

UK Attorney General Intervenes to Block Iraq War Case Against Tony Blair



London, April 22 (RHC)-- UK Attorney General Jeremy Wright says he will go to court to block a criminal investigation against former Prime Minister Tony Blair over his role in the U.S. war in Iraq, according to a new report.

Blair, along with his former foreign secretary Jack Straw and his attorney general Peter Smith, have been accused of the crime of “aggression” in a private case based on findings by the Chilcot Report, a long-delayed inquiry into Britain's role in the U.S.-led invasion which came out last July.

The Chilcot Inquiry, established in 2009 to investigate Britain’s most controversial military engagement since the end of the Second World War, called the invasion “unnecessary” and said Blair decided to go in based on “flawed” intelligence about Iraq's supposed weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

According to The Guardian, Wright -- who is a Tory Member of Parliament -- has reportedly asked to join the hearings following a judge's ruling last November that Blair had immunity from prosecution because it could “involve details being disclosed under the Official Secrets Act.”

The private case has been filed by General Abdul-Wahid Shannan ar-Ribat, the former chief of staff of the Iraqi Army. Speaking on the general's behalf, Imran Khan, his attorney, said his client was “baffled as to why it is that despite the Chilcot report making it very clear that the war was illegal, attempts are below made to prevent those responsible from entering a court, let alone being prosecuted for what they did.”

The attorney general has reportedly claimed that the case is destined to fail because there is no such thing as crime of aggression in English law, although it has been defined in international law. Goldsmith seems to disagree with the notion, as he clearly stated in a 2003 memo that “aggression is a crime under customary international law which automatically forms part of domestic law.”

Wright's spokeswoman refused to clarify whether he would oppose the attempted prosecution but told The Press Association that “he is seeking to intervene in this case because it raises issues about the scope of criminal law.”

“It is not unusual for the Attorney General to intervene in these sorts of cases in order to represent the public interest,” she added.

The U.S.-led war and dismantling of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's regime plunged Iraq into chaos, resulting in years of deadly violence. Tens of thousands of Iraqis, more than 4,000 U.S. troops and 179 British service members were killed in the lengthy conflict.

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