

Should Canadian authorities arrest Dick Cheney for war crimes when he comes to Vancouver?

Vancouver lawyer Gail Davidson seeks Dick Cheney's arrest

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Ex-vice president Dick Cheney may receive a rude welcome in Vancouver.

Dick Cheney is coming to town on September 26 to promote his book *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir*. But Vancouver lawyer Gail Davidson has other plans for one of the most controversial figures of the modern era, a powerful man who publicly admitted having allowed torture.

The cofounder of the international group Lawyers Against the War wants the government of Canada either to bar the former U.S. vice president from entering the country or, if he's allowed in, to arrest and prosecute him for torture, war offences, and crimes against humanity. And if Canada isn't keen on punishing the ex-vice president to former president George W. Bush, Davidson argues, then it should extradite Cheney to a country that is willing and able to prosecute him.



[Lawyers Against The War's letter to the prime minister](#)

One of the most vocal defenders of U.S. foreign policy, specifically the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, Cheney is the first featured speaker in the 2011-12 series of Vancouver's Bon Mot Book Club.

"It's a bit chilling that they would invite a mass murderer as their guest to Canada," Davidson told the *Georgia Straight* by phone, "when any one of them would know full well that because of the founded accusations made against Mr. Cheney, that he's persona non grata in Canada, being accused of international crimes, torture, war crimes, and crimes against humanity."

Organizer Leah Costello explained that the Bon Mot Book Club is an "intimate and exclusive high-end dinner series", wherein her company Curious Mind Productions Inc. brings in world leaders and other high-profile speakers. Cheney will speak at a dinner event at the Vancouver Club.

"I haven't heard anything yet," Costello told the *Straight* by phone, when asked if she expects protests to greet Cheney. "But I have heard that he's a controversial figure. That's for sure."

In a recent NBC interview, Cheney declared that he had “no regrets” that the American government used torture against terrorism suspects.

Asked if the U.S. should still use widely condemned techniques like waterboarding, Cheney responded: “I would strongly support using it again if circumstances arose where we had a high-value detainee and that was the only way we could get him to talk.”

According to Davidson, the government is obliged under local and international laws—such as the United Nations’ Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment—to deny safe haven and prosecute persons accused of crimes like torture. Davidson is writing Prime Minister Stephen Harper and key cabinet ministers to outline evidence against the Bush administration and its senior officials.

“The role of Mr. Cheney is that he authorized, directed, ordered, supervised, and failed to prevent the commission of a wide range of crimes against humanity and war crimes,” Davidson said.

She has previously written to the government, suggesting steps similar to those regarding Cheney be taken when Bush visits Surrey on October 20. The ex-president has been invited by Mayor Diane Watts to the Surrey Regional Economic Summit.

In her letter dated August 25 regarding Bush’s visit, Davidson cited a transcript of a U.S. interview with Cheney in May 2009, in which Cheney stated that Bush authorized torture. He said: “I mean it was a presidential-level decision. And the decision went to the president. He signed off on it.”

Speaking to the *Straight*, Davidson said that the evidence against the Bush administration is well known and part of the public record. The documentation contained in Davidson’s August 25 letter includes a statement from now retired U.S. army Maj.-Gen. Antonio Taguba, who looked into abuses at Iraq’s Abu Ghraib prison. Taguba stated that “the Commander-in-Chief [Bush] and those under him authorized a systematic regime of torture”.

The Vancouver lawyer also cited a 2004 report by the International Committee of the Red Cross that the American military used interrogation techniques amounting to torture on prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, a U.S. naval base in Cuba. She likewise mentioned a 2007 Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly report that spoke about a “whole series of illegal acts in Europe” by the CIA through “extraordinary rendition”, a practice in which individuals are abducted from one country and sent to another, to be detained and tortured for information in secret locations.

Davidson stressed that when Canada ratified the international convention against torture, it accepted a duty not just to Canadians but to everyone. And that is to “take effective measures to prevent and punish torture wherever it occurs, whatever the nationality of the victims are, and whatever the nationality of the perpetrators”.

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