

## "I cry every night," torture survivor tells court

Written by

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In some of the most powerful testimony to date at the Khmer Rouge tribunal, former Tuol Sleng prisoner Chum Mey told the court today about [his harrowing experiences](#) during Democratic Kampuchea. He broke down and wept at several points, when describing the torture he endured and the deaths of his wife and children.

"I cry every night," he told the court. "I am like a mentally ill person now."

As an observer, I was particularly moved by Chum's willingness to describe the psychological trauma he experienced as a result of the Khmer Rouge. Discussion of mental health issues is still taboo among many Cambodians, which makes Chum's candor all the more admirable.

He said that when he was summoned to testify before the court, he "felt so relieved. My mind was so disturbed." Chum said he hoped the ECCC could help bring him peace and, indeed, he has been in regular attendance at the court.

Other civil parties seated in the courtroom also began to weep Tuesday as Chum described how he was beaten, electrocuted and had his toenails pulled out. He even took off his sandals to show the judges his disfigured feet. Â

Like painter Vann Nath, who testified yesterday, Chum ultimately survived because he had a skill his captors found useful. He had been a mechanic before the Khmer Rouge and [was put to work](#) repairing party cars, tractors, sewing machines and typewriters.

Comrade Duch, also seated in the courtroom, remained expressionless during Chum's testimony.

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Although Chum acknowledged that Duch had tearfully apologized previously during a reenactment at Tuol Sleng, he said the former torture chief's tears "cannot wash away the suffering of two million." Â



*\* Pictured: Chum Mey testifies before the ECCC Tuesday (above); Chum Mey shows the judges his feet, which were disfigured by torture (at right). Photos courtesy of the ECCC. Â*