what he has done. However, participants did not believe that Duch could be forgiven in this life, as under religious law, he would still receive *karma* — religious punishment — in the future until he repays what he has done.

For example, Kaoy Luom, aged 73, said that he believe the verdict is acceptable. Although to his mind Duch should have received a life sentence, it was nevertheless suitable owing to Duch's cooperation with the court. According to Buddhism, Duch still has to face punishment after he dies. He might be punished by going to hell. Kaoy Luom said, "No matter how many years the tribunal sentenced him to, I think this tribunal is established to set a good example for the young generation."

A pagoda elder said that he thought the verdict was just and he could accept it. "Either 35 or 19 years, I believe he still has to die in prison as he's quite old now. We are Buddhist followers. We should be able to share and forgive. We should also be able to spread our compassion and accept the verdict."

One monk emphasized that the trial and sentence was not meant to take revenge against Duch. Because Duch committed evil deeds, he must receive those bad deeds back in equal measure. If Duch had done a lot of good deeds he would have been able to delay receiving the bad, perhaps until the next life. A second monk noted that killing and harming others is a sinful act and said that Duch should go to the 8th hell since he harmed and killed a lot of people. A third monk said that in respect for the rule of law, Duch must be brought to trial and sentenced. By doing this, he will not be able to commit more crimes. Moreover, the tribunal can set a good example for the younger generation that a wrongdoer should be punished for their wrongdoing. Nevertheless, Buddhists believe that in the next life Duch must be punished for his bad acts with another level of suffering and must go to hell.

Notably however, Nop Pol from Buddhism for Development did not think 19 years was acceptable because it wasn't enough to pay back such a grave crime. He worried about what would happen if in the future Duch's sentence is reduced to 10 or 12 years. He said, "In Buddhism, we believe that killing is a gravely sinful act. People should go to hell for killing people. Although Duch was sentenced to 19 years in prison in the human world, he will have to face hell for years before he's reborn as a human." He said that in his view, the ECCC was like the 1993 election assisted by UNTAC: Although the international community has spent millions of dollars to run the tribunal, it has not been so beneficial for Cambodian people.



Top: A pagoda elder sharing his view on Duch's sentence with screening participants.
Bottom: Nuns who stayed and served in the pagoda for the rainy season sitting among the crowd waiting to share their opinion on the verdict with the team. Wat Kaong Kang, Pailin city.

III. Screening in Samlot



Corn fields and mountains, Samlot district, Battambang province.

Samlot is 50 kilometers from Pailin, and even closer to the Thai border. It is a fertile land surrounded by low mountains, and in the rainy season is lush and vibrant green, untouched by modernity. If not for its distinction of being the most heavily mined area of the country, it would be one of the most desirable places to live in the country. It is a much poorer and less developed area than Pailin, and residents' battle scars are more obvious: a high

proportion of residence have missing limbs or other wounds not primarily from land mines, but from their time fighting for the KR. Many Samlot residents lived for years in KR camps on the border, participating in fighting against the PRK government, and only settled down to a peaceful life in 1999 in this enchanting area when the district became the last KR area to come under government control.

KR members living in Samlot are not as notorious those who have settled in Pailin. Most are lower level cadre and soldiers. Yet, those seeking to escape their pasts make up a high proportion of residents, including Meas Muth, a former military division commander and son-in-law of Ta Mok. He is one of the named cadre in "Seven Candidates for Prosecution: Accountability for the Crimes of the Khmer Rouge," by Stephen Heder with Brian D. Tittmore, which claims that Meas Muth was present at and endorsed planning sessions authorizing political purges. Today, Meas Muth is a Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF) brigadier general.

Samlot was the site of early Khmer Rouge rebellions against Prince Sihanouk's Sangkum government. In 1967, there was a peasant uprising that is considered by some to signal the official start of the KR's armed struggle.³ That year the new Lon Nol government brought in the army to assist the collection of rice in order to ensure that most of the crop would be sold to the government instead of on the black market as in previous years, and for a price around a third of the market rate. In April, around 100 villagers burned a government farm, killed soldiers and

³ See Ben Kiernan, *The Samlaut Rebellion and its Aftermath, 1967-70: The Origins of Cambodia's Liberation Movement (Parts I and II)*, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University.

village chiefs, and stole their weapons. Violence lasted until August, spreading to other districts. According to Ben Kiernan, the rebellion was the most serious violence to erupt in the country since an 1885-86 uprising against the French. Over 4,000 villagers fled from June-July, and as many as 10,000 people may have been killed during the government's subsequent repression. Khmer Rouge leaders such as Khieu Samphan were aware of the situation, and agitated in Phnom Penh for the withdrawal of troops. Due to the political fallout, Lon Nol was forced to resign as prime minister. After the violence ended in August, the Khmer Rouge, reportedly commanded by Khieu Samphan, began conducting organizational work in Samlot and other rebel areas. In January 1968, 5,000 or more villagers left their homes, with 400 imprisoned. This time the rebellion was planned, and quickly spread to other provinces.

In response to the government's crackdown on the Samlot villagers, Kaing Guek Eav *alias* Duch, the future director of the S-21 detention center, reportedly sent a group of his students to Kampong Cham town to protest. He was arrested shortly after, and only released as part of a large political amnesty in 1970 after the Lon Nol coup, after which he devoted himself fully to the KR.



A woman and kids reading "A History of Democratic Kampuchea 1975-1979" Samlot district, Battambang.

After the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge in 1979, Samlot, like Pailin, was an epicenter of KR-PRK fighting and KR refugee camps lined the border. When Ieng Sary defected in 1996, a reported 1,800 KR soldiers in Samlot surrendered and were integrated into the RCAF. However, in 1997, after open violence between the two Cambodian co-prime ministers broke out, these defectors attacked Hun Sen troops

and took control of much of western Samlot. They engaged in low intensity fighting against his government, moving with their families to the Thai border area and living in camps. After the surrender of Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan in 1999, they defected a second time, and began moving back to rebuild their destroyed homes despite the prevalent land mine danger.

Duch moved to Samlot in 1995, then worked in the camps along the Thai border with non-governmental organizations, settling back in Samlot in 1998. During that period he converted to Christianity and joined the local church. DC-Cam's

Living Document's team visited the home of Duch's sister, Hang Kim Hong, and briefly spoke to her and her husband Nop Bun Long at the house where Duch lived before his arrest in 1999. Kim Hong was reticent to speak or to have her photograph taken and did not wish to attend the verdict forum.

In previous comments to a journalist she said that she was not in contact with Duch. She did say, however, that she was upset that the Western journalist who called authorities attention to her brother in 1999 had misled Duch by bringing UN personnel and implying that they were there to help him find refuge in a third country.⁴ Although she did not name the journalist, it appeared she may have been speaking about Nic Donlop. DC-Cam Director therefore arranged to have a Khmer language copy of Donlop's biography of Duch, "The Lost Executioner," sent to Samlot and left it for her with a note asking that she let him know if there are any portions of it that she finds inaccurate.



DC-Cam staff members visited Duch's sister house located in Ta Sanh commune, Samlot district, Battambang. Duch's sister, a midwife, was however reluctant to speak to DC-Cam staff and declined to attend the screening.

In an effort to provide information to villagers who did not attend the Church screening, after the forum the team drove through the district from house to house distributing to former Khmer Rouge soldiers and their families at least 150 copies of "The History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)," the *Genocide: The Importance of Case 002* booklet, *Searching for the Truth* magazine.

⁴ See Prosecutor v. Kaing Guek Eav, Transcript, Case File N° 001/18-07-2007-ECCC/TC (Trial Chamber, April 22, 2009) (Duch told the court: "Peschoux and Ms. Hugo told me that Peschoux went around the whole world in order to find an asylum for me — for me to be a political asylum. And in the end they said they couldn't find it, and then they told me "Okay, so be imprisoned in Belgium;" that I should go to Belgium to be imprisoned there.")

O Sguot village church



Duch's church, Cambodian Christian Church, located in O Sguot village, Ta Sanh commune, Samlot district. The church was used to house the screening of Duch's verdict.

The small wooden church of O Sguot village, Tasagn commune, Samlot district, was the locale for the Samlot forum. The church covers only a small area of the vast green fields. The Christian community was formed by the support and initiative of a Cambodian American named Christopher Lapel. He helped convert people all over the country, including Duch, and met Pastor Kimmoung Kry of the Golden West Cambodian Christian Church in 2002. The former Pastor passed

away three years ago and now an acting Pastor, Saing Kimsrieng, has taken over. Only five families in the area have formally converted, though others attend church functions. Most are former Khmer Rouge cadres. Some knew Duch, and remarked that he is looking healthier since his arrest.

Participant's views of verdict



Pastor San Timothy speaking to the crowd about his faith in god and forgiveness in the forum in Ta Sanh commune, Samlot district.

Prior to the screening of the films and verdict reading to around 100 people, the man introduced Duch to Christopher Lapel and provided Duch spiritual guidance, Pastor San Timothy, spoke to the crowd assembled in a colorful tent outside the church. He said that he had introduced Duch (known at that time as Hang Pin) to Jesus, and that

Duch served God. "God brought him to lovingness — to appear in the court and confess everything," he said. "God always forgives people, even though this person was his enemy: He is the sample of forgiveness." In Pastor Timothy's mind, god brought Duch to court to bring justice to the people. God is the model of forgiveness so that all

people can forgive. God died on the cross because he loves justice. He teaches us to forgive everyone, even our enemies. Pastor Timothy regularly visits prisoners and believes that we must love them because god allows us to live with prisons. Despite his acceptance of the verdict, Pastor Timothy expressed doubts about Duch's expressions of faith after he reversed his guilty plea and asked to be set free at the end of his trial. In the Cambodia Daily he was quoted as saying, "Duch told everyone that he believed in Jesus, but to change like this means that he was just using Jesus' name. So that's double guilt."

DC-Cam Director Youk Chhang then read from the Bible: Genesis 9:6. "If anyone sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has man been made," he read. He asked a participant to come up and read portions of the text. When the footage of Duch was shown, the crowd immediately recognized him and called him "elephant man," a nickname they had for him because of his wide ears.



Youk Chhang, DC-Cam director, speaking to villagers about the Tuol Sleng film and Duch's verdict at the forum in Samlot district.

After the screening, Youk Chhang asked the crowd if the Duch judgment was just. Some who spoke up emphasized that verdict was just because it was long. Chab Mao said that during the DK she had worked in a mobile unit in Kandal Province. She was put in a labor camp because her parents had been Lon Nol Soldiers. Because she broke a shower there, she had been imprisoned for a week and been given limited food rations. Yet still she said that she felt the verdict was okay because it is sufficiently long. To her, because

Duch confessed his mistakes he should be forgiven. "His confession is a good example for others who killed people and have not acknowledged their responsibility," she said. Chao Kim Leng, 30, said that "It is not much of a sentence, but as people are kind and feel sympathetic to old people, we think that it is enough for him."

A few participants would have preferred that Duch receive a life sentence, but noted that he was old so it should be okay, implying that they hoped he would die in prison. Chey Veasna pointed out that some people who make small

mistakes end up in prison for 15 years. He would have been satisfied if the verdict going forward was 30 years, but he considered Duch's 19 years left to serve too low. He wanted Duch to have a life sentence so he would die in prison. Nevertheless, he thought a 19-year sentence may be enough to ensure that he does die there. One man had tears and openly expressed anger with the length of sentence because five of his siblings had died during the regime.

A majority of participants said they knew little of the trial but felt Duch had already paid for his sins. One person said, "I think Duch has suffered enough already." Commune Chief Chuon Pheng told the forum that he and other villagers were neither aware of the leaders of the Pol Pot regime, nor the Toul Sleng interrogation camp. He found the verdict acceptable, but emphasized that the people in his commune were busy with family and economic life and don't have much time to think about the tribunal. "We experienced the regime, but we were not aware of Pol Pot. We only try to work for our living. The tribunal is related to politics." San Timothy's fellow pastor Sang Horn even called Duch a "hero" for having the courage to repent.



Ms. Chab Mao (top) and Chuon Pheng (bottom) sharing their views on the verdict at the forum at O Snguot church, Ta Sanh commune, Samlot district.

Then Youk Chhang tried a new approach, asking participants where they were from: how many from Takeo, how many from Pursat? People enthusiastically raised their hands until Youk Chhang pressed, "So why are you here now?," forcing them to consider their own participation in the regime instead of distancing themselves from their responsibility. Once the import of his question became apparent, hands went down and participants became less excited to explain their journey to Samlot.

As has happened before in KR areas, a young man turned the question back on Youk Chhang, saying, "I like your question asking if the verdict is fair or not. What is your view?" In response, Youk said that to him, the

verdict is right. The court is for peaceful living in the future. If there were no tribunal, relatives who died during the regime would have died without justice and their deaths would be meaningless.”

IV. Screening in Phnom Penh

After learning about the scheduled Pailin and Samlot forums, Pastor Moses Samol Seth of Phnom Penh asked that DC-Cam lead a discussion about the verdict among 50 representatives of the 800 Christian Churches in Cambodia. This event was held at AGAPE International Mission, Phnom Penh Thmei, on August 12 and led by Savina Sirik and Director Youk Chhang.

As he did in later Samlot, Director Youk Chhang started off the discussion by quoting Genesis 9:6, “If anyone sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has man been made.” Following this logic, “Because Duch took blood from others we have to pay them back; Duch must receive what he has done” by being sentenced by the court.

Unlike the Christian community in Samlot, the participants in Phnom Penh were well versed in biblical scripture. They accepted the verdict as appropriate earthly justice, but believed that it was important that Duch forgive himself and that others forgive him in order to promote long-term reconciliation.

Participants offered the view that Duch confessed because he has god in his heart, and that he can be forgiven. For example, a priest attending the forum who lost several family members under the regime said that Duch should not be put in jail, but instead made to do work beneficial to the community. He should be made to walk from house to house, province to province, to say that he is sorry to victims. This would give him time to change himself and make himself pure. The priest believes that everyone should forgive Duch. If he is killed, the dead will still not come to life. The most important thing is that Duch acknowledged wrong doing and confessed to his crimes.

Similarly a Christian student who is studying in Thailand said that Duch should be allowed to speak about his experiences so that the crimes committed during the Khmer Rouge period cannot happen again. Duch should walk from house to house, from one victim to another, to help prevent future genocides and promote reconciliation. If Duch is kept in jail like a bird in a cage he will seek freedom. Therefore he will have sin in his heart forever.

The director of International Mission requested that DC-Cam provide books and film screenings about the Khmer Rouge period for all Christians so that they can learn about what happened and prevent future genocide. For him, the prosecution of Duch is the duty of the government and the court, yet we should forgive him and not treat him badly even though he did bad things in the past. He said, "Loving is giving. Love is sharing. Love is caring. Love is protecting." By this he meant that we must share love with others, preserve love, so that the country can move forward and develop.

V. Media Coverage

The screening in Phnom Penh was covered by *Reaksmey Kampuchea* and the screening in Samlot was covered by *Reaksmey Kampuchea*, *the Phnom Penh Post*, and *Voice of America*.

Former Khmer Rouge stronghold recalls regime's 'repentant' killer

Phnom Penh Post

Wednesday, 18 August 2010 15:02 David Boyle and Sun Narin

The church in Battambang province's Samlot district where former S-21 prison chief Duch converted to Christianity. Battambang province

OUTSIDE a small, cross-topped church in Samlot district, a crowd of about 100 people gathered yesterday to discuss a notorious mass murderer's day of judgment.

It was here, some 15 years ago, that the notorious Tuol Sleng commandant Kaing Guek Eav, convicted and sentenced to 30 years' jail by the Khmer Rouge tribunal last month, first confessed his sins and became a born-again Christian.

At the community forum, organised by the Documentation Centre of Cambodia, Duch's former pastor, San Timothy, urged those assembled to accept the verdict, forgive Duch and put the past behind them, something that most in this former Khmer Rouge stronghold appeared happy to do.

"God brought him to lovingness — to appear in the court and confess everything," he said. "God always forgives people, even though this person was his enemy. He is the sample of forgiveness."

In 1999, Irish photographer Nic Dunlop found Duch working in Samlot for an American aid organisation under the pseudonym Hang Pin. The former jailer claimed to have converted to Christianity several years earlier.

On trial at the Khmer Rouge tribunal in Phnom Penh last year, Duch claimed to have repented and expressed "profound regret" for his actions at Tuol Sleng, where he is thought to have overseen the torture and killing of up to 16,000 people.

During the trial's closing arguments, Duch shocked observers by demanding that he be released.

But after watching a projection of the closing moments of Duch's July 26 verdict, San Timothy's fellow pastor Sang Horn proclaimed the former prison chief a hero for having had the courage to repent.

"He is a hero because he did something that is in the past, not now, and he confessed his sins in front of God and the people," he said

In Samlot, the restive breeding ground of the Khmer Rouge insurgency and the refuge of many cadres following the regime's fall in 1979, attitudes about Cambodia's communist nightmare remain ambivalent.

After receiving documents including DC-Cam's historical textbook and a published copy of the verdict, many of those in attendance expressed a desire to leave the past behind.

Chuon Pheng, the chief of Ta Sanh commune, where the event was held, told the forum that he and other villagers were not aware of the Khmer Rouge top brass or the existence of Tuol Sleng prison.

"We experienced the regime, but we were not aware of Pol Pot. We only tried to work for living," he said.

Youk Chhang, DC-Cam's director, lamented the culture of denial that had taken root among some elders in Samlot, though he welcomed the church's participation in the forum, which he said he hoped would facilitate greater community engagement with the historical record.

"A hero is not somebody who murders 12,000 innocent people, and if you define someone like this as a hero there is clearly a danger that genocide will return," he said.

"Clearly you can see that some of them were here with the Khmer Rouge for a long, long time and deny knowledge of what happened," he added.

Youk Chhang also regretted the absence of Duch's sister, Hang Kim Hong, and brother-in-law, Nop Bun Long, who were both invited to attend.

Like many of the area's residents, their personal ties to the Khmer Rouge appear to remain strong, even after the passage of so many years. "It seems to be that she has this question in her mind," he said of Duch's sister.

"What if Duch hadn't been discovered and arrested?"

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,...“In Buddhism, we believe that killing is a gravely sinful act. People should go to hell for killing people. Although Duch was sentenced to 19 years in prison in the human world, he will have to face hell for years before he's reborn as a human.”

Nop Pol from Buddhism for Development