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President Bush cancels visit to Switzerland

Former US president George W. Bush will not travel to Geneva on February 12, according to reports in the *Tribune de Genève*. The cancellation comes ahead of expected protests and possible legal action against the former president.

On Friday, Amnesty International sent Genevoise and Swiss federal prosecutors a detailed factual and legal analysis of President Bush's criminal responsibility for acts of torture he is believed to have authorised. Amnesty International concluded that Switzerland had enough information to open a criminal investigation against the former president.

Such an investigation would be mandatory under Switzerland's international obligations if President Bush entered the country.

The organisers of the event President Bush was expected to attend told the *Tribune de Genève* that they decided to cancel the visit because of the "controversy" it has generated. They denied that the potential criminal investigations against the former president were a factor in the decision.

Amnesty International has repeatedly called on US authorities to investigate the responsibility of the highest US officials for torture, and of President Bush in particular, most recently after the publication of his memoirs in November.

The USA has failed to open investigations that can adequately examine the former president's potential criminal responsibility for these acts, and all indications are that it will not do so.

"To date, we've seen a handful of military investigations into detentions and interrogations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantánamo. But none of these has had the independence and reach necessary to investigate high-level officials such as President Bush," said Salil Shetty, Secretary General of Amnesty International.

"Meanwhile, there has been virtually zero accountability for crimes committed in the CIA's secret detention program, which was authorized by then-President Bush."

Anywhere in the world that he travels, President Bush could face investigation and potential prosecution for his responsibility for torture and other crimes in international law, particularly in any of the 147 countries that are party to the UN Convention against Torture.

"As the US authorities have, so far, failed to bring President Bush to justice, the international community must step in," said Salil Shetty.

For a copy of Amnesty International's Memorandum to the Swiss authorities, please see: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR51/009/2011/en>

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