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Canada urged to arrest and prosecute George W. Bush

Amnesty International today urged Canadian authorities to arrest and either prosecute or extradite former US President George W. Bush for his role in torture, ahead of his expected visit to Canada on 20 October.

“Canada is required by its international obligations to arrest and prosecute former President Bush given his responsibility for crimes under international law including torture,” said Susan Lee, Americas Director at Amnesty International.

“As the US authorities have, so far, failed to bring former President Bush to justice, the international community must step in. A failure by Canada to take action during his visit would violate the UN Convention against Torture and demonstrate contempt for fundamental human rights.”

Amnesty International submitted a memorandum to the Canadian authorities on 21 September 2011 that makes a substantial case for the former president’s legal responsibility for a series of human rights violations.

The violations took place during the CIA’s secret detention programme between 2002 and 2009 – and include torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading-treatment and enforced disappearances.

While President, George W. Bush authorized the use of a number of “enhanced interrogation techniques” against detainees held in the secret CIA program.

The former President later specifically admitted to authorizing the “waterboarding” of several individuals whose subjection to this torture technique has been confirmed.

Detainees were subjected to waterboarding and a range of other “enhanced interrogation techniques” – including being forced to stay for hours in painful positions and sleep deprivation – during the CIA’s secret detention program, set up under then-President Bush’s authorization.

The CIA Inspector General found that Zayn al Abidin Muhammed Husayn (known as Abu Zubaydah) and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed were subjected, between them, to at least 266 applications of waterboarding while in detention between 2002 and 2003.

Amnesty International’s submission also highlights further evidence of torture and other crimes under international law committed against detainees held under US military custody in Guantánamo, Afghanistan and Iraq.

“This is a crucial moment for Canada to demonstrate it is prepared to live up to its commitments and obligations with respect to human rights,” said Susan Lee “Canada has been a leader in efforts to strengthen the international justice system and must now demonstrate that when it comes to accountability for human rights violations, no one and no country is above international law.”