



S-21 prison in Phnom Penh, where Cambodian prisoners were tortured by the Khmer Rouge © Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide

## Genocide in Cambodia 1975-1979

The fate of Cambodia shocked the world when the radical communist Khmer Rouge, under their leader Pol Pot, seized power in 1975 after years of guerrilla warfare. The Khmer Rouge ruthlessly imposed an extremist programme to reconstruct Cambodia (now under its Khmer name *Kampuchea*) on the communist model of Mao's China – creating 'year zero'. The population was made to work as labourers in one huge federation of collective farms. The inhabitants of towns and cities were forced to leave. The ill, disabled, old and very young were driven out, regardless of their physical condition. No-one was spared the exodus. People who refused to leave were killed, so were those who did not leave fast enough and those who would not obey orders.

All political and civil rights were abolished. Children were taken from their parents and placed in separate forced labour camps. Factories, schools, universities and hospitals were shut down. Lawyers, doctors, teachers, engineers, scientists and professional people in any field were murdered, together with their extended families. Religion was banned as were radio sets and music. It was possible for people to be shot simply for knowing a foreign language, wearing glasses, laughing, or crying. One Khmer slogan ran 'To spare you is no profit; to destroy you is no loss.' Approximately 2 million men, women and children were murdered in the Cambodian genocide and on HMD we must ensure that those lives were not wasted by standing up to hatred, discrimination and prejudice when we see it happening.

To find out more about the genocide in Cambodia visit:

[www.hmd.org.uk/genocides/cambodia](http://www.hmd.org.uk/genocides/cambodia)