

Immune from Prosecution: Kuala Lumpur War Crimes Tribunal to Judge Bush and Blair

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Symbolic 'war crimes' tribunal to try Bush, Blair

By SEAN YOONG, Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Malaysian-led activists will hold a symbolic trial this month for former President George W. Bush and British ex-leader Tony Blair on charges of committing crimes against peace in the Iraq war, the event's organizers said Tuesday.

The Kuala Lumpur War Crimes Tribunal is an initiative of Malaysia's retired Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, who staunchly opposed the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The tribunal will convene a four-day public hearing starting Saturday to determine whether Bush and Blair committed crimes against peace and violated international law in the Iraq invasion, said Malaysian lawyer Yaacob Hussain Marican.

"For these people who have been immune from prosecution, we want to put them on trial in this forum to prove that they committed war crimes," Yaacob told The Associated Press.

Activists sent information about the charges to Bush and Blair recently but received no response, Yaacob said.

Francis Boyle, an American international law professor based in Illinois, will be among the prosecutors at the hearing, which follows two years of investigations by a Malaysian peace foundation founded by Mahathir that looked into complaints by people affected by the Iraqi war.

The effort is modeled after a 1967 Vietnam war crimes panel convened in Sweden and Denmark by philosophers Bertrand Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre, Yaacob said. The Vietnam tribunal said the U.S. committed acts of aggression against Vietnam and bombarded civilian targets, but it was mostly ignored in United States.

The Kuala Lumpur tribunal will have a seven-member panel of judges including two retired judges from Malaysia's highest court, peace activist Alfred Lambremont Webre of the United States and Mumbai-based lawyer Niloufer Bhagwat of India.

If the tribunal finds Bush and Blair guilty, it will enter their names into a symbolic "Register of War Criminals."

The tribunal is also scheduled to hold a separate hearing next year on charges of torture

linked to the Iraq war against former U.S. officials including ex-Vice President Dick Cheney, former Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld and ex-Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, Yaacob said.

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