

By Mark Dunn

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OTTAWA - Amnesty International, the Nobel Prize-winning human rights group, wants former U.S. president George W. Bush arrested and charged with torture when he visits British Columbia next week.

Amnesty officials -- armed with reams of documents they say support the incarceration of the former most-powerful man in the world -- brushed aside suggestions Wednesday's news conference was a publicity stunt. They did acknowledge, however, that Justice Minister Rob Nicholson would likely ignore their demands.

"A failure by Canada to take action during his visit would violate the United Nations convention against torture and demonstrate contempt for fundamental human rights," the group's Susan Lee said.

An identical request for U.S. authorities to arrest their former leader fell on deaf ears.

Nicholson's office did not respond for comment.

Amnesty says the alleged torture took place during the CIA's detention program between 2002 and 2009 following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks against the U.S.

"Detainees were subjected to waterboarding and a range of other enhanced interrogation techniques, including being forced to stay for hours in painful positions and sleep deprivation, during the CIA's secret detention program set up under then-president Bush's authorization," the group's website says.

Waterboarding is when water is poured on the face of a captive. It gives the sensation of drowning.

The International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group, the Center for Constitutional Rights and the Canadian Centre for International Justice support Amnesty.

All want Nicholson to launch a criminal investigation into the Bush-led war on terror, and say Canada is obligated to act because it is a signatory of the convention against torture.

Bush is scheduled to speak at an economic summit Oct. 20 in Surrey at the invitation of the city's mayor.