

REDRESS

Seeking Reparation for Torture Survivors

3rd Floor, 87 Vauxhall Walk, London SE11 5HJ

Landmark ruling that foreign torturers can be sued in UK Courts

28 October 2004

Today the Court of Appeal unanimously ruled that foreign officials cannot be shielded by immunity to prevent a victim from pursuing their claim for torture before a UK Court. The Court of Appeal found that:

“it can no longer be appropriate to give blanket effect to a foreign state’s claim to state immunity ... in respect of a state official alleged to have committed acts of systematic torture.”

This judgment now allows the four British victims to continue with their civil claims for torture against a number of Saudi officials. Some of these victims were detained in December 2000, severely tortured over a period of two years and convicted on confessions extracted through torture.

“This is a great day, not only for these British nationals who have fought hard to bring their claim before the UK Courts, but for all torture victims who have been left without any form of reparation, including a judicial recognition of the torture they endured” said Carla Ferstman, the Director of REDRESS.

The State Immunity Act 1978 remains one of the major hurdles barring torture victims right to reparation in the UK. This judgment opens the way for state officials to be held accountable for torture regardless of where it was perpetrated. No longer will officials or the state be able to deny that torture took place. It will also act as a deterrent, warning individuals that they can no longer escape judicial scrutiny for their heinous crimes.

***For more information please contact:
Carla Ferstman or Rosanna Mesquita
Tel. 020 7793 1777
Email: info@redress.org***