

# BITTER MEMORIES: CAMBODIA'S MUSEUM OF GENOCIDE



The 1970s present the most painful era in the history of Cambodia. Those to blame are still awaiting their justice, yet the nation mourns its dead. Many come and visit the infamous prison S-21 - now a museum of genocide.

The Khmer Rouge regime, which lasted from 1975 to 1979, remains one of the most dreadful eras in human history. Nearly a fifth of the entire Cambodian population died during this time. Several thousand innocent people were captured and held in the infamous S-21, a prison which only a dozen survived.

The former high school was transformed into a prison soon after the rule was established. The prisoners were subject to inhuman torture and forced to ridiculous confessions. After a period of about three months, they were taken away and murdered. The killing fields outside Phnom Penh, where the prison was situated, are a shocking example of the cruelty of the regime.

To commemorate all those who lost their lives in the prison, the S-21 has been turned into the **Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide**. Photographs and paintings of the victims line the walls as well as displays of the various deadly instruments used to torture the prisoners.

Unfortunately, those responsible have not yet been punished. In fact, the process with several high-ranking members of the Khmer Rouge regime has just started. Only one of them has expressed some regret. As the nation expects a fair ordeal, hundreds of visitors come to Tuol Sleng Museum to understand the past.

Documents have been made, interviews with the dozen of survivors have been shot and thousands of pictures taken. In fact, one of the photographers of the terrible regime is now attempting to open a museum in the former communist stronghold **Anlong Veng**. The museum features over a thousand photographs he had taken during the late 1970s. No matter how questionable his motives are, shedding more light on the darkest chapter in Cambodian history may help the nation move on.

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