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NAIROBI - A case filed before an African judicial body could open a new front in efforts by human rights groups to hold the CIA and its partners accountable for what they allege was the torture of innocent victims in secret "black site" prisons around the world.

The case involves Mohammed al-Asad, who said he was arrested in late 2003 at his home in Tanzania, blindfolded and flown to a secret prison in Djibouti. He said he was subjected to two weeks of torture and inhuman treatment in a clandestine CIA rendition and detentions program designed to nab suspected terrorists.

From Djibouti, human rights activists say, Asad was dispatched into a network of secret CIA prisons in Afghanistan and Eastern Europe before being jailed in his native Yemen. In 2006, Asad was released without being charged with a terrorism-related crime.

On Monday, U.S. and British human rights lawyers filed legal documents at the [African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights](#), urging it to require the government of Djibouti to "answer for abuses it committed as part of the CIA's secret" program. The case, made public Monday, was filed confidentially in December 2009.

Djibouti's embassy in Nairobi did not answer requests for a response, and a government spokesman in Djibouti was not reachable for comment. The CIA declined to discuss Asad's case and denied the allegations of abuse.

"It's safe to say - without commenting on this specific matter - that much of what has been alleged about the former CIA detention and interrogation program, which ended over two years ago, is simply incorrect," said CIA spokesman George Little.

The commission, based in the Gambia, is a quasi-judicial body that has jurisdiction over nations that have ratified the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which includes Djibouti.

If the commission accepts the case, it would be the first international case to inquire into the role of an African country in the U.S. rendition program, human rights lawyers said.

"By serving as the doorway for the U.S. secret detention and rendition program in Africa, Djibouti directly violated the human rights of our client," said Jayne Huckerby, research director of the [Center for Human Rights and Global Justice](#), based at New York University's School of Law, which along with [Interights](#), a British human rights law organization, filed the case.

In a telephone interview from eastern Yemen, where he now lives, Asad said he thinks he was arrested because of his links to an Islamic charity that was blacklisted after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks for allegedly funding terrorism. The al Haramain Islamic Foundation, a Saudi Arabian charity, had rented space in a building Asad owned.

When Asad landed in Djibouti, he said, he was placed in a small cell and not given a change of clothes for the two weeks he was there. A woman who identified herself as an American interrogated him, he said.

Asad said that one guard told him he was in Djibouti and that he also noticed a photograph of the country's president on a wall in the prison. Later on, Tanzanian authorities told his father that he had been taken to Djibouti, he said.

Asad said two guards entered his cell two weeks later and blindfolded him and tied his hands together with a piece of cloth. He said he was taken to the airport where his blindfold was ripped off; five black-clad men masked with balaclavas tore off his clothing and photographed him naked before assaulting him. They chained him, placed a hood over his head and forced him onto a small plane, Asad said.

For the next 16 months, he said, he was held in three more CIA prisons in Afghanistan and elsewhere, where he endured more abuse.

The efforts to bring Asad's case to Africa follow attempts by human rights activists to bring legal actions in U.S. courts involving other alleged victims of the CIA rendition program. Their cases were dismissed on the basis of the "state secrets doctrine" that bars lawsuits deemed to threaten U.S. intelligence secrets.