

# *International Criminal Court Prosecutor Seeks Investigation into Afghan War Crimes*

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The Hague, November 4 (RHC)-- The chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) has called for a formal investigation into war crimes in Afghanistan following the U.S.-led invasion of the country in 2001.

"Following a meticulous preliminary examination of the situation, I have come to the conclusion that all legal criteria required to commence an investigation have been met", said Fatou Bensouda in a statement on Friday. "There is a reasonable basis to believe that war crimes and crimes against humanity have been committed," Bensouda added.

She said U.S. forces and CIA agents may have committed war crimes by torturing detainees in Afghanistan under a system of approved torture techniques, which included simulated drowning.

Human Rights Watch has welcomed the possibility of holding perpetrators to account for what it called horrendous human rights abuses against Afghans. "Having documented egregious crimes in Afghanistan that have gone unpunished over many years, we hope this step will open a path to justice for countless victims there," said a spokesman for the group.

Pentagon spokesman Eric Pahon has described the investigation "wholly unwarranted and unjustified," telling reporters in Washington that "our overall assessment is that commencement of an ICC investigation will not serve the interests of either peace or justice in Afghanistan."

The United States invaded Afghanistan in October 2001 after the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington, and overthrew the Taliban regime. But U.S. forces have remained bogged down there through the presidencies of George W. Bush, Barack Obama and now Donald Trump.

Recently, the U.S. military officially acknowledged that there are some 2,600 more troops in the war-torn country than the 8,400 previously reported. The additional forces would join the 11,000 foreign troops from other countries already in Afghanistan.

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