

Toronto Star on Cheney's Canada Visit: Arrest him. Canada should not Provide a "Safe Haven for Torturers"

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Global Research, October 31, 2013

[Digital Journal](#)

Region: [Canada](#)

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)

An editorial in Canada's largest newspaper has urged that Canada not provide "safe haven for torturers," on the eve of a visit by former US Vice President Dick Cheney to Toronto.

Four men — Hassan bin Attash, Sami el-Hajj, Muhammed Khan Tumani and Murat Kurnaz — have submitted a 64-page indictment and thousands of pages of supporting material to Canadian authorities, which has yet to be acted upon.

Cheney is scheduled to address the 2013 Toronto Global Forum on Thursday, October 31st. The newspaper joins an international chorus of attorneys, human rights activists, and street protesters calling for the arrest of Cheney for war crimes committed during his tenure as vice president. The [Toronto Star op-ed asserts](#) that Cheney and President George W. Bush oversaw torture programs in which men were: "beaten, hung from walls or ceilings, deprived of sleep, food and water and subjected to extreme temperatures, among other acts of abuse they endured while in U.S. custody." Unlike the United States, Canada is a signatory to the United Nations Convention Against Torture, which obliges the Canadian government to investigate and prosecute known instances of torture under the Geneva Conventions.

Bush-era instances of torture remain at the forefront for legal activists calling for prosecution and justice, who say that the practice of "waterboarding" is but the tip of the iceberg in a [veritable House of Horrors](#) maintained under the Bush administrations, in Iraq, Afghanistan, Guantanamo, and in secret "black box" locations run by the CIA around the world. A British national, Binyam Mohammed, filed a case in the UK, which was ultimately quashed at the [urging of the Obama administration](#), in which he alleges that US torturers repeatedly sliced his genitals with a razor, even though they knew he had no information to give. In 2002, after being flown in a US government plane to Morocco, Binyam says he was held in "black box" CIA prison where, according to his diaries [reported in the UK Guardian](#):

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Torture room at Abu Ghraib

One of them took my penis in his hand and began to make cuts. He did it once, and they stood still for maybe a minute, watching my reaction. I was in agony. They must have done this 20 to 30 times, in maybe two hours. There was blood all over."

Binyam says he was in Morocco for about 18 months, and that he was tortured in this manner about once a month. His diaries state: *“One time I asked a guard: “What’s the point of this? I’ve got nothing I can say to them. I’ve told them everything I possibly could.”“As far as I know, it’s just to degrade you. So when you leave here, you’ll have these scars and you’ll never forget. So you’ll always fear doing anything but what the US wants.”“The diary also alleges:“Later, when a US airplane picked me up the following January, a female MP took pictures. She was one of the few Americans who ever showed me any sympathy. When she saw the injuries I had she gasped. They treated me and took more photos when I was in Kabul. Someone told me this was “to show Washington it’s healing.”“*

“Washington” can only refer to the US administration, of which Cheney was a part. In 2009, US District Court Judge Gladys Kessler [found Binyam’s charges credible](#), writing that: *“His genitals were mutilated. He was deprived of sleep and food. He was summarily transported from one foreign prison to another...The Government does not dispute this evidence”*In another instance, a young Afghan farmer, who was posthumously cleared as innocent of any wrongdoing, was hung from a ceiling until his shoulders were dislocated, and his legs beaten so badly that one witness said they were “basically pulpified.”

Doctors in the investigation testified that the man, named Dilawar, would have had to have his legs amputated had he lived. US Army Spc. Willie Brand, the only soldier disciplined in the death of Dilawar, with a reduction in rank, maintains that knowledge of the torture taking place in the prison ran up the chain of command, and [told Scott Pelley of 60 Minutes](#) in 2006; *“I didn’t understand how they could do this after they had trained you to do this stuff and they turn around and say you’ve been bad”*



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Sketch by Sgt. Thomas V. Curtis showing how Dilawar was chained to the ceiling of his cell.

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Dilawar is the subject of a documentary film entitled [Taxi to the Dark Side](#). Cheney has already canceled one trip to Toronto, in 2012, citing [fear of massive protests](#). **Four men — Hassan bin Attash, Sami el-Hajj, Muhammed Khan Tumani and Murat Kurnaz — have submitted a 64-page indictment and thousands of pages of supporting material to Canadian authorities, which has yet to be acted upon.**

The The Toronto Star writers opine that: *“[The indictment] submitted by the four tortured men clearly demonstrated that an investigation – and prosecution – of Bush for torture was warranted.”*

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