

Guilty! International Commission Delivers Verdicts on Bush Administration

By [Global Research](#)

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It was a historic moment at the National Press Club in Washington, only blocks from the White House. On February 2, the preliminary findings of the International Commission on Crimes Against Humanity were read out by Ajamu Sankofa, executive director of the Physicians for Social Responsibility-NY and former national secretary of Blacks for Reparations in America.

Listening to the verdicts, Ray McGovern, a former CIA analyst and founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity, exclaimed: "This is what our German forbearers in the 1930s did NOT do. They sat around, blamed their rulers, said 'maybe everything's going to be alright.'... That is something we cannot do. Because I don't want my grandchildren asking me years from now, 'why didn't you do something to stop all this?'"

The findings were based on five days of public testimony in New York in October and January. The work of the Commission brought together a unique combination of former government officials, experts in international law, human rights monitors in the relevant areas, and victims of the crimes under investigation. It was a Commission of great legal, ethical, and moral credibility based on its integrity, its rigor in the presentation of evidence, and the stature of its participants.

On the first charge of committing wars of aggression, the Commission found: *"The evidence is overwhelming that the Bush Administration authorized and is conducting a war of aggression against Iraq in violation of international law, including The Nuremberg Principles, Geneva Conventions of 1949, the United Nations Charter, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In doing so, the Bush Administration has committed war crimes and crimes against humanity."*

Former United Nations weapons inspector Scott Ritter was a compelling witness before the Commission on this issue. Ritter led the investigation into the defection of Saddam Hussein's son-in-law, Hussein Kamel:

"Dick Cheney said because of Hussein Kamel's defection the United Nations, indeed the United States, received evidence that Iraq was actively reconstituting its nuclear weapons program... Dick Cheney was lying. Dick Cheney knew that he was lying.... But it is evidence that the Bush administration willfully exaggerated the threat posed by Iraq's WMDs, thereby negating any case they might make about the existence of a clear and present threat that warranted pre-emptive attack."

The actual conduct of the war was also a major issue investigated by the Commission, especially the destruction of the city of Fallujah using white phosphorous and hyperbaric

bombs. The Commission saw film of the bombing of civilians in Fallujah that was truly damning. Shown was the pilot's camera trained on the ground where people were running in the street. The pilot asks his controller, "shall I take them out?" And the controller says, "Yes." The pilot kept a laser focused on the crowd until a guided bomb exploded in the middle of the running crowd.

The destruction of Fallujah, a city of over 300,000 people, in retaliation for the death of four U.S. mercenaries, was a vivid reenactment of a historic war crime — the destruction of the Czechoslovakian village of Lidice in 1942 by the Nazis in retaliation for the assassination of a high Nazi official.

On the indictment for illegal detention and torture, the Commission found: *"There was substantial evidence submitted through testimony and documents that the Bush Administration committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in conducting its 'War Against Terror.' It did this by developing and implementing policies and practices that violated international law and international human rights to force information from detainees and to punish those whom it believes may be 'enemy combatants.'"*

Barbara Olshansky, from the Center for Constitutional Rights, told the Commission of an August 2002 memo written for Alberto Gonzales, now Attorney General: "It talks about what the traditional definitions of torture are... and it says that a very good case can be made for redefining torture. And the definition that is recommended in that memo is that torture really is only when someone is at the risk of complete organ failure or death. And that is a new definition of torture in the United States according to this administration. Then the memo proceeds to...examine all the ways that the government could avoid liability, even if its actions meet that definition of torture. It is a staggering document..."

The results of such "legal theories" by the U.S. government at the very top were described by Brig. General Janis Karpinski (U.S. Army ret.), the former commandant of the infamous Abu-Ghraib prison in Iraq. After photographs of the torture of prisoners there were revealed, Gen. Karpinski entered the cell block where this happened and found a memo attached to the wall calling for harsher interrogation techniques and signed by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. In the margin was handwritten: "Make sure this happens!!" Karpinski went on to testify that a high-ranking general demanded that Iraqi prisoners be "treated like dogs."

Craig Murray, former British ambassador to Uzbekistan, provided particularly chilling testimony on the horrible forms of torture used by the U.S.'s 'Coalition of Willing' and declared, in a very moving moment, "I'd rather die than have someone tortured to save my life."

On the indictment for destruction of the global environment: *"The testimony of scientists and the scientific reports and other documents submitted during the inquiry support a conclusion that the Bush Administration has committed crimes against humanity by its environmental policies and practices."*

Daphne Wysham, from the Institute for Policy Studies and the Sustainable Energy and Economy Network gave a searing example: "On June 8, 2005, the *New York Times*, through whistle-blower Rick Pilz, exposed [White House official Philip] Cooney as the primary censor of climate change policy documents at the highest levels of government. Two days later,

Cooney resigned... Cooney and his staff's edits were pervasive with 100 to 450 changes per report, and shameless. Among the topics the government doesn't want you to know about are the national and regional impacts from climate changes, consequences like glacial melting and floods."

On the indictment for the destruction of New Orleans: *"The evidence of the Bush Administration's conscious and deliberate failings in preventing the foreseeable devastation, including death toll, caused by Hurricane Katrina, particularly in New Orleans, and its failure to respond efficiently and appropriately after the Hurricane was overwhelming. Its failures constitute crimes against humanity."*

The Commission heard stunning testimony that the government knew full well that New Orleans would be inundated in a major hurricane, and the President himself knew two days in advance that Katrina would hit New Orleans. But no efforts were made to evacuate the predominantly poor and Black masses of the city. As a result, over 1,300 people died on the Gulf Coast with over 3,000 still missing.

Annette Addison, a Katrina survivor, told her personal story to the Commission: "So many Army trucks just was driving past us. We even waved for the Army trucks to help us because we were so desperate. We was dehydrated. They did not give us any assistance. We even asked the police for water, and where we could get gas to get out of the city. The police just looked at us like we was nobody, as though we were nothing. Many were going into the stores, and they said they were looters. But to be honest, they was going into stores to survive. It was *people helping people*. It was not the Army, it was not the police. It was not the ones that were in authority to help us. It was just the community helping each other to survive."

At the February 2 press conference to release the Commission's preliminary findings, three of the five Commission judges were present, along with Commission Convener C. Clark Kissinger. In presenting the preliminary findings (more findings will be presented later), the judges were emphatic about the criminality of the Bush administration.

Judge Ann Wright, 29-year Army reserve colonel with 16 years in the State Department as former deputy ambassador in Afghanistan, Mongolia, Sierra Leone, and Micronesia:

"I believe the Commission is incredibly important for the future of the United States and really the world, because it's the people of America who are speaking to these very serious indictments. It's the people who are coming forward with evidence, their personal testimony in many cases of things that have happened to them, or cases of their lawyers, cases they have worked, the human face of what torture is all about, what detention is about, what war is all about — a war that's conducted the invasion and occupation of a country that did nothing to the United States of America."

Judge Abdeen Jabara, board member of the Center for Constitutional Rights and past president of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee:

"People who launch a war of aggression are in violation of international law, have committed crimes against humanity, and that is the kind of discourse we need to introduce into the United States... the use of torture in the press often reported as "abuse" rather than torture. Of course, there is no international convention for the prevention of abuse, but there is an international convention for the prevention of torture. So we need to change the way in

which these items are talked about in order to get people to face up to the fact of what this government is doing.”

Judge Jabara closed by pointing to the profound significance of what Craig Murray, the British ambassador to Uzbekistan, had said. Murray testified that his government and the American government were OK with receiving intelligence reports that had been obtained by torture in Uzbekistan. His superiors in the British foreign service said to him that, “we don’t mind as long as we didn’t ask them to do that. We can still receive this information.” Murray then added, “After I heard that, I understood how some clerk could sign off on these cattle cars that were going to Auschwitz.” That’s really what is at stake, Jabara pointed out. “The use of this torture, the beginning of all these black sites — all of these things are the road to Auschwitz.”

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