

CHAIR REPORT

Committee: Historical Crises Committee

Topic: The Khmer Rouge Regime

Name(s): Sethypong Seima, Thanakrith Nov

Position: Crises Director, Frontroom-Chair

Introduction

The Khmer rouge regime was a brutal communist regime led by former general secretary of the communist party within Cambodia, Pol Pot; with the main goal of transforming Cambodia into a classless, agrarian communist society. (Britannica, 2026)

The regime lasted approximately 48 years, from June 28, 1951, to February 9, 1999. Widely considered to be one of the most devastating events within Cambodian history, With the evacuation of major cities, the abolishment of money, private property, schools, and religious practices, effectively destroying Cambodian society. Furthermore, under this regime, if any citizens were considered to be a threat — intellectuals, professionals, ethnic minorities, and monks — they would immediately be targeted and executed. (Britannica, 2026)

Through the cruel conditions, forced labours, severe starvation, diseases, and mass executions at the killing fields it accumulated the estimated total deaths of 1.5 - 3 million Cambodian citizens. However the regime officially lost control on January 7th 1979, marking the end of the cruel regime. However, it still significantly stagnates Cambodia's socio-economic and political growth to this day. (Britannica, 2026)

Key Terms

Agrarian Socialism

A political ideology that promotes an agrarian farming lifestyle, with an economy that is defined by collective or public ownership. This type of society focuses on the peasant/farmers class rather than the industrial workers, advocating for the collective ownership of land rather than private ownership. (Wikipedia, 2008)

Communism

Defined by the collective or public ownership of land and property, the system centers on no private ownership whilst promoting a classless society emphasizing the sharing of resources so everyone is equal. (Britannica, 2026)

Year Zero

Refers to the beginning of the Khmer Rouge, with the defeat of general Lon Nol's government and the entry of the Khmer Rouge into Cambodia's capital, April 17, 1975. The day when Cambodia's culture, family structure, and capitalist ideologies were eradicated, resetting to "year zero" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2026)

Old people (neak chas)

The term is used to describe Cambodian civilians who have been raised in rural communities or provinces ever since they were born. (Khmerrougehistory, 2026)

New people (neak tmei)

The term is used to describe Cambodian civilians who have evacuated from the city back into their hometowns or provinces, often subjected to more intense labour compared to the old people as they are viewed as impure and enemies to the regime. (Khmerrougehistory, 2026)

Tuol Sleng

Previously a school, but was revamped to become a prison and an interrogation center run by Kaing Guek Eav which held approximately 20,000 people in total, doctors, government and monks included. (cipdh, 2026)

Background Information

The Khmer rouge regime was a radical agrarian regime led by the Communist party of Kampuchea formed in 1960, with its main leader being Pol Pot governing over Cambodia for multiple decades. (ushmm, 2026)

However before the start of the regime, Cambodia was already in ruins, due to the aftermath of a revolution for independence against French colonials. In this period, the country was already starved, and traumatized, with remnants of the war scattered around the country. (asiapacificcurriculum, 2016)

Though, during the colonial period, they gave scholarships to young elites one of which was Pol Pot, Leng Sary, and Son sen, gaining communist teachings such as lenin and marx shaping their plans for the nation's future. Afterwards however, the cold war was already in full motion, as large nations searched for smaller countries to gain power over one of which was Cambodia, becoming enmeshed in this struggle as they fought back their independence. (asiapacificcurriculum, 2016)

After achieving independence in 1953, Cambodia experienced even more atrocities including the American war, Vietnam war. Due to these consecutive events, there was widespread discontent within the nation, leading up to Sihanouk's overthrowment in the 1970 coup and lon nol's establishment; later Sihanouk formed an alliance with the khmer rouge calling on Cambodian peasants to join leading to the rise of the khmer rouge. (asiapacificcurriculum, 2016)

Major Countries and/or Organizations Involved

Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK)

The official organization held responsible for the rise and power of the Khmer Rouge, led by Pol Pot; recognized as the absolute government of Cambodia after its capture. Influenced by extreme Maoist ideology to transform Cambodia into a pure, classless agrarian society. (Cambodianess, 2026)

Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation (KUFNS)

The Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation (KUFNS) was a military organization as well as a political party ran under multiple Cambodian defectors, exiles, and dissidents including Hun sen, Heng Samrin, and Chea sin. By partnering with advancing Vietnamese armies, the KUFNS successfully overthrew the regime. (KhmerTimes, 2024)

National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC)

FUNCINPEC is the royalist political party founded by Prince Norodom Sihanouk allying with the khmer rouge to resist against the vietnamese backed cambodian governments (PhnomPenhPost, 2006)

Vietnam

A neighboring country bordering Cambodia with a communist government. Initially the country helped the khmer rouge regime during the vietnam war helping them seize control over the countryside to fight US-backed Cambodian governments. However after a hostile betrayal, Vietnam later helped end the Khmer Rouge regime. (Brittanica, 2026)

Timeline of Events

A minimum of 4 events needed, please provide a brief description of the event.

For the date format use: day/month/year , ex: 3 June 2009

<i>Date</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>1940s</i>	The Cambodian Communist movement began to emerge as the country grew dissatisfied with French Colonization.
<i>1960s</i>	King Norodom Sihanouk named his communist opponents the “Khmer Rouge”, where the term later stuck to label the communist insurgents. Their official name was the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK).
<i>1963</i>	Pol Pot became the party secretary and leader of the Communist Party Kampuchea.
<i>March 1970</i>	The start of the Cambodian Civil War. Marshal Lon Nol and his pro-American associates staged a successful coup to depose the head of state, Prince Sihanouk.
<i>1973</i>	During the Civil War, The Khmer Rouge grew in popularity, gaining members due to the general public’s growing resentment of Lon Nol. At this time, 85% of Cambodian territory was under Khmer Rouge control.

<i>April 17, 1975</i>	The Khmer Rouge takes full control of the city of Phnom Penh in Cambodia. In the following days, approximately two million people in Phnom Penh and other cities, were forced into the countryside to undertake a life of agricultural work.
<i>1976</i>	The CPK created the state of Democratic Kampuchea and wrote the first “Four-Year Plan,” which called for the collectivization of all private property, and placed high national priority on the cultivation of rice. This led to the abolishment of currency, and surrendering of all possessions to “be used collectively”. Cambodian families were split and assigned to different work groups to work towards the CPK’s goal of achieving a high national yield of rice throughout the country. To achieve that goal, most Cambodians were forced to work harvesting rice more than 12 hours a day without rest or adequate food.
<i>Late 1977</i>	Clashes broke out between Cambodia and Vietnam, where tens of thousands of people were sent to fight, and thousands more killed.
<i>December 1978</i>	Vietnamese troops and forces from the United Front for the National Salvation of Kampuchea fought their way into Cambodia.
<i>January 7, 1979</i>	Vietnamese troops successfully captured Phnom Penh from the Khmer Rouge. Leaders of the Khmer rouge fled west and reestablished their forces in Thai territory.
<i>1979–1990</i>	The United Nations recognized the Khmer Rouge as the only legitimate representative of Cambodia.
<i>1982</i>	The Khmer Rouge formed the Triparty Coalition Government. At the same time, Vietnam helped to create a new government regime called the People’s Republic of Kampuchea (PRK), which governed Cambodia for a decade.
<i>1990</i>	Complete withdrawal of all Vietnamese troops from Cambodia.

<i>October 23, 1991</i>	All Cambodian parties signed a peace agreement in Paris and agreed to organize national elections under the supervision of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). The Khmer Rouge boycotted the UN-organized election and refused to demobilize their forces.
<i>1993</i>	A newly elected government came to power called the Royal Government of Cambodia. For several years, Khmer Rouge soldiers continued to fight against these troops.
<i>1998</i>	Pol Pot died. Other senior Khmer Rouge leaders defected in 1998.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

minimum of five treaties and/or events, include a few Sentences describing the results or what happened.

- ***UN General Assembly Credentials Recognition (1979-1990):*** Following the Vietnamese invasion that ousted Khmer Rouge in January 1979, the UN General Assembly repeatedly voted to allow the exiled Democratic Kampuchea (Khmer Rouge) regime to retain Cambodia's official UN seat rather than recognizing the newly established People's Republic of Kampuchea (Amer 53-55). This decision was largely driven by Cold War geopolitical dynamics, which resulted in international accountability for the regime's atrocities for more than a decade (Amer 56-58).
- ***1991 Paris Peace Agreements:*** Signed by 19 countries alongside the four warring Cambodian factions (including the Khmer Rouge), this comprehensive settlement officially ended the decade-long Cambodian-Vietnamese War ("Chronology of the Khmer Rouge Movement"). The agreement established the United Nations Transitional Authority (UNTAC) to oversee a ceasefire, disarm factions, and organize democratic elections in 1993, though the Khmer Rouge ultimately defaulted on the peace terms and boycotted the elections ("Chronology of the Khmer Rouge Movement").

- ***1948 UN Genocide Convention (Applied in Ruling):*** Although adopted long before the regime took power, the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide served as a primary legal instrument during later prosecutions. In 2018, judicial chambers formally applied the treaty to convict former Khmer Rouge leaders Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan of genocide, specifically targeting the ethnic Vietnamese and Muslim Cham minority populations (“Chronology of the Khmer Rouge Movement”).
- ***2003 UN-Cambodia Agreement on the ECCC :*** The United Nations signed an official bilateral agreement with the Royal Government of Cambodia to create the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), commonly known as the Khmer Rouge Tribunal (“Chronology of the Khmer Rouge Movement”). This agreement established a hybrid court combining Cambodian and international judges to prosecute senior leaders and those most responsible for grave breaches of domestic and international law committed between 1975 and 1979.
- ***ECCC Case 001 Final Judgment (2010–2012) :*** Marking the first major verdict resulting from the UN-assisted tribunal, Kaing Guek Eav (a.k.a. "Duch"), former head of the S-21 Tuol Sleng detention and security center, was convicted of crimes against humanity and grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions (“Chronology of the Khmer Rouge Movement”) Duch admitted responsibility for the torture and execution of over 15,000 prisoners, resulting in a life sentence upon final appeal (“Chronology of the Khmer Rouge Movement”).

Previous Attempts to solve the issue

- **People’s Revolutionary Tribunal (1979):**
Following the overthrow of the regime by Vietnamese forces in January 1979, the newly installed People’s republic of Kampuchea conducted a five-day trial in absentia in August 1979 (Ervard & Destrooper, 2024). Polpot and Ieng Sary were convicted of genocide and sentenced to death. However, international observers largely dismissed the proceedings as a show trial lacking due process, and neither leader was apprehended as a result of the ruling (Gruspier & Pollanen, 2017).
- **Amnesty and Defection Policies (1994-1998):**
In 1994, the Cambodian government outlawed the Khmer Rouge; but simultaneously offered amnesty packages to encourage defections. In 1996, senior leader Ieng Sary defected with thousands of guerillas in exchange for a royal pardon, significantly

fracturing the remaining insurgent network (Gruspier & Pollanen, 2017). The movement completely dissolved following Pol Pot's death in 1998 and the surrender of remaining leaders like Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea.

- **Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) (2006-2022):**
Established jointly by the United Nations and the Cambodian government, the “hybrid tribunal” served as the definitive international legal effort to prosecute senior leadership (Ervard & Destrooper, 2024). Over its 16-year operation, the court convicted key figures such as Kaing Guek Eav, Nuon Chea, and Khie Samphan for crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide (Ervard & Destrooper, 2024; Kiernan, 2000).

Work cited

Provide all resources used to write this report in MLA latest format.

- Amer, Ramses. "The United Nations and Kampuchea: The Issue of Representation and Its Implications." *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, vol. 22, no. 3, 1990, pp. 52–60. Taylor & Francis Online, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.1990.10413112>
- Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada. “The Rise and Fall of the Khmer Rouge Regime.” *Asia Pacific Curriculum*, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, 6 June 2016, <https://asiapacificcurriculum.ca/learning-module/rise-and-fall-khmer-rouge-regime>
Accessed 27 Aug. 2026.
- Britannica Editors. “Khmer Rouge | Facts, Leadership, Genocide, & Death Toll.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 20 July 1998, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Khmer-Rouge>
Accessed 26 July 2026.
- Buenos Aires IT - buenosairesit.com. “Memorias Situadas Cipdh - Unesco.” *Cipdh - Unesco*, 2026,

<https://www.cipdh.gob.ar/memorias-situadas/en/lugar-de-memoria/museo-del-genocidio-tuol-sleng/> Accessed 27 July 2026.

- “Cambodia.” *College of Liberal Arts*, 2026,
<https://cla.umn.edu/chgs/holocaust-genocide-education/resource-guides/cambodia>
Accessed 26 July 2026.
- Cambridge Dictionary. “Year Zero.” *CambridgeWords*, 22 July 2026,
<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/year-zero> Accessed 27 July 2026.
- Chandler, David P. “Cambodia | History, Map, Flag, Capital, Population, Language, & Facts.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 26 July 1999,
<https://www.britannica.com/place/Cambodia/Vietnamese-intervention> Accessed 28 July 2026.
- "Chronology of the Khmer Rouge Movement." *Cambodia Tribunal Monitor*,
<https://cambodiatribunal.org/history/cambodian-history/chronology-of-the-khmer-rouge-movement/>
- Contributors to Wikimedia projects. “Political Ideology Which Combines an Agrarian Way of Life with a Socialist Economic System.” *Wikipedia.Org*, Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., 4 May 2008, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agrarian_socialism Accessed 27 July 2026.
- Dagger, Richard. “Communism | Definition, History, Varieties, & Facts.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 26 July 1999, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/communism> Accessed 27 July 2026.

- “Deconstructing the Khmer Rouge’s Propaganda Machine.” *Cambodianess*, Calin Hurley, 1 July 2026,
<https://cambodianess.com/article/deconstructing-the-khmer-rouges-propaganda-machine>
Accessed 28 July 2026.
- Evrard, E., & Destrooper, T. (2024). Learning from the past? How the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, civil society initiatives and survivor stories shape young Cambodians’ understanding of non-recurrence. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 1–27.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2024.2432946>
- Gruspier, K., & Pollanen, M. S. (2017). Forensic legacy of the Khmer Rouge: The Cambodian genocide. *Academic Forensic Pathology*, 7(3), 415–433.
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6474568/>
- Horng, Pengly. “Cambodia Marks 46Th Anniversary of Kufns Founding - Khmer Times.” 2 Dec. 2024.
- “Origins of the Khmer Rouge - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.” *Holocaustmuseum*, 2026,
<https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/countries/cambodia/origins-of-the-khmer-rouge> Accessed 27 Aug. 2026.
- post staff. “The Rise and Demise of Funcinpec.” *Phnompenhpost.Com*, 24 Mar. 2006,
<https://phnompenhpost.com/national/rise-and-demise-funcinpec/> Accessed 28 July 2026.
- “ប្រជាជនថ្មី ឬ ប្រជាជន១៧មេសា – Khmerrougehistory.Org.” *Khmerrougehistory.Org*, 2026,
<https://khmerrougehistory.org/%E1%9E%94%E1%9F%92%E1%9E%9A%E1%9E%87%E1%9E%B6%E1%9E%87%E1%9E%93%E1%9E%90%E1%9F%92%E1%9E%98%E>

[1%9E%B8-%E1%9E%AC-%E1%9E%94%E1%9F%92%E1%9E%9A%E1%9E%87%E1%9E%B6%E1%9E%87%E1%9E%93%E1%9F%A1%E1%9F%A7%E1%9E%98/](#)

Accessed 27 July 2026.