

## Preface

In Democratic Kampuchea from 1975 to 1979, the Khmer Rouge built detention centres and killing fields throughout the country. Particularly, POL Pot cliques formed the biggest Security Center in Phnom Penh called “Office S-21”. They transferred the victims who were thought to be very important prisoners from various security centers throughout the country to Office S-21 to be interrogated and smashed (killed) at Choeng Ek Genocidal Centre.

Choeng Ek is a commune in *Khan* Dangkao, Phnom Penh, 15 km away in the southwest of Phnom Penh. In 1975, the Khmer Rouge built it on two hectares of land, making it the cruelest genocidal centre. From 1976 until the end of 1978, approximately more than ten thousands victims, 9 of which were foreigners, at Tuol Sleng prison including intellectuals, diplomats, foreigners, women and children... etc. were secretly and forcibly transferred to Choeng Ek Genocidal Centre to be killed with their hands tied and blindfolded; especially, in early May 1978, cadres, POL Pot soldiers and people who were accused of betrayal in the East Zone, and of being with a number of international intelligence agencies such as CIA or KGB and so on.

After 7 January 1979 liberation, i.e. in early 1981, 129 pits were discovered at this genocidal centre; 8985 bodies were exhumed from 86 pits. Under the care of the government, the remains collected from the pits were temporarily stored in a small wooden house with zinc roof. In early 1988, those remains were washed and conserved by Vietnamese expert doctors. Meanwhile, a stupa was built to store them and has become a special evidence centre of the genocidal regime and a national memorial for the victims who died in the Khmer Rouge Democratic Kampuchea.

For a 17-year period (1988 to 2005), the Royal Government authorized the Municipality of Phnom Penh to work with specialist partners so that this genocidal centre could be conserved and maintained forever, in line with the technology of the science museum of the nation. On 18 March 2005, a concession agreement between the Municipality of Phnom Penh and JC Royal Company LTD was reached. The re-conservation of those remains was a must based on the agreement, and the evolution of their colours and poor conditions which were prone to decay. The work was carried out with the observation and assessment of the specialists of the

Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, the officials of the Municipality of Phnom Penh, and the staff of Choeng Ek Genocidal Centre.

After the assessment made by the experts from the three institutions, *Samdach Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN Sen*, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia instructed, in principle, the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts to repair and conserve the stupa and all the remains to avoid damages or losses of the killing field regime evidence. After that, the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts figured out, by means of cutting edge technology, how to conserve and prevent the decay so that all the evidence could be maintained. Later, a commission consisting of the officials of the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts and the Municipality of Phnom Penh, and the staff of Choeng Ek Genocidal Centre was set up to assess and review the conservation work. Also, a technical sub-commission consisting of the experts of the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts and the staff of Choeng Ek Genocidal Centre was set up to directly execute the daily routine. The conservation work was done, based on technical phases, to ensure that the remains and other evidence at Choeng Ek Genocidal Centre are properly maintained.

The working group carried out the conservation work in three phases: phase one from August 2013 to August 2014, conservation of severely damaged remains; phase two from August 2014 to August 2015, conservation of fairly damaged remains; and phase three from August 2015 to August 2016, conservation of slightly damaged remains. Before getting started, the working group examined and analyzed signs of torture or signs of killing by various tools, took photographs, for documentation, providing an identity for the remains of each victim, entered them in the inventory through information technology, and compiled them into catalogues. The working group also cooperated with and received additional training from the experts of Central Identification Laboratory of Department of Defense, United States of America, Oxford University of the United Kingdom, Otago University of New Zealand, and the specialists dealing with the genocidal conservation work in Kosovo from LMU-Munich University of Germany, and the local specialists. Therefore, the conservation work was smoothly implemented as planned. After the conservation work had been done, the commission officially assessed the effectiveness of the work, and the result was so far wholly satisfactory, up to the standard, enabling the remains to last longer.

**Commission for the Conservation of the Remains**

Signed

HAB Touch (ហាប់ តូច)

Chairperson

Signed and sealed

PHOEURNG Sackona (ហ្វឿង សកុណា)

Minister of the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts

**Choeung Ek Genocidal Centre**

Signed

ROS Sopharavy (រស់ សុភារ៉ាវី)

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PA Socheatvong (ប៉ា សជាតិវង្ស)

Governor of the Municipality of Phnom Peng