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Judges at British high court block prosecution of former British PM for war crimes in Iraq. | Photo: Reuters

It is not the first time that there has been an attempt to prosecute Blair for war crimes.

The most recent attempt to prosecute former U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair for war crimes was blocked Monday by judges who stated that English law has no crime of aggression for which he could be indicted.

The bid against Blair was launched by Abdulwaheed al-Rabbat, a former Iraqi army general

who was motivated to take action after the conclusions of the Chilcot Inquiry report in 2016.

Michael Mansfield QC, the prominent UK lawyer that represented al-Rabbat in court, stated in his opening argument that “Saddam Hussein did not pose an urgent threat to the UK, intelligence reporting about [Iraqi] weapons of mass destruction was presented with unwarranted certainty, that the war was unnecessary and that the UK undermined the authority of the U.N. security council,” adding that all the report's conclusions demonstrated that “it was an unlawful war.”

Despite the tenacious arguments presented by Mansfield on behalf of al-Rabbat, Lord Chief Justice John Thomas and Justice Duncan Ouseley echoed the argument of the attorney general for England and Wales who stated that Blair cannot be tried due to there having been no crime of aggression law in England at the time of the events. The judges admitted that a crime of aggression law does currently exist under international law, but argued that it cannot be enforced retroactively.

It is not the first time that there has been an attempt to prosecute Blair for war crimes. According to arrestblair.org, a total of five citizen's arrest attempts have been made since 2010. The website, which offers rewards to anyone willing to make a “peaceful citizen’s arrest” of Blair, uses article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations to justify their legal pursuit of the British politician.

al-Rabbat’s solicitor Imran Khan stated that his client is “extremely disappointed with the judgment” and reminded the court that the war on Iraq led to the “deaths of hundreds of thousands of individuals as well as the displacement of over four million others.”

While the court ruled that Blair cannot be charged for crimes of aggression under international law, he can still be charged with the abuse of prisoners of war as well as interfering with an occupied country’s political and economic system, as stated in the Hague and Geneva rules.