

មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា

VICTIM PARTICIPATION PROJECT

A FIELD TRIP REPORT TO KAMPONG CHHNANG PROVINCE 3-8 MAY 2011



“We haven’t heard anything as a result of our petition. [...] Nevertheless, now we have such a creditable court ... please bring our word to the court. We who have borne such chronic pain are now pleading for the Tribunal to hold a fair trial and deliver justice ... it is our only hope.”

~ Chhay Pum, a 61-year-old survivor from Samraong Sen Commune, Kampong Leng District, Kampong Chhnang

PURPOSE

The Victim Participation Project of the Documentation Center of Cambodia made a field trip to Kampong Chhnang Province from 3-8 May 2011. The purpose of the field trip was to conduct interviews with survivors who had participated in the creation of the Renakse Petitions in the early 1980's and also to conduct follow-up interviews with survivors who have filed their complaints with the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) via the Victim Participation Project over the past three years.

GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION

1. Description of the Province

During Democratic Kampuchea (DK), Kampong Chhnang was part of Region 31 in the Western Zone of the Khmer Rouge administration. Today, Kampong Chhnang, famous for its abundance of fish, is located 91 kilometers northwest of Phnom Penh. Kampong Chhnang is prosperous mainly due to its location along the Tonle Sap Lake, the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia. The province is a beautiful one with rice fields covering the plain and with the famous Neang Kang Rei Mountain, located on the bank of one of the Mekong's tributaries connecting the Mekong to the Lake. The mountain resembles the reclining body of a woman, whom people have called Neang Kang Rei, in accordance with a local myth. The province is comprised of eight districts, namely Boribo, Rolea Pa-ea, Samki Meanchey, Kampong Tralach, Kampong Leng, Chul Kiri, Tirk Phos, and Kampong Chhnang. During the one-week field trip to the province, VPA visited two of the eight districts.

Downtown Kampong Chhnang boasts a small Independence Monument similar to the one located in Phnom Penh. To the left of the monument, there is a tiny grassy garden with decorated statues of a man riding on a horse waving "goodbye" and a woman lying on the ground crying and asking the man not to leave her. In fact, a myth passed from one generation to the next tells of the couple's tragic love story. Under the Democratic Kampuchea regime, however, the people of Kampong Chhnang suffered far more than Neang Kang Rei. The people suffered considerably and the tragedy continues to haunt them today. For stories detailing the people's suffering during the DK period, see "Survivor Stories" below.

2. Population and Death Toll

As of 2008, Kampong Chhnang Province had a total population of about 471,616 (according to census data released in late 2008 by the National Institute of Statistics). This constitutes approximately 3.5% of the entire Cambodian population of nearly 14 million. Generally, people cultivate the rice fields, produce earthenware or clay products, and engage in fishing. During the DK period, there were nineteen prison sites scattered across the province. The actual death toll in Kampong Chhnang has never been determined accurately. Reports garnered from the Renakse Petitions suggest, however, that the figure stands at around 132,043 (Mapping the Killing Fields, DC-Cam: 1997).

Democratic Kampuchea undertook a major project by constructing a military airport in Rolea Pa-ea District, Kampong Chhnang Province. The construction began in 1977 and had never been fully completed when the regime collapsed. According to information from former workers at the airport, only soldiers, often those suspected of disloyalty, were allowed to

work at the construction site. They added that the length of the airport at that time was as long as 3.5 kilometers and the width was as wide as one kilometer. Survivors interviewed by the Victim Participation Project in Rolea Pa-ea, however, could provide little information regarding the construction of the airport.

THE HISTORY OF THE RENAKSE PETITIONS IN KAMPONG CHHNANG PROVINCE

Since the fall of Democratic Kampuchea on 7 January 1979, the successor regime – People’s Republic of Kampuchea – has attempted to address the issue of impunity and has condemned the previous regime for the mass crimes committed. The government established the People’s Revolutionary Tribunal in August 1979, which sentenced the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary Clique to death *in absentia*. Between 1980 and 1983, the government also realized the importance of collecting petitions (known as "*Renakse Petitions*") in order to solicit support from the United Nations to remove the Khmer Rouge from its seat at the United Nations General Assembly. The Petitions were collected and have since been stored in boxes at the Salvation Front Office. In 1997, with approval from the government, those original documents were handed over to the Documentation Center of Cambodia.

The successor government to the Khmer Rouge managed to collect 1,250 petitions from more than 1.1 million Cambodians detailing crimes of the Khmer Rouge. DC-Cam holds 79 Petitions from Kampong Chhnang Province signed or thumbprinted by a total of 12,207 individuals. Usually, one or two representatives wrote a Petition on behalf of a large group, ranging in size from 10 to as many as 700 individuals. Many individuals signed or thumbprinted the Petition affirming his or her name, sex, and age (and, in some cases, occupation and other comments). Our records show that only one individual petition was collected in Kampong Chhnang Province.

CHALLENGES

As mentioned above, home visits present a challenge for the Project. Out of necessity, the Project work under time constraints and thus the schedules did not allow for unproductive activity such as searching for a house location (which was sometimes in vain because the person was not at home), or awaiting their return home if they were busy elsewhere. Circumstances such as these would require the Project to alter its plan and might ultimately lead to unsatisfactory consequences. As far as complainants are concerned, for future trips, the team should try to arrange group meetings, if possible, as we often do by seeking cooperation from the local authority, namely commune or village chiefs. If such a plan is not possible in some cases, the team, prior to home visiting, should contact the target persons directly or indirectly through any reachable person, for instance, the village chief or their neighbors, so that the time spent on the field trip is productive to the greatest possible outcome. Furthermore, the fact that the Project had to adhere to a boat schedule and travel quite a long distance by Tuk Tuk further limited the actual time for the interviews. Traveling by boat was rather time-consuming as the ferry always took a late departure.

ACHIEVEMENTS

In spite of the above-mentioned challenges, the team’s effort and cooperation enabled them to conduct 39 interviews (27 audio and 12 video), almost 80% with petitioners, during the six-day trip. Most importantly, during the trip we held meetings with approximately 70

petitioners and dozens of villagers, the majority of whom have very limited access to the tribunal's information and have rarely been subject to outreach on the issue. In an effort to broaden their understanding and interest in the trial process, the team distributed booklets of Case 002 and copies of *Searching for the Truth* magazines to the villagers who attended the meetings as well as people who live in their neighborhood. This outreach should further stimulate public discussion among family members as well as the entire community regarding the Khmer Rouge Tribunal and life under the regime. This effort is expected to contribute to the long-awaited national reconciliation.

SURVIVOR STORIES

1. CHEA Re (ឆា រ៉ែ), female, 67, living in Tum Nup Village, Tra Ngel Commune, Kampong Leng District, Kampong Chhnang Province (a petitioner)



Chea Re

After her wedding, Chea Re began living with her husband, who got a job as a factory worker at Chhlong Commune, Chhlong District, Kratie Province. By about 1969, she had two children, namely Nauv Poly (female, 9 years old) and Nauv Dy Mang (male, 6 years old). During that period, she witnessed scenes of protest by villagers and monks and the government crackdown which brought bloodshed to the village. She then decided to flee by boat from Kratie to her home village in Kampong Chhnang. Her husband had to travel on foot and it took him almost two months to reach the village. When her boat arrived in Phnom Penh port

in front of the palace, she had to carry her belongings and two children and wait for a taxi. Surprisingly, she saw no taxis but only many trucks full of soldiers. Ordinary people were hiding in their houses because they were afraid of being conscripted. She then asked a soldier whether she could get on the truck to Kampong Chhnang. Luckily, the soldier agreed. After she had lived in the village for one or two years, the Khmer Rouge arrived and started to evacuate villagers. The Khmer Rouge emptied her village in 1975. By the time of the evacuation, Re had two more children, namely Nauv Seiha and Nauv Makara.

The entire family was evacuated to Kbal Toek Commune of Region 1, which is now known as Toek Phos District. Along the way, the family could barely find anything to eat. Even water was scarce as most of the wells were filled with corpses. She brought with her a lot of money which she had just earned from selling cows, but the money was useless for obtaining food. The Khmer Rouge had abolished money. Once she reached Kbal Toek Commune, she was not yet assigned to work. A while later, the Khmer Rouge authority organized people in units and cooperatives. Then she was assigned to work while her husband tended the cows. Her family was classified as 17-April people (new people) who, according to Re, were treated badly, worse than the rest of the 18-March 1970 people (base people).

Her two older children were put in a children's work unit, while the other two little children were allowed to stay with her. A few months later, two Khmer Rouge cadres came at night, telling her husband he had been assigned to tend cows. She did not realize what was about to happen and told her husband to take along their two children Poly and Seiha, as she mistakenly thought that those who tended cows would receive a better food ration. Seven days later, the Khmer Rouge came to inform her she was to marry a new husband. Only then did she realize that her husband and two children had been killed. She was speechless and heartbroken. Re did not hide her emotion and angrily questioned the disappearance of her husband. This kind of challenge would normally result in fatal consequences under the Khmer Rouge regime. However, she was not arrested because she had a distant relative who served the Khmer Rouge ranks in Region 16 and who wrote to Re's unit chief to spare her life. Nevertheless, Re was firmly determined not to remarry regardless of the risk of execution. Re raised her two remaining children on her own and survived the Khmer Rouge regime.

Approximately 15 months after the death of her husband, a KR cadre came and asked her to prepare herself for a trip to dig canals at Boeng Khnong. Carrying her baby and the digging tools, she was led to a cliff. There, she saw KR cadres standing and drinking. Surprisingly, one of those KR was her foster son who was shocked to see her. He then brought her to the village nearby where she spent another few months. When she revisited the area at the cliff, she saw wooden bars and a sentence "32 heads" inscribed on a tree trunk. She then understood that she was meant to be killed at that place. After living in the village for a few months, she was asked to help with cooking for "high ranking officials" in the jungle. Luckily, those KR liked her and once asked her to join them at a meal. She was very scared. The KR cadres discussed the methods for fighting against Vietnam. This happened just a few months before the Vietnamese intervention. After that incident, she was transferred to the jungle to cut wood and there she lived in a 17-April Cooperative. One morning in the jungle of Kbal Toek Commune, she saw a plane flying overhead and dropping thousands of small fliers written in Khmer. She said the flyers contained information urging Cambodian people to stand up against the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime under the leadership of Heng Samrin, Pen Sovann and Chann Sy. A month later, she and the other people in the jungle were allowed to return to the village. It took her another month of travel by foot to reach Tra Ngel Village. She stayed there for another year before returning to her home village – Tum Nup – as she still feared the Khmer Rouge guerrilla attacks.

Around 1984, she was named to join the K5 program [clearing trees in the jungle and defending the nation against the Khmer Rouge's guerilla war]. She was stationed at Khieu Mountain in Pursat Province, where she was assigned to work as a cook. Although many soldiers and villagers died during the K5 program, she managed to survive and returned home after three months. However, due to the desperate living conditions, she often got sick and sometimes even went into convulsions over the course of a few months. In spite of her very horrific experiences, she carries no grudge now, though she used to be angry at the Khmer Rouge because of the passage of time and her belief in Buddhism. Aside from her family, many of her relatives were also evacuated and only a few survived the regime after 1979.

With respect to the Renakse petition, she recalled that in the early 1980's, many meetings were held to inform villagers about the atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge. She was not sure where she signed the petition as it was a long time ago. Since that time, she has never heard of the petition again. "I only want justice ... it isn't for me alone; it is for the next generation," she said. Having the chance to talk about the experience lessens her painful

memories, she stated. She indicated that the only motivation for her to persevere is the future of her remaining children. This has been the secret source of energy to lighten up her life, coupled with the thought of her executed husband, who stands beside her in spirit.

2. HEM Hai (អ៊ែម អៃ), male, 70, living in Trabek Village, Tra Ngel Commune, Kampong Leng District, Kampong Chhnang Province

During the period of U.S. bombing, Hem Hai was living in his home village of Trabek. Several of his relatives' houses were damaged, however he was not affected. In 1972, the Khmer Rouge started evacuating villagers to the foot of Touk Meas Mountain, situated in Cha-nok Village of Kampong Leng District. By that time, he had three children named Hul Saren, Hul Saran, and Hul Si Yen. After his arrival in the village, he was assigned to be in charge of a unit of fifty members, named Unit 44. He received direct orders from Meas Morn, the communal secretary, and Ta Lunh, his deputy of the commune. According to Hai, his fifty-member unit consisted of forty to fifty households, a total of about 200-300 people. Prior to this position, he had been assigned to work in the execution unit; however, he refused and was finally assigned to head this Unit 44 – controlling the making of levees and canals. Since 1975, people in his village (especially officials of the former regime) were called upon and ordered to perform varying tasks; however, they all disappeared and never returned, according to Hai. There were several canals that he and members of his unit built throughout the district. The smallest canal was 500 to 600 meters in length and the biggest one, as he remembered, was three kilometers in length. Despite the fact that Hai was in charge of the unit, he said he had to work and eat in the cooperative with the rest of the villagers.

At the end of December 1978, all of the villagers were forcefully removed to the jungle by the Khmer Rouge; however, because of the arrival of the Vietnamese troops, he and the rest of the villagers were able to return to Kampong Chhnang. One year later, he voluntarily joined the army of the successor government. Later he left the army and was assigned to take part in the K5 program. He was sent to Phnom Prik in order to clear the jungle and fight the Khmer Rouge. Three months later, he returned to his village. After that, he resumed his normal civilian life. According to Hai, 1977 was the harshest year due to the severe shortage of food. Several of his relatives died during the DK period.

Hai said he is not really satisfied with the court because it is taking too much time to prosecute this handful of leaders whose crimes are well-known. Thus, he doesn't think there will be justice. However, if the court works fairly and effectively, then it will be historically respected and remembered.

3. CHEA Oeun (ឆា ឿន), 75, a retired district educational official, living in La-baek Village, Khun Rang Commune, Baribaur District, Kampong Chhnang Province (a complainant and a petitioner)

Chea Oeun was born in Kandal Province to a relatively poor peasant family. After the death of his parents, he managed to get a good education with support from his former teacher. However, he was not able to find a well-paying job and thus decided to sell goods at his house. Around 1970, he remembered seeing the Khmer Rouge wandering around and causing chaos in the village. His family decided to move to Phnom Penh where he spent the next five years near Borei 100 Khnang, working as an accountant. By that time, he had four children.

Still, there was no safety under the Lon Nol regime, as soldiers were present at every corner of the city. On 17 April 1975, he dressed in his uniform and headed for the office as normal but to his surprise, he found the streets completely empty. As he reached Tao Pi, he saw crowds of people being forced to walk out of the city. He wanted to walk back home; however, he was stopped and mixed with the crowd. Coincidentally, he found his family and his father-in-law immediately and they told him to strip off his uniform. There were hundreds of thousands of people moving very slowly. Sadly, his wife and two children died of hunger and disease during this exodus.



Chea Oeun

Despite feeling void after the death of his family members, he struggled to take care his two remaining sons – Visal and Seiha. After crossing by boat to Kien Svay, Visal and Seiha got sick. He then decided to travel further to Prey Veng, where relatives of his wife lived. He was stopped many times by the Khmer Rouge, but was allowed to continue on his journey. They arrived at night and were starving. To satisfy the hunger of his two sons, he exchanged his only belonging – a small package of salt – for some potatoes. He was also starving, but he had to save the potatoes for his sons. The next morning, they headed for his wife’s relatives’ house. They then spent several months there in Lvea Commune, Preah Sdach District, Prey Veng Province. His two sons soon recovered from their illness, not because of any treatment they received, but because of *Vitamin Kaem* (*Kaem, according to Oeun, means rice in Vietnamese; thus, the phrase refers to nutrition from rice*). One time, Oeun had a serious illness, but his condition improved after eating sugar mixed with dessert. As the food ration was inadequate for survival, he and the rest of his wife’s relatives decided to flee to Ta Ke Chong Village. Luckily, the whole family managed to hide in the village for several more months with help from a kind-hearted woman, who provided them with food and shelter.

It was during Sao Phim’s betrayal period when they were all transferred to Leach Commune in Pursat Province. The Khmer Rouge then arranged a marriage for him. Despite his several refusals, he ultimately agreed. Today, he and his wife are still together. After his brother-in-law was accused of being an enemy of the Khmer Rouge, the rest of his wife’s relatives were again separated and have since disappeared. Later, he heard that the rest of his wife’s relatives were all killed. None of his wife’s relatives survived the regime. Oeun lived there unharmed until 1979. He lost many relatives during the Khmer Rouge regime. After the end of the regime, he returned to his village of La-baek and continued to learn and teach students. Several years later he was promoted to a district educational official.

With respect to the Renakse Petitions, at that time he was questioned by his colleague, Moan Sarin, “After seeing such atrocities, what are your impressions? Can you write something about your experience?” He then thought of writing a poem to describe the suffering during the DK regime. After finishing the writing, he handed it over to the commune chief. Later, on the *Day of Anger* [*to condemn Pol Pot-Ieng Sary Clique*], villagers were invited by the

district level to commemorate the day and those who were present were asked to sign the petition. His poem was also read at that time.

Oeun submitted a complaint to the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. He said that the only reason why he participated in the tribunal was because he wanted to see justice served. And now that he has filed a complaint, he no longer holds a grudge and instead feels relieved.

4. Mr. Yun La (យុន ឡា), 52, farmer, Lvea Village, Svay Rompea Commune, Kampong Leng District, Kampong Chhnang Province

Born to a poor peasant during the Sihanouk regime, Yun La had to quit school after the coup d'état in 1970. The situation in his village, Lvea Village, became chaotic; fighting erupted between the Lol Nol soldiers and liberation soldiers, as they were then called.

Between 1971 and 1972, countless bombs were dropped by the Lon Nol regime and all villagers resettled in the paddy fields next to a mountain. Every family dug out their own trench as a bomb shelter for protection during the attacks. The Lon Nol soldiers intended to kill Viet Cong and liberation soldiers stationed in the village. However, many civilians lost their lives because of these bombing campaigns.



Yun La

Between 1973 and 1974, liberation soldiers evacuated Yun La and all the other villagers to Prech Mountain. He was ordered to build a dam with other members of La It Unit [a unit which consisted of people from approximately 15 or 20 houses.] While building the dam at Prech Mountain, he worked from 6 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Workers were given a plate of gruel mixed with potatoes to eat. At the worksite, he saw people unknown to him die. They were falling down and dying due to exhaustion and starvation, according to him. From 1973 to 1975, he was allowed to visit his family only twice.

In 1975, district soldiers recruited youth from the communal cooperative to serve as Khmer Rouge soldiers in Kompong Leng District. He was the only youth from the commune to be selected by the cooperative chief to serve as a soldier in the District Office. In 1976, he served as a child soldier in Kampong Chhnang. His assigned tasks were working in the kitchen, boiling tea, and growing vegetables. In 1977, he was sent to Preah Keto Mealea Hospital, located in Phnom Penh. Emaciated, he was put to work in the kitchen, cooking and boiling tea for high ranking soldiers in the garrison. Fortunately, he always had enough food to eat because Angkar provided soldiers with adequate food.

A few months later, after receiving upper level orders to purge the traitorous soldiers in the Eastern Zone and to fight against Vietnamese soldiers along the border, his unit was

mobilized to a rubber plantation farm in Tbaung Khmum District of Kampong Cham Province. Yun La never received any military training or a rifle to use. At the age of 16, his tasks were to grow vegetables, cook, boil tea, and drive a Jeep for his superiors. Later he was given a rifle to patrol the garrison.

In late 1978, Yun La witnessed a terrifying and unforgettable incident when soldiers in his division killed hundreds of people with bamboo sticks at the rubber plantation. Particularly horrifying was the execution of two young children, approximately five-or-six-months old, who were killed by being swung against a rubber tree. Yun La became filled with grief from that moment on and he started to worry about his parents in the cooperative at his home village. To Yun La, execution of those innocent people, especially the children was an evil act which was unjustifiable.

After Vietnamese troops came in, he escaped to his home village and reunited with his family. Then he joined the forces of the successor government, fighting against the Khmer Rouge. When asked about the petition in 1982-83, he said that he might have been busy fighting in the forest. He is not certain whether he filed the petition with others or not because so much time has passed. At the end of the interview, Yun La stated that putting the Khmer Rouge leaders on trial will bring justice to both the survivors and those who perished under this notorious regime.

5. Mrs. Nay Heap (ណយ ហ៊ែប), 60, vendor, Kan Seng Village, Kan Lang Commune, Baribo District, Kampong Chhnang Province

Native to Pra Nak region of Pursat Province, Mrs. Nay Heap is the youngest daughter of a peasant family. During her childhood, she was not able to go to school, despite the fact that she did want to study. “My father was afraid that I might write romantic letters to boys,” she said. She added that her father beat her whenever she went to school. As a result, she ended up being illiterate and could help her family only by doing the farming and growing crops.

During the Lon Nol regime, she married Say, a Lon Nol soldier. When the Khmer Rouge came to power, her father urged her and her husband to leave the village because he was afraid the Khmer Rouge would kill Lon Nol civil servants and soldiers.

During the Khmer Rouge regime, she and her husband were put to work in different cooperatives. Neither of them ever talked openly with each other. They tried to have short conversations whenever they were close to each other. The Khmer Rouge did not allow people to talk freely and openly. At one point, her husband Say, a major lieutenant for the Lon Nol regime, was taken to be executed by an unknown security policeman. Her husband was buried in the ground with only his head exposed. Then he was shot in the head and died instantly. This incident took place in Tum Nun Thmei cooperative.

She did not witness the killing of her husband. A security policeman informed her that her husband had been executed. Given that her husband had been so brutally killed, she was no longer scared and often defied orders. At one point, a Khmer Rouge cadre asked her, “Do you miss your husband?” Responding immediately, she said, “Your wife is far away from you and you miss her the same way [I miss my husband]!”

Then she was taken to an unknown security center. Fortunately, an elderly woman came and rescued her. After that, she lived with the elderly woman until the country was liberated by Vietnamese troops.

Under the Pol Pot regime, her parents died from starvation and exhaustion and her brother, who was highly-educated, was executed by the Khmer Rouge.

Nay Heap believes that the court will help bring justice to Cambodian people.

6. Mr. Mao Suon (ម៉ៅ ស៊ុន), 61, farmer, lives Tranpean An-chanh Village, Svay Chrum Commune, Rolea Pa-ea District, Kampong Chhnang. (The interview was interrupted when his family called.)

Born to a poor peasant family whose family members, especially the parents, had always suffered terribly from disease, Mao Suon had to help his family make ends meet by making sugar palm juice and doing the farming. He could not go to school like the other children his age.

After getting married at the age of 22 during the Lon Nol regime, he did the farming and worked as a *Ro Mork* (a three-wheeled vehicle pulled by a bicycle) transporter to support his family. In 1974, he was forced to enlist in the Lon Nol army by a Lon Nol soldier named Peou. At that time, Malis Peou and his four subordinates tied him up and sent him to Svay Chrum military base. Along with 300 other arrestees, Mao Suon was detained there for two nights. Being superstitious, he made offerings of incense to *Preah Ang Khmao*, a guardian spirit in Kampong Chhang, and asked for his help. In a dream, Preah Ang Khmao told him to walk northward. The following morning, he escaped by walking northward without being seen or getting caught. Prior to the take-over of Phnom Penh city in 1975 by the Khmer Rouge, he patrolled the commune at night with a rifle from a Lon Nol soldier.

After the Khmer New Year holiday in 1975, Khmer Rouge soldiers – previously known to his villagers as "liberation force" – forced all people to leave their villages for three days. His family had to move along the crowded street, suffering from exhaustion, starvation, and arching sun. During the KR regime, his family was relocated eight times in District 20 of Kampong Chhnang Province. He was separated from his family and sent to cut down trees in a forest in District 18. The forest, a former battlefield, was littered with unexploded bombs and other explosive devices. He witnessed an incident in which a child captured his own mother and called her an enemy – not a mother. At one point, he carried so many loads of earth that he collapsed unconscious at his worksite.

Regarding the Renakse Petitions, Mao Suon said his memory was vague. He said the petition was filed during a meeting when villagers gathered around and discussed the suffering of individuals under the Pol Pot regime. Government civil servants presided over the meeting and asked villagers about their experiences under the regime. The civil servants delivered a speech describing the atrocities committed under the Pol Pot regime. Every participant agreed with their comments, stating that they had similar experiences during the regime.

From his personal point of view, Mao Suon wants the court to also prosecute low-ranking cadres – real executioners – in order to find justice for the victims.

7. Mrs. Nem Thim (ណែម ធីម), 60, farmer, Chres Village, Tra Gil Commune, Kampong Leng District, Kampong Chhnang Province

Under the Lon Nol regime (1970-1975), Nem Thim's husband served as a combat soldier for the government. In 1975, her family was evacuated to a forest. Her husband, accused of being Lon Nol soldier, was captured. Luckily, she knew a high ranking cadre at the place where her husband had been taken. She asked him to help release her husband. If not, her husband would have been taken to a prison Lvieng mountain.

Under the Khmer Rouge regime, she was ordered to carry earth and grow vegetables and crops. Her husband was put to work somewhere far away, while her two children were looked after by elderly people in the Khmer Rouge's child care cooperative. Her two children, Thy and Chann, were tied up against the wall because they always escaped and ran to look for her because they missed her so dearly. The children were caught and mistreated. Her husband was captured many times and ill-treated due to the fact that he had served the Lon Nol government. Fortunately, her family members survived the regime.

After the collapse of the Pol Pot regime, her husband was interviewed about his experiences during those years. The villagers, such as her husband, were interviewed from house to house, but the interviewers were unknown to her. The interviewers asked questions and made notes of what the interviewees said.

Ultimately, Nem Thim wants to know why Khmer killed Khmer during that time.

8. Mr. Pech Uy (ពេជ ឌីយ), 70, farmer, currently living in Tra Ngel Village, Tra Ngel Commune, Kampong Leng District, Kampong Chhnang Province

Born to a poor peasant family which valued education, Pech Uy went to school for only a short period of time. He quit school after four years for some reasons and was later ordained as a monk in Tra Ngel Pagoda at the age of 23. After three years of serving as a monk, he left the monkhood and got married during the Sihanouk regime. After that, he made a living for his family by doing the farming and growing crops.



Pech Uy

After the coup d'état in 1970, Viet Cong invaded his village. From 1971 onward, the situation became tense, and villagers could not walk freely because of the fighting between the (so-called) liberation soldiers and Lon Nol soldiers. Everyone had built their own trench as a shelter to escape the bombardment. Between 1972 and 1973, every family living in Tra Ngel went to live and hide in the paddy field because the village was under attack most of the time.

Pech Uy had a brother, Pech Sam On, who enlisted in the Lon Nol Army. Unfortunately, his brother was shot dead in the battle in Nak Leung. He learned of this incident from his mother who always stayed in touch with his brother and the soldiers in his unit.

In 1974, the liberation soldiers – later known as Khmer Rouge – evacuated people to a forest of Kampong Kalor District, Kampong Cham Province. In 1975, a second evacuation took place. His wife, Meas Phan, was forced to work somewhere far away. She was ordered to do farming and also had to look after their three children.

Between 1975 and 1976, his mother and father both died from starvation in the forest of Ta Ngel Village, Ta Ngel Commune. He did not witness the incidents, but was informed by people he knew. On both occasions, when he learned the shocking news of the deaths of his parents, he escaped from his cooperative to give each of them a proper burial.

During the regime, there was nothing to eat except watery rice soup. To survive, Pech Uy and other people were forced to find and eat frogs, tree leaves, and fruits from the forest. Lots of people had swollen disease because of malnutrition. At that time no one was allowed to converse openly.

His assigned tasks during the regime were tending cows, cutting down trees, and plowing the paddy fields. At one point, a cow which he was tending broke loose and roamed away while he was chopping down bamboo in the forest. Having committed this wrongdoing, he could be taken away and executed immediately. It was fortunate for him that the coworkers in his unit helped hide his mistake and did not report it to the upper level.

He did not file the Renakse Petition in 1982-83, because he was selected and sent to K5. At K5, the government staff had him build a route through the forest and cut down trees in a malaria-infected area. Though arduous, these given tasks were easier to endure than those assigned by the Khmer Rouge. Three or four months later, he and the other workers returned home. Some villagers contracted malaria and died after returning from that malaria-infected area.

He is satisfied with the tribunal's progress and believes that this tribunal will deliver justice to Cambodian people, including those who perished under the regime. He would like the tribunal to reveal who created the policies of execution and forced labor under extremely harsh conditions.

9. Mrs. Meas Nguon (មាស ឆ្ល័ត), 56, farmer, lives in Tra Bek Village, Tra Ngel Commune, Kampong Leng District, Kampong Chhnang Province

Motherless at the age of 12 and raised by her father, Meas Nguon struggled both to help her father do the farming and to continue her studies. She had to quit school after grade eight, not because of her family's living conditions, but because of the coup d'état in 1970, which led the country to war.

Between 1970 and 1972, Khmer Rouge soldiers were stationed in her village and, consequently, fighting erupted between forces loyal to the Khmer Rouge and those loyal to the Lon Nol regime. At the time, Khmer Rouge soldiers ordered her to patrol the village and alert them if there were any attacks from the enemy forces.

Motherless life during war time was really difficult. She had to help her father do the farming, cook for the family, and do other necessary tasks. In 1974, her father remarried.

After coming to power in 1975, the Khmer Rouge evacuated the village and relocated everyone to District 20 of Kampong Chhnang Province. Shortly after her family arrived at Kraing Srakea Commune, District 20, all of her family property had to be turned over to the commune for collective use. During the regime, the most arduous task for her was uprooting trees to clear the forest. She also worked at other difficult assignments such as building dams and rice dikes, and farming. Workers received two ladles of gruel per meal



Meas Nguon

time. Her unit chief was an elderly woman named Phou who, she recalls, did not allow her or anyone else to take even a short rest while working at the worksite.

When she became sick, Meas Nguon sought permission from her unit to visit her parents at home. Her parents treated her illness and exhaustion by coining, since there was a lack of medicine. While growing crops and vegetables along the riverbank, she asked a cooperative chief named Oeun (now deceased) for some fish and then brought them to her parents. Her younger sister always escaped from the children's unit to look for her or her parents because she missed them. Her sister escaped because she couldn't tolerate the bugs and insects at her children's unit. No holidays were given during that time. Once during 1978, she was hospitalized for malaria and she discovered many people had died in the hospital. There were only a few kinds of medicine available in the hospital to cure all kinds of diseases.

After being tricked by the Khmer Rouge that the Vietnamese soldiers had seized Phnom Penh and that they were planning to kill people, Meas Nguon reunited with her family members and escaped along with the Khmer Rouge. At one point, her family decided not to keep running with the Khmer Rouge and returned to her home village.

After 1979, fighting between the government forces and Pol Pol soldiers continued for quite awhile. Therefore, it was not safe for people to travel freely or to farm in certain areas.

These days, Meas Nguon generally recalled the experiences she suffered under the Khmer Rouge regime during her meals. She stated that meals these days are completely superior to those during the Khmer Rouge regime. She added that food at that time contained neither vitamins nor salt. That was why many people became swollen from malnutrition.

Meas Nguon is satisfied with the Khmer Rouge Tribunal and wants to prevent the recurrence of such a regime. With this recorded interview, Mean Ngon wants to share her experience with the next generation.

10. Mr. Prak Thai (ព្រះក៏ ថៃ), 74, farmer, lives in Tra Ngel Village, Tra Ngel Commune, Kampong Leng District, Kampong Chhnang Province



Prak Thai

Prak Thai was born to a poor peasant family, however he was able to attend school through grade six during the Sihanouk regime, because he was the youngest son in the family. It was fortunate for him that he did not have any responsibilities other than attending school. Later, at the age of 18, he was ordained as a monk at Tra Ngel. After leaving the monkhood, he got married.

In Tra Ngel Commune, fighting between Lon Nol soldiers and liberation soldiers, later known as the Khmer Rouge

soldiers, erupted in about 1973.

In 1975, after the Khmer Rouge came to power, he lived north of Trom Mountain. He worked as a blacksmith, making machetes, and his wife was assigned to do farming. The working conditions were extreme and he was always required to complete the assigned amount of machetes which the Khmer Rouge had ordered. A communal dining hall was created in 1975. Rice and gruel were given to the workers as well as Khmer Rouge cadres. Because he was among the Khmer Rouge, he was fortunate to receive better food rations as opposed to those of the ordinary people. He became sick very often, but managed to survive. However he witnessed workers from other units die from overwork at their worksite.

Throughout the three years, eight months, and twenty days of the Khmer Rouge regime, he lived in his home village. His family was not evacuated during the arrival of the Vietnamese troops in 1979. After the collapse of the Pol Pot regime, he began to make his living by farming.

When asked about the Renakse Petitions, Prak Thai mentioned that he recalled a meeting held at that time. People were called upon to attend the meetings, and then the government staff talked about what happened during the Pol Pot regime. They then asked villagers about their experiences under the regime and wrote down their replies.

11. Mr. Nou Lai (នូ លៃ), 52, farmer, lives in Thnal Ta Segn Village, Svay Ta Chrum Commune, Rolea Pa-ea District, Kampong Chhnang.

In 1970, adults in Thnal Ta Segn were drafted into the Lon Nol army at Svay Tran. They were mobilized to guard the villages as well as fight against the so-called liberation soldiers – Khmer Rouge – on the front lines. Nou Lai's father was also conscripted into the army.

During 1971, fighting and explosions from bombs were often heard around the village. In 1973, liberation soldiers walked through villages. Some villagers, mostly in their 20's,

entered the maquis in a response to the appeal from King Sihanouk. Fighting between the Lon Nol soldiers and the liberation soldiers escalated.

After seizing Phnom Penh in 1975, the KR liberation soldiers entered his village and began to force people out of the village. People were told that they would be able to return in three days. Most families did not take many possessions or much food during the evacuation. Later he realized that those three days turned out to be three years. His family was evacuated to Tirk Phos Commune, Tirk Phos District, Kampong Chhnang Province. At that time, he was a monk. During the evacuation, he decided to leave the monkhood because his family was aware of the Khmer Rouge's plan to eliminate Buddhist monks. According to Nou Lai, the Khmer Rouge planned to gather all the monks in one place and execute them.

During the Khmer Rouge regime, his family was separated and forced to live and work in different places. Nou Lai recalled that he changed locations many times. Sometimes, he had to transplant rice seedlings for the whole day. It was extremely difficult and the food ration was always insufficient during that time. People's bodies became swollen because of malnutrition.

In 1979, the Khmer Rouge forcibly abducted his family and others to mountainous areas. Then the Vietnamese troops caught up with the villagers in Pong Ro Commune and told them to return to Kampong Chhnang Province.

After the fall of the Pol Pot regime, he returned to his village and began to do farming. Sometimes, Pol Pot soldiers, who had been hiding in the forest, showed up in his village and asked villagers for some food. People gave them food and the soldiers returned to the forest without harming anyone.

Nou Lai did not remember if he had participated in the creation of the Renakse Petitions.

These days, he follows news about the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. He believes that this court will bring justice to him and the Cambodian people.

12. Mr. Rea Hao (រ៉ា ហ៊ាវ), 60, farmer, lives in Thnal Ta Segn Village, Svay Ta Chrum Commune, Rolea Pa-ea District, Kampong Chhnang Province

Rea Hao was born to a peasant family in Than Ta Segn Village, Svay Ta Chrum Commune, Rolea Pa-ea District, Kampong Chhnang Province. During the Sihanouk regime, he studied in Thnal Ta Segn through grade ten.

When the country fell into civil war, he made a living by farming during the Lon Nol regime. However, Lon Nol soldiers began to use their artilleries to attack the Khmer Rouge in his village. Every time the fighting broke out, people ran to hide in the trenches. Sometimes, the Khmer Rouge liberation soldiers came into the village and asked for some rice from villagers, but did no harm to people.

Later, the Lon Nol soldiers built their military base inside the village. From that moment on, the Khmer Rouge soldiers dared not enter the village. In 1974, he was drafted into the Lon Nol army. When the Lon Nol soldiers were defeated in 1975, his family and other people

were evacuated to Prey Leu for a week. However, that week turned into years. He did not know who Angkar was.

During the KR regime, he was ordered to uproot trees, build dams, and make fertilizer. Three months after the evacuation in 1975, his parents died from starvation and exhaustion. His older sibling witnessed the incident and buried their parents' bodies. At that time, he was hauling earth at Trapeang Malou Dam.

The diet of gruel was insufficient for everyone. Therefore, they had to search for tree leaves, banana, and other edible things to supplement their diet. His wife and children died at a hospital. While working at Trapeang Malou Dam, he was forced to carry six cubic meters of earth per day. Suffering from malnutrition, he had little strength and therefore never completed this assigned task. The maximum he could transport was three cubic meters per day. At that time, the assigned task was required to be completed; otherwise, rations would be cut. Sick people had to work, the Khmer Rouge said. The sick could be allowed to take a rest only when they fell down unconscious at the worksite. Sometimes, to fill his empty stomach, he risked his life by stealing potatoes which he had secretly grown. If caught, he would have been executed.

After the liberation in 1979, the Khmer Rouge forced him to escape with them. The Khmer Rouge told people that the Vietnamese would come and execute them all. Reaching Am Leang, he finally decided to escape from the KR and return to his home village. His journey back home lasted four days. Upon his arrival at his home village, he found his house completely destroyed by the Khmer Rouge. He rebuilt the house and remarried in 1980. He did not recall the petition filed in 1983, despite the fact that he saw his signature in the attendant list.

Rea Hao listens to news about the Khmer Rouge Tribunal on the radio. He wants the Khmer Rouge leaders to be convicted.

13. Mrs. Seng Chauk (សង ច្បក), 71, farmer, lives in Lvea Village, Svay Ampea Commune, Kampong Leng District, Kampong Chhnang Province.

Born in Kampong Chhnang Province, Seng Chauk had Vietnamese ancestry, given that her mother was Vietnamese and her father was a Chinese-Vietnamese descendant who came to settle in Cambodia a long time ago. She had five siblings.

War erupted between the KR liberation soldiers and Lon Nol soldiers in her village. Her house was burned down by a bomb dropped from a Lon Nol plane. During her pregnancy, her family defected to Tuol Thnal to avoid being killed by the bombardment.

After the liberation of Phnom Penh in 1975, most people in her village were evacuated to District 10. However, her family was relocated to Cheung Cham Nauk instead.

Next, her family was sent back to Cooperative 1, which was located in her village. Her group, consisting of people with Vietnamese ancestry, worked and lived separately from the other groups, who were Khmer and Cham. During the regime, she did the farming and worked in the communal dining hall.

At that time, people who had Vietnamese blood were segregated from other groups. She and the other Vietnamese people in her group were forced to work under harsher conditions than other groups, and members kept disappearing. Seng Chauk always feared that one day her turn would come. Her mother, who could speak Khmer fluently, was taken away and executed in 1977. She did not witness the incident. However, her communal dining hall chief, named Comrade Ruos, informed her not to look for her mother. The fact was that she had been executed. Her siblings were executed under the regime as well.

In 1978, while assigned to haul earth at Koh Bo, she suffered a fever. Along the way to work, she had to lie down on the ground in the paddy and informed others to keep walking to work and just leave her behind. At that time, she had no strength and did not care whether she would be killed for not going to work. Rin, a security policeman, found her in the field and brought her back to a warehouse. Fortunately, she survived.

After the liberation in 1979, her family returned to her home village. When asked about the petition, she said that she did not participate in filing the petition at that time.

14. Mr. Youk Van (យក វ៉ាន), 62, farmer, lives in Ta Lanh Village, Ta Lanh II Commune, Kampong Leng District, Kampong Chhnang Province

Youk Van studied in the pagoda during his childhood. In the early years of the Lon Nol regime, Lon Nol soldiers conscripted him into the army, but he refused to serve and escaped to Kampong Thom Province, hiding in his relative's house.

Then, following King Sihanouk's appeal to the Cambodian people to enter the maquis and help liberate the country, Youk Van volunteered to serve as a liberation soldier and fight against Lon Nol soldiers in 1973.

In 1974 and 1975, he worked in a production unit, doing the farming. In the production unit, men worked plowing paddy fields and carrying earth, while women grew crops and did farming. His given task during the whole regime was to do the farming. Youk Van and his family lived in the village during three-year, eight-month, and twenty-day regime.

In 1975, his three siblings were drafted into the army and dispatched to fight against Vietnam. They all remain unaccounted for. He thought that they all died in the battlefields, given that only their colleagues – not the three of them – returned home after the war. Under the Khmer Rouge regime, his parents died from starvation and exhaustion.

In 1979, when the Vietnamese troops arrived, his family was evacuated to an unknown mountain. Then they returned to their home village. After the collapse of the Khmer Rouge regime, he served as a security policeman, guarding his village and preventing any attacks by the Khmer Rouge soldiers.

When asked about the Renakse Petition, he stated that he volunteered to file the petition. At that time, villagers were interviewed about their lives under the Pol Pot regime. The answers given by villagers were recorded. No pressure was placed on them when the petition was filed.

Youk Van follows the news about the Khmer Rouge Tribunal because he wants to know the truth. In his opinion, Khmer Rouge leaders deserve to be convicted and receive life imprisonment.

15. Mr. Pieng Ai (ពឹង អៃ), 61, lives in Tum Nop Village, Tra Ngo Commune, Kampong Leng District, Kampong Chhnang.

Born to a poor peasant family, Peing Ai studied at Po To Tim School for four years before dropping out of school.

During the Lon Nol regime, he enlisted in the Lon Nol army and had served for one year in the Lon Nol's military. Later he was wounded and captured by the Khmer Rouge soldiers known then as the liberation soldiers. The Khmer Rouge forced him to carry the ammunition.

When the Khmer Rouge took over the country, he surrendered and hid his weapon because he feared that former Lon Nol soldiers would be executed. The Khmer Rouge relocated his family to Kampong Beong.

In 1977, the Khmer Rouge captured his family and detained him and his wife in a prison at Ro Sal, next to a mountain. This incident occurred because his wife had light skin, even though she was in fact Khmer. The prison was located in District 20 of Kampong Chhnang Province. During the detention, all inmates were called to a meeting and were asked to confess whether they had served as Lon Nol soldiers. He was able to survive because he lied about this issue. Those who confessed to having been Lon Nol soldiers were taken away and executed immediately. When asked whether his wife was Vietnamese, he said she was Khmer.

From then on, the Khmer Rouge always kept a close watch on his family, suspecting that his wife was Vietnamese. In one meeting, he stood up and said that his wife was Khmer and he urged the Khmer Rouge to study her background in her home village. After that, the Khmer Rouge cadres no longer spied on his family.

During the regime, he served in a transportation unit, while his wife was assigned to do farming. Riding an elephant, he transported milled rice, fish, medicine, and other items from Kampong Chhnang provincial town to Ro Sal Prison until the arrival of the Vietnamese troops in 1979. He and his wife worked constantly during the regime of the Khmer Rouge. At one point, he fell off the elephant and was badly injured, but survived.

In Ro Sal Prison, there was a large turnover of prisoners. At nighttime, prisoners were shackled and chained. He knew prisoners were killed and buried next to the prison compound and consequently, there was always a bad smell in the area. In addition, he saw bodies of prisoners who had been killed next to the prison.

After the collapse of the Khmer Rouge regime, he learned that thirty of his relatives perished under their rule. As for the Renakse Petitions, he was interviewed at that time about his experiences under the Pol Pot regime. He recalled that the interviewers were Khmer, and they interviewed people in his village from house to house.

16. Mr. Kung Rin (កុង រីន), 70, farmer, currently living in Chres Village, Tra Gil Commune, Kampong Leng District, Kampong Chhnang Province

Since both his parents had died, Kung Rin was raised by his grandmother. He studied in Samdech Chao Vea Chuon School but quit school in grade seven (about five years of education). During King Sihanouk's regime, he worked as a palm tree climber in Maung District, Battambang Province, and then at age 23 married a woman named Sam Keat.

During the Lon Nol regime, the Maung District chief paid him to serve as a soldier, fighting against the Khmer Rouge soldiers in many battles. When the Lon Nol soldiers lost the war to the Khmer Rouge, he abandoned his weapon and escaped to Kampong Tralach District. However, he was caught by the Khmer Rouge along the way and sent to Baribo District of Kampong Chhnang Province.

As a soldier of the defeated Lon Nol army, he was ordered to work hauling earth in District 20 of Kampong Chhnang Province, along with about 208 other Lon Nol soldiers. Approximately 108 of these soldiers disappeared after being taken to be re-educated by the KR upper level cadres. All of the soldiers who disappeared remain unaccounted for. That place was known as a concentration camp. These incidents took place in 1975. Fortunately, he was released and assigned to climb palm trees. Kap was the district chief at that time.

Next, he was relocated to Sam Rong Thom cooperative of Baribo District. Throughout the years of the Khmer Rouge regime, he never saw his wife or son. Fortunately, he was able to search and find extra food to eat without being arrested or beaten. For example, he could fish when the given ration was not enough to fill his empty stomach. He was ordered to carry palm juice to people working in the plowing unit. He lived and worked in this cooperative until the Vietnamese troops arrived.

When the Vietnamese troops invaded, the Khmer Rouge forced him to escape with them to O Ral Mountain. He managed to escape with his wife and son. However, at one point, the Vietnamese troops found them and asked him and his family to return to Kampong Chhnang. Eventually, his family went to Tra Ngel, Kampong Leng District.

When asked about the Renakse Petitions, his memory was rather vague. According to him, he recalled writing down his experiences under the Khmer Rouge regime.

He follows the news about the Khmer Rouge Tribunal because he wants to know the facts about the prosecution of the Khmer Rouge leaders.

17. Nhoung Khun (ញ៉ុង ឃុន), 81, lives in Kork Village, Khon Rong Commune, Boribo District, Kampong Chhnang Province.

When Khun was young, he studied at Punley School. A few years after Khun became a teacher, the Khmer Rouge invaded and seized his village. He was evacuated to Thnal Village and remained there for one month before he was sent to another village named Samlang. There, he worked transporting rock for use in bridge construction. A former student of Khun's, named Chhit, was a Khmer Rouge cadre in the area. Chhit offered a great deal of help to Khun during the Khmer Rouge period and also saved a number of other people from

being executed. When Chhit was repatriated into his village after the Khmer Rouge regime collapsed, he was accepted by the villagers despite his association with the Khmer Rouge.

Khun witnessed the arrest of six students who were ultimately executed. He also witnessed the disappearance of people around him. According to him, people were forced to work in harsh conditions without proper food or medication. He said he saw people collapse while working because they were too emaciated and weak. Khun lost his entire family, including a brother, during the Khmer Rouge regime.

Khun did not remember if he had participated in the creation of the Renakse Petitions, but stated that he did file a complaint with the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. He was happy to receive a note from the Khmer Rouge Tribunal confirming receipt of his complaint.

18. Chham Peou (ឆាម ពៀវ), 52, lives in Lvea Village, Svay Rumpea Commune, Kampong Leng District, Kampong Chhnang Province.



Chham Peou

Peou dropped out of school after grade eleven after only two years of education. The Khmer Rouge seized his village in about 1973 or 1974. After the Khmer Rouge gained control of the village, they began to organize the population into groups and units; cooperatives were not established until 1975. In 1974, Peou, a security policeman, was sent to fight against the Lon Nol forces.

When the Khmer Rouge came to power, Peou was assigned to a Regional Mobile Work Brigade, working at various sites building dikes and dams. According to Peou, he was separated from his parents at that time. At the worksite in Koh Bo, many people were killed for not carefully performing the tasks as assigned, or because of their backgrounds as former military, Buddhist monks or students. Leaders of his brigade changed frequently.

In 1977, a marriage was arranged for Peou at Koh Bo. According to Peou, everyone had to reveal their background, thus, the Khmer Rouge authorities knew exactly who were new people (those evacuated from Phnom Penh and other provincial towns), and who were base people. When the Vietnamese troops arrived in the village in 1979, the Khmer Rouge abducted him and other villagers and took them to the Dangrek Mountains along the Thai border. Again, he and the other villagers were forced to live in cooperatives similar to those during the Khmer Rouge regime. It was then that his wife delivered a child, who remains alive today. He returned to his village later in 1979.

Peou did not remember participating in the creation of the Renakse Petitions and was wondering why his name appeared on the petitions.

19. Klauk El (ក្លាក ឈៃ), 75, lives in Lvea Village, Svay Rumpea Commune, Kampong Leng District, Kampong Chhnang Province

During the Khmer Rouge regime, El was living in a cooperative headed by a man named Hakk. He was first put to work as a blacksmith for the cooperative. Later he made plows and constructed houses. Then he was transferred to work in craftsmanship for the District Office, where he remained for two years. The chief of craftsmanship was Comrade Mam, a female comrade. She reduced food rations for people and kept the remaining rice for herself. This was reported to the upper echelon and she



Klauk El

was then removed and replaced by another unit chief. The new chief (whose name he did not recall) was better, offering adequate food to people. This new chief was in charge of around 30 families, comprising approximately 100 people. El returned to his home village in 1979 and told the Victim Participation Project that he did not witness any killings.

20. Nou Noeun (នូវ នួន), 63, lives in Tra Ngel Village, Tra Ngel Commune, Kampong Leng District, Kampong Chhnang Province.



Nou Noeun

Initially, the Khmer Rouge evacuated Noeun to Touk Meas Mountain and assigned him to grow rice and do farming in the vicinity of Koh Bo Dam. Then he was assigned to collect palm juice to make palm sugar from palm trees in the area. As he climbed up the palm trees, he saw a tile-roofed house in Andaung Ronuk Village, which was used as a detention center for those who had committed light offenses. According to Noeun, those who had committed serious offenses would not be allowed to live.

Noeun climbed palm trees both in the morning and afternoon. In addition to climbing palm trees, he collected wood. Noeun returned home after the Vietnamese troops ousted the Khmer Rouge. Noeun told the Victim Participation Project that he did not have much information about the Khmer Rouge Tribunal.

21. Yin Choek (យិន ចឺក), 61, lives in Tum Nub Village, Tra Ngel Commune, Kampong Leng District, Kampong Chhnang Province.

In 1974, Choek lost a daughter due to cholera because there was no medication for treatment. At that time, Choek was living in an area considered an enemy area by the Khmer Rouge. Therefore, when the Khmer Rouge took power, he was evacuated to District 10, (now Boribo district), and placed in Cooperative 66. He was identified as a depositee in the cooperative and, according to him, that classification meant that he would eventually be executed. He was assigned to perform extreme labor -- such as digging and carrying earth, constructing dikes,

and transplanting rice -- without adequate food or rest. Choek said that he heard from others about the killings and he saw the graves, but he never witnessed the arrests or executions personally. He stumbled upon graves at one point when he was sent to cut trees at Chumreay Mountain, but did not recognize any of the victims. He was at District 10 until 1979 when the Vietnamese troops came. Shortly afterward, Choek reunited with his family and returned to his home village.

22. Mr. Yean Sok (យ៉ាន សុខ), 54, farmer, lives in Lvea Village, Svay Rumpea Commune, Kampong Leng District, Kampong Chhnang Province.

During the coup d'état against King Norodom Sihanouk in 1970, Yean Sok was studying in grade nine. After dropping out of school, he was ordained as a monk. Later, the Khmer Rouge forced him and other monks to farm and grow potatoes in the forest. Prior to the fall of the Lon Nol regime, the area in which they lived was subject to constant aerial bombardment by Lon Nol forces.

In 1976, approximately 50 monks were forced to leave the monkhood. That year, the cooperative was created. In late 1977, Yean Sok was relocated to a Region's mobile unit located in Kampong Chhnang provincial town. As a member of this unit, he worked building dikes in various places within District 10 of Kampong Chhnang Province. In 1978, he and many other people worked building a dike in District 10. There, he carried loads of earth night and day.

As he recounted his terrible experiences during the regime, he stated that having to eat gruel and morning glory soup was the worst of all. From 1973 to 1978, he lived all alone and never had even a single chance to meet with his family. It was fortunate that all of his family members were able to survive the regime.

In 1978, he was sent to the battlefields and put in charge of transporting food supplies and carrying the wounded. There, a Khmer Rouge cadre (who now lives in Pailin), attempted to kill him three times and to kill his father twice. The cadre also mistreated his elder brother for reasons which remained unknown to him to this day.

When asked about the Renakse Petitions filed in the early 1980s, he could not recall that event. He must have filed the petition at that time because his name appears on the attendance list. He supported the filing of the petitions because he wanted the genocidal regime to be prosecuted. He often follows the proceedings of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal and is satisfied with Duch's sentence because he thinks that: 1) Duch is now elderly; and 2) he will not live much longer.

Sok is no longer angry at the atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge. He said, "Vindictiveness ends by not being vindictive." Ultimately, he believes that today's visit to his village by the Victim Participation Project was not intended to recall the suffering during the regime, but to help people contemplate reconciliation.

23. Mr. Ok Hieng (អ៊ុក ហឿង), 70, farmer, lives in Tra Bek Village, Tra Ngel Commune, Kampong Leng District, Kampong Chhnang Province.

During his childhood, Ok Hieng studied in a pagoda and dropped out of school after only three years of education. During the Lon Nol regime, he was assigned to do farming and also served as a member of his village's paramilitary.

When the Pol Pot regime took power in 1975, his whole family was forced to relocate from his home village to a newly built commune, which was far away at the foot of a mountain. During the regime, he was ordered to serve in a transportation unit, which transported food supplies from the communal hall to work sites. Every family member was put to work in different units. Specifically, his wife was forced to work in a plowing unit, whereas his children were put to work in the children's unit. Only a small amount of food, consisting of watery gruel and morning glory soup, were provided twice per day at lunch and dinner.

Because he suffered from hunger, he sometimes had to risk his life searching for paddy crabs and snails to supplement his diet. At one point, the Khmer Rouge suspected him of having served as a former Lon Nol soldier. At first, he denied the accusation, but he later revealed the truth. Luckily, they did no harm to him because he worked hard and served them well.

After the liberation in 1979, his family reunited and returned to his home village. Regarding the Renakse Petitions, he did not remember participating in the creation of the petitions, although his name was on one of the petitions.

When asked about the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, he frankly responded that he sometimes hears news related to the court on the radio. He wants the accused to be prosecuted and convicted as soon as possible.

**24. Team Saut (ទាម ស៊ូត), 57, lives
in Tra Bek Village, Tra Ngel
Commune, Kampong Leng
District, Kampong Chhnang
Province**

Saut lost her father during the Khmer Rouge regime. According to Saut, her father died in his sleep after fulfilling his duty as a transporter for the Khmer Rouge. She said, with permission from her unit chief, she was allowed to bury her father.



Team Saut

Saut said all kinds of jobs were assigned to her and she did all of them in order to survive. She was always in a state of fear. According to her, even the smallest mistake could result in fatal consequences. She tried to do every assigned job despite the intense hunger. Those who had worked for the predecessor Lon Nol government commonly disappeared. Her colleagues, upon being told to change work assignments, disappeared one after another and were never seen again. Saut received a few marriage proposals during the Khmer Rouge regime and managed to reject them without any negative consequences.

When the Vietnamese troops ousted the Khmer Rouge in 1979, the Khmer Rouge abducted her and other villagers and headed for the jungle. Fighting broke out a few times between the

Vietnamese troops and the Khmer Rouge forces during their escape. Saut and others were finally rescued by Vietnamese troops. She then returned to her village and has remained there ever since.

Saut said that she did not regularly follow developments involving the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. According to her, prosecuting the Khmer Rouge leadership is the right thing to do.

25. Ponn Peun (ប័ន ព័ន), 57, lives in Trapaing Anchagn Village, Svay Chrum Commune, Rolea Pa-ea District, Kampong Chhnang Province.

Peun dropped out of school in 1972 after only three years of education. He was ordained as a Buddhist monk in 1973 at Thoam Voan Pagoda and left the monkhood in 1975. According to him, the Khmer Rouge ordered monks to transplant rice, and to raise chickens and other poultry. As a monk, one was not permitted to raise animals. However, if one refused to do this assigned job, they would not be given any food. This predicament forced many monks to leave the monkhood.

Peun was evacuated out of his village to Prasneb Village, Sra-Ngaim Commune. Peun's eldest brother was killed because he was alleged to be a military officer for the predecessor regime. Peun said that, in fact, he was a student and not a member of the military. The perpetrator of the killing, according to her, was Soeur, who has since died. Soeur had alleged that her brother was a member of an American CIA network. Peun learned about the fate of her brother through a man named Lan. She said that one day at about 5 p.m., her brother had been ordered to grow vegetables at Kampong Ras, but as he left the hut, he was arrested and taken to be executed.

Peun's job was to collect palm juice from the palm trees in the vicinity, work in the rice paddies, and dig and carry earth. Peun witnessed the arrests of 17-April people, but could not assist the victims or even talk about the incidents. In 1978, her worksite allowed the workers to return to their villages. She returned home to reunite with her family members. Soon after, her parents made a request to the Khmer Rouge authority for her to get married. She said five couples were married at the same time and the ceremony, which took place at around 10 p.m. at night, was very brief. She remained at that location until the arrival of the Vietnamese troops.

26. Vann Sophat (វ៉ាន់ សុផាត), 48, lives in Thnal Ta Segn Village, Svay Ta Chrum Commune, Rolea Pa-ea District, Kampong Chhnang Province.

Sophat was still young when the Khmer Rouge came to power, and he was evacuated to Samaki Meanchey District. Later, Sophat and other villagers were returned to his home village to grow vegetables. Sophat had difficulty remembering dates and times. He said that in 1976 he was assigned to construct a dam, currently called 20-May Dam, at Koh Keo Village. He said that the working conditions were not too harsh and he was allowed to rest. He was required to dig and carry three cubic meters of earth per day. If he was able to carry six cubic meters per day, he would be given the next day off and allowed to visit his family. He said it took only three months for the workers to construct a dam of four kilometers in length and five meters in width.

After the dam construction was completed, he was assigned to work on the rice paddies. Between 1977 and 1978, he and other villagers were assigned to construct another dam in the village where he resides today. The dam was seven kilometers in length but, due to flooding, the dam was severely damaged.

Upon the arrival of the Vietnamese troops, he and others were abducted by the Khmer Rouge and forced to go with them to Kravanh Mountain. According to him, the Khmer Rouge continued to assign people to farm and grow rice at the mountain until they were rescued by the Vietnamese troops in May 1979, after which he returned to his home village. Sophat said that the dam he worked on still exists today and is being used as a road by villagers.

27. Mr. Mam Son (ម៉ម សុន), 70, farmer, lives in Tra Bek Village, Tra Ngil Commune, Kampong Leng District, Kampong Chhnang Province

As the only child of a relatively poor peasant family in Tra Bek Village, Mam Son studied in the pagoda with monks. He studied for five years, quitting school due to the family's difficult living conditions. He then helped his family do the farming.

Four or five years later, he was ordained a monk in a pagoda in Battambang Province. After spending ten years of his life as a monk, he left the monkhood to help his aging parents with the farming. In 1962, he married his wife, Prum Neng. His entire family continued living in his home village until the coup d'état against King Sihanouk in 1970. During the Lon Nol regime, his family and most other families escaped to live in Kampong Boeng in order to avoid the aerial bombardment by American planes. At the time, Kampong Boeng was under the control of the Americans, and the Khmer Rouge started to attack the area. Taking advantage of the availability of the American food supply and shelter, his family continued to live there until the Khmer Rouge took control of the area and evacuated all people to a mountain.

In 1975, his family was forcibly relocated to Touk Meas Mountain. There they lived in a cooperative. Two nights after arrival at the new location, his family members were separated and assigned to live in different places. At one point, he became sick and was taken to a hospital. After recovering, he went to visit his parents, but was informed that his parents had died from starvation and exhaustion. He asked permission from his unit chief to allow him to visit his children. However, the request was always refused. For more than three years while the Khmer Rouge regime was in power, he was never once able to visit his wife and children. In the cooperative, his daily task was hauling earth to help construct paddy dikes. Working hours lasted from 7 a.m. to 12 noon, and in the afternoon the work sometimes continued until 8 or 9 p.m.

One time, upon going to search for timber in the forest to make a plow and oxcart wheels, he saw a pit filled with swollen bodies. The pit was approximately five meters square. This incident took place in 1977. During the regime, he witnessed people being arrested and taken away to be executed at the mountains. In 1977, his four-year-old child died from exhaustion and a lack of breast milk from the mother, but he was not allowed to bury his dead child. Classified as a 17-April person, he had no rights and was not allowed to go anywhere. Lonh, the commune deputy chief in charge of the military, was very cruel. Lonh was later killed by survivors after the collapse of the Khmer Rouge regime.

He witnessed an incident involving a couple accused of committing a moral offense. The two were arrested, taken away, and have been unaccounted for since. During the regime, when two people were in love, they needed to seek permission from Angkar. Otherwise, they would be in danger. Under the regime, monks were forcibly disrobed and forced to work like ordinary people, according to Son.

When the Vietnamese arrived at Touk Meas Mountain, Son loaded his family and his possessions onto an oxcart and escaped to Bra Yap in Kampong Leng District and then to his home village. After the fall of the Khmer Rouge, he served as a village chief until 1996 or 1997. Between 1979 and 1993, the Khmer Rouge continued to launch guerrilla attacks on the village.

When asked about the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, he stated that he supports the prosecution of the leaders of the regime and believes that such a prosecution could bring justice to the people. He hopes that the accused will be prosecuted as soon as possible.

28. Kong Channa (គង់ ចាន់ណា), 54, farmer, lives in Thnal Ta Segn Village, Svay Ta Chrum Commune, Rolea Pa-ea District, Kampong Chhnang Province

In 1974, Channa was engaged to a man named Ros Savorn, but unfortunately Savorn died during the Khmer Rouge regime. Channa remembered that in 1975, she was told to prepare herself to welcome a visit by King Norodom Sihanouk and was very happy upon receiving that news. To her disappointment, her departure to receive her beloved king had changed her life forever. The king did not come and her travel continued for many days. Along the way, Channa witnessed people falling ill and dying.

Upon arriving at her destination, Channa was assigned various works which included dam construction, rice transplanting and other manual tasks. She had to work each day from dawn until late at night with only a brief lunch and dinner break. Channa recalled the unbearably meager food ration given to her and other villagers. Only gruel and meatless morning glory soup were provided every day, and nothing else was available. Due to overwork and severe food shortages, the health of the people was in serious danger. Proper medical care was never given to her or any other people.

Between 1976 and 1977, she was assigned to harvest rice at a mountain for half a month. She had no shelter during the period and had to spend her nights on mats underneath trees. Upon her return from the mountain, Channa became sick and was treated with nothing other than the medicine which resembled rabbit droppings. The Khmer Rouge believed this medicine was able to cure all kinds of diseases and illnesses. Later, she was assigned to spray pesticides on rice. She visited her family after that job and was threatened with arrest by Khun (since deceased), chief of the cooperative, who accused her of being lazy. Channa said that forced marriage was quite common but, had it happened to her, she would have committed suicide to avoid such an arrangement. According to her, anyone who refused to submit to an arranged marriage would face fatal consequences. When a marriage was arranged for her sister, Channa was not allowed to participate. Channa heard, just as did other people, of arrests and executions, but she herself never witnessed the torture or execution. Channa returned to her home village when the Vietnamese troops ousted the Khmer Rouge from power.

Channa did not recall the creation of the Renakse Petitions. Channa would prefer if the prosecution of the Khmer Rouge leaders moved more quickly.

29. Tep Hong (តេព ហុង), 60, farmer, lives in Thnal Ta Segn Village, Svay Ta Chrum Commune, Rolea Pa-ea District, Kampong Chhnang Province

Hong had seven siblings, five of whom were lost to the Khmer Rouge regime. In 1972, Hong married Ponn Phann and they had a total of seven children, all of whom survived the Khmer Rouge regime. In 1975, Hong was evacuated out of his home. He was told that everyone had to leave their homes for a short period of time so that the new regime could rearrange the village. According to Hong, everyone had to leave without exception. Hong recalled that his neighbor's marriage was interrupted by the evacuation.

During the Khmer Rouge regime, Hong did not live together with his wife and children since everyone was assigned to different jobs at different locations. At work, Hong saw people dying from a lack of food and water. After a while, Hong was again relocated to Prey Maung and there he was assigned to work in the rice paddies. When his wife delivered a baby, he had to take care of his wife at night and work during the daytime. Hong was later selected to join a tree-cutting unit and had to work very hard without any rest. Hong was classified as one of the 17-April people. Although the working conditions were really harsh, he was able to request permission to visit his wife and children. Hong had been relocated several times to perform different work assignments in the area. Phalla, who was an uncle of Hong, and his wife were arrested and executed based on an allegation that Phalla was in the military during the Lon Nol regime.

When the Vietnamese troops first arrived, they arrested Hong but he was later released. He then joined the village's paramilitary, guarding the village against Khmer Rouge attacks. In 1981, Hong left the paramilitary and became chief of his village. Hong confessed that he knew little about the Khmer Rouge Tribunal.

30. Bou Hon (ប៉ូ ហុង), 64, lives in Thnal Village, Svay Chrum Commune, Rolea Pa-ea District, Kampong Chhnang Province

Hon has eight brothers and sisters, but two of her siblings died during the Khmer Rouge regime due to sickness. She said that on the day she gave birth to her baby in 1977, her husband was arrested by the Khmer Rouge soldiers and taken to be killed without any reason. However, this news was withheld from her because her aunt did not want her to learn about the death of her husband while she was delivering the baby. Witnesses saw that her husband had been tied up by Khmer Rouge cadres. She never found out why her husband was killed. During the Democratic Kampuchea era, the Khmer Rouge chief in her village ordered her to make clothes and hats. Working hours lasted from early morning until lunch time and then continued sometimes until midnight. During that time, Hon said food was so scarce that everyone suffered from malnutrition. Then Hon was lucky because she was assigned to work in the Khmer Rouge's communal kitchen. After that, she had enough to eat.

In the early 1980's, after the Khmer Rouge regime ended, she was chief of a women's unit in the commune where she lived. Regarding the Renakse Petitions, she did not recall whether she participated. She said perhaps it was the village chief who put her name on the petition

because she had no recollection of the event. Asked about the Extraordinary Chambers in the Court of Cambodia (ECCC), she said the court should be allowed to do its job. She added that putting leaders of the Khmer Rouge regime on trial is the right thing to do. She believes they have to be held accountable for the deaths of so many Cambodians.

31. Prum Sophan (ព្រំ សុផាន), 56, lives in Thnal Konsang Village, Svay Chrum Commune, Rolea Pa-ea District, Kampong Chhnang Province

In the early 1970s, battles between forces loyal to the Khmer Rouge and those loyal to the Lon Nol regime were waged around her village. When the Khmer Rouge took power on 17 April 1975, she was relocated along with other villagers. They were all told to travel out of the village to welcome a visit by King Norodom Sihanouk. The trip out of her village turned out to be a very long and painful trip.

In July 1975, she was sent to Prey Moul, Trapaing Pring Village. There she had no food to eat and survived only by picking mushrooms. In 1976, her husband was assigned to cut trees for making wooden pillars but, to her disappointment, he never returned. The villagers told her not to wait for him, because they knew that he had been killed. One day, after her husband had disappeared, the village chief told her that her husband had been sent for re-education at another location and warned her to work hard. Sophan had little time to rest and sometimes she had to work until close to midnight. Sophan said food shortages were common, but the rations were better during the harvest season.

During the Khmer Rouge era, she saw many people being arrested and tied up by the Khmer Rouge cadres along the road in front of where she lived. Her mother's mental health was severely affected by witnessing the arrests and she later passed away. In 1977, Prum Sophan was forced to transplant rice seedlings. That year, she was watched carefully by the Khmer Rouge cadres and any wrongdoing could have resulted in her death. Aware of the circumstance, Sophan worked diligently to avoid arrest. Sophan mentioned that a man was called for re-education because he stole sugar and he was never seen again.

In January 1979, after the Khmer Rouge regime collapsed, she returned to her home village to reunite with her siblings and her parents.

When asked about the Renakse Petitions, Sophan could not remember whether she was involved. Regarding the Extraordinary Chambers in the Court of Cambodia (ECCC), she knew a lot about Duch's case from listening to radio broadcasts. She stressed that Duch's sentence of 35 years in prison, which was mitigated to 19 years, is not proportional to the crimes he committed. She feels he deserves life imprisonment.

32. Uch Sot (ឥស សុត), 56, lives in Svay Chrum Commune, Rolea Pa-ea District, Kampong Chhnang Province

During the interview, Mr. Uch Sot said he is now living in the Svay Chrum Commune, Rolea Pa-ea District, Kampong Chhnang Province. Aside from working for the Provincial Hall, he supplements his income as a farmer and a *motodop* driver.

He worked for the Lon Nol administration between 1970 and 1975. He was in the military. In 1973, he delivered food to the frontline soldiers and was once wounded in a Khmer Rouge attack. In the commune in which he lived, he saw the Khmer Rouge cadres arrest villagers, some of whom were allowed to live and some of whom were killed.

When the Khmer Rouge took control of the country on 17 April 1975, Uch Sot was relocated to District 20 (today Rolea Pa-ea District). After dawn on 17 April 1975, while he was preparing to climb a palm tree to collect juice, there were many black-clothed cadres nearby who told him to prepare for a three-day trip to greet King Norodom Sihanouk. Because it was meant to be a three-day trip, he did not bring many of his belongings. Things turned out to be quite different from what he expected. The Khmer Rouge troops ordered the villagers to remain along the route and not move away or return home. He said that it was very miserable because he did not have shelter for sleeping or any water to drink.

In 1976, he was sent to farm rice and vegetables at Koh Peam Nhor, Svay Chrum Commune. While he was working one day, the Khmer Rouge cadres called him and some other people to attend a meeting. He and the others were accused of having served in the Lon Nol military. He immediately denied the accusation, stating that he was a driver and had never been in the military. The cadres believed him because he showed them his hidden driver's license. He told the Victim Participation Project that his driver's license saved his life. He was then ordered to construct a dam. At the worksite, food was scarce. In the morning, cadres forced people to work from 6 a.m. to 12 noon, with a short lunch break. They would then continue to work until 6 p.m. Sometimes, he was forced to continue digging and carrying earth until midnight. After 1977, he was assigned to work on irrigation and road construction. He worked as hard as he could and was rewarded with food.

He said he heard about the establishment of the ECCC. He feels that Duch's sentence of 35 years in prison is fair because, given Duch's age, this sentence amounts to life imprisonment. He said the ECCC is very important for Cambodian people. It will produce documents for Cambodian students to learn about in the future.

**33. Dy Oeun (ឪ ត្បូង), 57, lives in Lvea Village, Svay Rumpea Commune,
Kampong Leng District, Kampong Chhnang Province**

Oeun dropped out of school in 1970 after only six years of education due to the fact that his teachers fled to the city to avoid armed conflicts in the area. He was then ordained as a Buddhist monk and served until 1975, when the Khmer Rouge took control of the whole country. According to Oeun, after the Khmer Rouge took control of his village in 1970, they forced him and other monks to grow rice and vegetables to supply their troops, who were fighting against soldiers of the Lon Nol regime.

Four months after the Khmer Rouge victory over the Lon Nol regime, Oeun was forced to leave his monkhood because, according to him, the Khmer Rouge viewed all religions as contrary to their revolutionary ideology. Oeun told the Victim Participation Project that the Khmer Rouge had discriminated against him, accusing him of seeking refuge as a Buddhist monk instead of joining them during the war. He was forced to work three times per day -- morning, afternoon and night -- with little rest. He said he had to work until 10:00 at night. Oeun was fed cooked rice during the first five or six months, after which gruel was his only

food ration. He said the food ration was so inadequate that people were compelled to look for edible things such as banana trunk or red corn.

Oeun said that during the Khmer Rouge period, many Khmer Rouge cadres were sent to be re-educated but never returned. In October 1978, the Khmer Rouge began to conscript people into the military to fight against Vietnam. He said many people had died or been wounded as a result of the war against Vietnam. When the Vietnamese troops seized control of Phnom Penh, he and others were evacuated by the Khmer Rouge to Peam Lauk Mountain in District 14, now Tirk Phos District, in Kampong Chhnang Province. After the Vietnamese troops rescued him from the Khmer Rouge, he returned to his village and has lived there ever since.

As for the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, Oeun believes it is just to sentence Duch to 35 years in prison. He said Duch should not have appealed this conviction, given the serious gravity of the crimes he committed in S-21. He believes that if all prison chiefs of the Khmer Rouge were brought to trial, it would lead to instability for the country. Therefore, he believes the Khmer Rouge Tribunal should finish its work at the end of Case 002.

34. Pen Phon (ឃុំ ៩ ៩), 57, lives Smaeb Village, Svay Chrum Commune, Rolea Pa-ea District, Kampong Chhnang Province

Phon, who has five siblings, dropped out of school after only six or seven years of education. Fighting between Khmer Rouge forces and soldiers loyal to the Lon Nol regime broke out in 1972. Because of the armed conflict, he and other villagers had been evacuated by the Khmer Rouge to one of its bases in Kraing Leav Village for a few days before being allowed to return. The Khmer Rouge warned them not to inform the Lon Nol soldiers of the location of their base.

Phon said that three days after the Khmer Rouge took control of the country in 1975, they evacuated his family, along with the other people in his village, during the night. They told the villagers to prepare for a three-day trip to greet King Norodom Sihanouk during his visit to the area. Instead, they were evacuated to Brasnith Commune, Rolea Pa-ea District, Kampong Chhnang Province. People were forced to remain in the cooperative and work collectively planting and harvesting rice and digging canals. According to Phon, at the beginning of the regime, people were able to search for their own food. However at the end of 1975, both working conditions and food rations changed for the worse.

Phon was later assigned to join a mobile work brigade which was constructing a dam at Prey Khmer. He had to work from dawn until late at night, with little rest. Food rations were scarce with only gruel provided to the workers. Khmer Rouge cadres investigated everyone's background in an effort to purge the brigade of enemies. In late 1978, he obtained permission to visit his parents, who ran toward him and embraced him as soon as they saw him. Later, he was allowed to return to join his parents in the cooperative. He requested to be married and an arrangement was offered to him. He and his wife are still together today. He remembered that during their brief Khmer Rouge wedding ceremony, a cadre pointed out that Khmer Rouge marriage was free, unlike those of predecessor regimes.

In 1976, he witnessed the arrests of former Khmer Rouge soldiers from the Eastern Zone, who worked at Kampong Chhnang Airport and were taken to be killed. In the same year,

Phon was arrested and beaten for traveling without permission. He was forced to work with reduced rations as punishment. Phon said a pagoda in his village was demolished by the Khmer Rouge, while some pagodas in the district were used as animal pens and warehouses.

After the Khmer Rouge regime, Phon became a policeman, resigning in 1993. Phon believes former Khmer Rouge leaders should be prosecuted for events which occurred in Cambodia during their regime and that this prosecution should help answer many questions which still remain about the regime.

35. Meas Nheam (មេស ញ៉ែម), 70, lives in Tra Ngel Village, Tra Ngel Commune, Kampong Leng District, Kampong Chhnang Province

Nheam was ordained a monk in 1970 but later left the monkhood. According to Nheam, the Khmer Rouge conquered his village in 1970, i.e. one month after the coup d'état against King Norodom Sihanouk.

On 17 April 1975, Nheam was relocated to Touk Meas Mountain and placed in a 10-man unit. He was assigned to dig and carry earth. Aside from hauling earth, he was assigned to produce hoe handles. He had to produce 10 handles every morning. He was later assigned to collect palm juice and produce palm sugar for soldiers. He said that his wife and children were separated from him. He was not allowed to visit his children even when they were sick. He lost a 7-year-old daughter due to starvation. As for food, Nheam said that he was given two meals per day, lunch and dinner, all of which were gruel.

One day, he was assigned to look for wooden poles at Rongeang Mountain to make hoe handles. He found a mass grave so big that, according to him, it could contain up to 100 bodies. Nheam said he was terrified upon discovering that scene. When the Vietnamese troops arrived, he and other villagers were abducted by the Khmer Rouge and taken to District 10 (Baribo District today). Nheam remained there with the Khmer Rouge for three months before being rescued by the Vietnamese troops. He returned to his home village and has lived there ever since.

Nheam believes it is crucial to prosecute leaders of the Khmer Rouge regime, because it will help young people to learn about this dark period in their country's history.

36. Bou Kimsin (ប៊ូ គីមស៊ីន), 58, lives in Thnal Ta Segn Village, Svay Ta Chrum Commune, Rolea Pa-ea District, Kampong Chhnang Province

Kimsin is currently chief of Svay Ta Chrum Commune. During the Khmer Rouge regime, he was forced to work from dawn until late at night with little time for rest. He recalled a very sad experience in 1977 when his request to visit his parents was refused by the Khmer Rouge.

One year after the Khmer Rouge came to power, Kimsin was relocated to Kraing Skea Commune and later to Kang Meas District to grow rice. In 1978, he requested to be married and this request was accepted by the Khmer Rouge. After the marriage, however, he and his wife were separated because they were assigned to perform hard labor at different worksites. Kimsin remembered that at the beginning of the Khmer Rouge regime, people were given cooked rice to eat but later food supplies became very scarce.

Kimsin said that one night in 1977, one of his co-workers was taken away without any reason and never returned. He heard that the co-worker was taken away to be killed. Kimsin's father died in 1978 due to starvation.

Kimsin supports the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, which he believes may help end impunity in Cambodia. Kimsin is still amazed that he actually survived the harsh living conditions during the Khmer Rouge regime.

37. Khlim Kin (ខ្លីម គីន), 55, farmer, lives in Trapeang An Chanh Village, Svay Chrum Commune, Rolea Pa-ea District, Kampong Chhnang Province

Though born to a poor peasant family, Khlim Kin managed to study in Ka-san School for five years. In 1974, after quitting school due to the serious bombardment against the Khmer Rouge forces around Kampong Chhnang town, he enlisted in the Marines. Serving in the Marine Force for the Lon Nol regime, he fought many battles along the Mekong River before defecting from the military and returning to his home village. According to Kin, it was fortunate that he left the military three or four months before the Khmer Rouge gained complete control of Phnom Penh on 17 April 1975, because members of the Lon Nol forces were targeted for execution by the new regime. After the Khmer Rouge victory, "the bandits," to use Kin's words, evacuated his family and other villagers out of their village, telling them that they must make a trip to greet the return of King Norodom Sihanouk. Kin and the other villagers were told not to bring any belongings because they would return in just one day.

He and the rest of the villagers were evacuated to Tirk Phos in District 14 (Tik Phos Commune today). Shortly after their arrival, the Khmer Rouge took away his bicycle. The following morning, they had him build a wooden bridge, currently called O Tra Ngoung, next to Kbal Tirk. The construction of this wooden bridge lasted about two weeks. Then he was ordered to build a road and do farming. About ten days later, they assigned him to grow potatoes in a mobile work brigade, separate from his parents. His mobile unit was comprised of approximately 70 people.

During the regime, the Khmer Rouge always spied on him because they suspected that he had served in the Lon Nol military. In order to survive and encourage them to spare his life, he completed his assigned tasks to the best of his ability. Between 1976 and 1977, his sole assigned task was to grow potatoes in District 20. Later he was put to work in a fishing unit in Kampong Reang. Specifically, they had him pick liana from the mountainside in order to make fishing instruments. Kin recalled an incident in which an elderly man, who for some reason beat a cow so severely that it could no longer work, was tied up and dragged by a horse on the road before being taken away and executed. The Khmer Rouge punished him in public in order to ensure that the other workers learned from this man's mistake.

There was a prison located near his cooperative during the Khmer Rouge regime. People who stole potatoes or unintentionally broke the plow while plowing the paddy field were arrested and detained in that prison. The prison had no roof, and about 40 inmates were detained there, as he recalled. Inmates slept on the ground and had no shelter from the rain. From his perspective, those detained inmates were meant to die. Male prisoners were interrogated and tortured. He witnessed these incidents in 1977. The Khmer Rouge also arrested their own cadres.

When he requested permission to visit his sick parents, he was scorned by being asked, “Are you a member of the medical staff?” He was not able to visit his parents, who died in 1977. Because Kin was unable to attend to his parents when they were dying, he does not even know where they are buried. During the regime, he witnessed some Cham Muslims being forced to eat pork. According to him, the Chams who refused to eat pork were not mistreated. Some Chams did not eat the soup cooked with pork; they just ate watery gruel. If it was discovered that someone was Vietnamese, they were executed immediately.

In late 1978, many people (especially the young ones) were drafted into the army to fight along the Vietnamese border. When the Vietnamese invaded the country, the Khmer Rouge forced him to flee the area with them. However, after many months of life on the run with the Khmer Rouge, he finally escaped and returned to his home village. After the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime, only twelve of the original seventy members of his mobile unit returned to the village. Those who had been taken away and executed were mostly former soldiers. Their only crime was having served in the Lon Nol army. Under the Khmer Rouge regime, Kin lost four siblings: two brothers and two sisters. His sisters died from malaria, exhaustion, and forced labor. One of his brothers died from malnutrition in his mobile unit, and his other one-year-old brother died in his hammock from an unknown cause. His parents died from exhaustion and starvation.

Kin follows the news of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal on the radio, and said that Duch’s apology was not acceptable because so many people were killed during the regime. From his perspective, Duch cannot be forgiven and deserves a life sentence. He added that a 19-year-imprisonment is too lenient for Duch. Finally, he was pleased to have his experiences under the Khmer Rouge regime recorded and preserved as an historical record from which future generations may learn.

38. Phauk Saret (ហ្វាក សារ៉េត), 58, farmer, lives in Thnal Ta Segn Village, Svay Ta Chrum Commune, Rolea Pa-ea District, Kampong Chhnang Province

In 1976, Saret served in a transportation unit of the economic section. Desperate to see his wife, he asked the village chief if his wife could be allowed to come and live with him. His request was granted. After giving birth to their first child, she returned to live in her cooperative. He escaped to see his wife, but when it was discovered that he was missing, he was hunted down. It was very fortunate for him that the cooperative chief wanted to protect him. The cooperative chief regarded Saret as one of his own children, and he also adored Saret’s daughter. At every meeting, the chief always had Saret with him.

According to Saret, he witnessed an alleged moral offense which occurred in late 1975 or early 1976. A cadre was in a relationship with a lady. The Khmer Rouge considered this unpermitted relationship a moral offense. Upon discovery of the relationship, both the cadre and the lady were arrested and punished. They had to dig their own graves. According to Saret, the Khmer Rouge asked both of them which part of the body they liked about each other. They asked the man which part he loved about his woman. When he answered “cheek”, they immediately sliced off her cheek. “As long as an answer was given, that given part was sliced off immediately,” said Saret. Remarking about the pain, Saret said it was absolutely beyond comprehension and defied description. They sliced different parts of their body off from morning to evening. The incident took place in Phnum Dei Dam, west of

Cham Bakk Brasat Pagoda. Thousands of people were present and witnessed the event. It was meant to be a warning to others. On that day, people sat and witnessed the incident from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m., with nothing to eat. His wife and oldest daughter were also at the meeting. They used the midribs of palm leaves as a tool to slice off the flesh. The woman's name was Soa and they were both in their 40's. The woman was one of Saret's distant relatives. Saret said that marriages were arranged by the Khmer Rouge and twenty to thirty couples were matched for each group ceremony.

The Khmer Rouge suspected Saret of stealing potatoes and coconuts. Saret said that one time, as he was climbing down a coconut tree and was about to reach the ground, Khmer Rouge cadres were walking toward the tree but fortunately did not look up. Saret became terrified because if they had looked up, he would have been killed. At that time, it was unbelievable that he was able to tie ten coconuts to his body.

Monks were forcibly disrobed beginning very early in 1975. All Vietnamese were targeted for elimination. Saret witnessed one incident in which a child was thrown up into the air and stabbed to death with a bayonet. The parents had committed mistakes, but failing to capture the parents, instead they killed their child. Saret said the Khmer Rouge were especially cruel at Kraing Sdey, the area where he lived. One day in 1976, one man, currently a member of the Pagoda Committee, stole a small earth-moving bucket filled with potatoes. It was a small bucket, but it seemed to be a lot at the time. Then they forced him to eat all the potatoes. After he finished, they let him go free. This incident took place in front of lots of people. The man survived.

In late 1978, the Khmer Rouge began to execute people with no mercy. Once, while transporting clothing along the foot of a mountain, he became terrified upon seeing the Khmer Rouge driving ten or twenty trucks loaded with Eastern Zone people and dropping them at Stung Chraing. Those people, all of whom were men wearing shorts, were taken from Kampong Chhnang Airport. They were dropped into a small river. Terrified, he abandoned the clothes and hid in the forest. This incident took place near O Ral Mountain. No one survived – all were drowned to death.

Shortly before the liberation by Vietnamese troops, the Khmer Rouge assigned Saret to look for liana. He had heard on the radio that H.E. Pen Sovann was bringing Vietnamese soldiers to liberate the people. People in the economic section heard this news also. The Khmer Rouge then immediately began evacuating people, including him and his wife. The regime's tactic was very effective: they gathered everyone within a very short period of time by scaring them with a false threat that the Vietnamese would slice them open and fill their bodies with grass. On the contrary, when the Vietnamese troops arrived, they told people to return to Kampong Chhnang.

39. But Vun (ប៊ុត វ៉ុន), lives in Lvea Village, Svay Rumpea Commune, Kampong Leng District, Kampong Chhnang Province

Mrs. But Vun's story was very similar to those featured in VPA's recently-made documentary film entitled: "Mass Grave Near Pagoda." Mrs. But Vun had two siblings who were executed by a known perpetrator who is still alive and living just a few villages away from her. Two years ago they came across each other during a religious ceremony which was held at the place which the Project is now using as a meeting venue. She used to converse with that

person, but now they always avoided her and never dared to look directly at her face. But Vun said, "If I lived in a communist regime, I would have killed her to avenge the death of my siblings."

During the KR period, she lost twelve of her family members: namely, her mother who died of hunger and illness; her father-in-law who was arrested and killed; a brother who was arrested; a sister who was accused of committing a moral offense; and nine children, including four miscarriages. In addition, one of her nieces died during the U.S. bombing in the 1970s, when she and her family were forced to live in a small trench for years in order to protect themselves from the aerial bombardment. During the regime of Democratic Kampuchea, she was regarded as a base person. Nevertheless, she still suffered from overwork, inadequate food rations and the lack of personal freedom. Once her mother was seriously ill and she was not allowed to visit or take care of her. When her mother was nearing death, she really wanted to eat some coconut. But Vun hurriedly and secretly brought coconut for her; however, her mother could not even recognize her face and passed away without having a chance to eat the coconut. After the death of her mother, she was ordered to work in the rice fields, despite her pregnancy. Due to forced labor and malnutrition, she had four miscarriages.

Despite the tragedies which she endured, she does not bear a grudge against the Khmer Rouge. She had no recollection of the Renakse Petitions.

END.