

Bush Cancels Visit to Switzerland following Criminal Complaints to Geneva Court

By [Global Research](#)

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GENEVA (Reuters) – Former President George W. Bush has canceled a visit to Switzerland, where he was to address a Jewish charity gala, due to the risk of legal action against him for alleged torture, rights groups said on Saturday.

Bush was to be the keynote speaker at Keren Hayesod’s annual dinner on February 12 in Geneva. But pressure has been building on the Swiss government to arrest him and open a criminal investigation if he enters the Alpine country.

Criminal complaints against Bush alleging torture have been lodged in Geneva, court officials say.

Human rights groups said they had intended to submit a 2,500-page case against Bush in the Swiss city on Monday for alleged mistreatment of suspected militants at Guantanamo Bay, the U.S. naval base in Cuba where captives from Afghanistan, Iraq and other fronts in the so-called War on Terror were interned.

Leftist groups had also called for a protest on the day of his visit next Saturday, leading Keren Hayesod’s organizers to announce that they were cancelling Bush’s participation on security grounds — not because of the criminal complaints.

But groups including the New York-based Human Rights Watch and International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) said the cancellation was linked to growing moves to hold Bush accountable for torture, including waterboarding. He has admitted in his memoirs and television interviews to ordering use of the interrogation technique that simulates drowning.

“He’s avoiding the handcuffs,” Reed Brody, counsel for Human Rights Watch, told Reuters.

The action in Switzerland showed Bush had reason to fear legal complaints against him if he travelled to countries that have ratified an international treaty banning torture, he said.

Brody is an American-trained lawyer specialized in pursuing war crimes worldwide, especially those allegedly ordered by former leaders, including Chile’s late dictator Augusto Pinochet and Chad’s ousted president Hissene Habre. Habre has been charged by Belgium with crimes against humanity and torture, and is currently exiled in Senegal.

PROSECUTE OR EXTRADITE

“President Bush has admitted he ordered waterboarding which everyone considers to be a

form of torture under international law. Under the Convention against Torture, authorities would have been obliged to open an investigation and either prosecute or extradite George Bush," Brody said.

Swiss judicial officials have said that Bush would still enjoy a certain diplomatic immunity as a former head of state.

Dominique Baettig, a member of the Swiss parliament from the right-wing People's Party, wrote to the Swiss federal government last week calling for the arrest of Bush for alleged war crimes if he came to the neutral country.

Bush, in his "Decision Points" memoirs on his 2001-2009 presidency, strongly defends the use of waterboarding as key to preventing a repeat of the September 11 attacks on the United States.

Most human rights experts consider the practice a form of torture, banned by the Convention on Torture, an international pact prohibiting torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment. Switzerland and the United States are among 147 countries to have ratified the 1987 treaty.

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