

Guantanamo: US prison is 'threat' to Geneva treaties

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THE United States is undermining international law by unilaterally rejecting demands to grant detainees at the Guantanamo Bay prison camp protection against mistreatment and torture, an influential committee of British MPs has warned.

The Foreign Affairs Committee claims the US is threatening the future of the Geneva Conventions by refusing to recognise the terror suspects interned at the camp as "military combatants" and give them the rights due under the international agreements.

The all-party group issued the warning as part of a critical verdict on conditions after a groundbreaking visit to Guantanamo Bay last September.

They added their weight to claims that suspected terrorists interned at the camp have been subjected to physical and mental abuse amounting to torture by their American captors.

In a wide-ranging report on the controversial facility published today, the committee also complained about substandard facilities at Guantanamo, including limited access to lawyers, education and exercise.

The panel, who were granted a level of access previously reserved for members of the US Congress, said detainees have "almost certainly" been abused at the prison, and urged the UK government to encourage the US to improve treatment.

But they accepted that many detainees "present a real threat to public safety".

The report urged the UK government to take immediate action to protect the Geneva Conventions, which have governed the treatment of enemy combatants for almost 150 years.

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