

PRESS RELEASE

INTERNATIONAL COALITION AGAINST TORTURE

On June 14, 2006, the British House of Lords ruled that torture victim, William Sampson, and other detainees who had been tortured at the hands of Saudi Arabia, could not bring personal claims against their torturers in the British Courts. The court determined that the immunity of Saudi Arabia before the English courts extended to immunity for those persons actually conducting the torture. The decision overturned an earlier decision of the British Court of Appeal that would have permitted such personal claims to be made.

The International Coalition Against Torture deplors the decision of the British House of Lords. The decision confirms that torture victims who manage to escape will never be permitted access to justice and meaningful reparations for crimes committed against them as long as state immunity laws remain unchanged.

The decision reinforces the fact that state immunity statutes, such as the Canadian State Immunity Act, must be changed to permit such claims to be brought to the courts by torture victims.

In May 2005, the Report of the United Nations Committee Against Torture 34th Session criticized Canada because of "the absence of effective measures to provide civil compensation to victims of torture in all cases." The Committee recommended that Canada "should review its position under article 14 of the Convention (against torture) to ensure the provision of compensation through its civil jurisdiction to all victims of torture."

The International Coalition Against Torture urges the Government of Canada, as a priority, to take active steps to protect the rights of torture victims to bring such claims before the Courts of Canada by amending the State Immunity Act to permit such claims

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