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U.N.: U.S. Late in Filing Rights Report

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GENEVA, Switzerland -- The United States will be late in filing a report on its anti-terrorist measures, including the treatment of detainees in Iraq, Afghanistan and at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, a U.N. human rights body said Friday.

U.S. officials told the Human Rights Committee by letter that "they are not in a position to submit their report by the time of the committee's 84th session," committee chairwoman Christine Chanet said.

An official at the U.S. mission in Geneva said the U.S. needed more time.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, the official added that the United States had just replied to a similar query by the U.N. panel against torture and that U.S. experts were now turning to the rights committee's request.

In July 2004, the panel asked Washington to provide details about anti-terrorist measures taken since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, including the Patriot Act and "problems of the treatment of detainees in Afghanistan, Guantanamo, Iraq and in other places of detention outside of the U.S.," Chanet said.

The committee's criticism comes a month after other U.N. human rights investigators urged the United States to allow them to check conditions at Guantanamo Bay, arguing that the failure of the U.S. to respond to requests since early 2002 was leading its experts to conclude Washington had something to hide.

Chanet, a French legal expert, said the initial impetus to ask the U.S. for such a report goes back to March 2004. "We had a lot of information, especially from NGOs (non-governmental organizations) about what happened in Iraq, in the prison Abu Ghraib and also in Guantanamo," Chanet said.

Ivan Shearer, an Australian committee member, said the United States has assured the panel it will provide the report by year's end. "We want something by the end of October," he said.

The United States is also seven years late in filing its periodic report on the state of human rights in the country. Shearer said that 35 other countries are even later than the United States, but conceded that most of those are "poor, developing countries."

All members of the Human Rights Committee must submit periodic reports detailing their progress in complying with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The United States has been a party to the treaty since 1992.