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## **Lawsuit may force torture rethink.**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MICHAEL RATNER  
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From Mr Michael Ratner.

Sir, Frances Williams is right that, despite the global outcry over Abu Ghraib, there has been no real effect on the practices of the Bush administration (report, December 22). Instead, in Orwellian fashion, it labels practices the International Committee of the Red Cross calls "tantamount to torture" as treating detainees humanely. For this very reason lawyers at the Centre for Constitutional Rights have once again, as they did in the Guantanamo cases which they won, turned to the courts - this time in both the US and Germany.

In the US various suits for damages have been filed against US officials for torture at Guantanamo and a major suit has been filed against the private interrogators allegedly involved at Abu Ghraib. However, it is the German case seeking an indictment of Donald Rumsfeld and others that may be the most significant in sending a message to the Bush administration which could force it to rethink its practices.

It was with some reluctance that we at CCR turned to the courts of a foreign state for redress. It is preferable to have a state examine its own practices and, barring that, the second choice should be an international court.

Rather than a genuine examination of its torture practices, the Bush administration is blaming low-level military personnel and, as is well known, is extremely hostile to the International Criminal Court. Germany has an excellent law on war crimes that gives it universal jurisdiction. In addition, Gen Richard Sanchez and others allegedly involved in or with knowledge of the torture are stationed in Germany. We are hopeful that Germany will begin an investigation of this matter. All of our futures in a society based on law may depend on it.

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