

Australia expected to ratify torture pact

by UPI

CANBERRA, Australia - The new Labor government in Australia plans to sign an international treaty on torture and to introduce legislation to make torture specifically illegal. Former Prime Minister John Howard's government refused to ratify the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Torture. Howard said Australia did not need the treaty because of its excellent reputation on human rights. Robert McLelland, attorney general in the new government, told the Sydney Morning Herald he expects the treaty to be ratified soon. "Labor is committed to ratifying the Optional Protocol on torture, and we will soon be consulting the states and territories as to how that can be achieved," he said. One question is whether a law against torture would apply to Australian officials who cooperate outside the country with torture by foreign governments. The government faces one suit from an Australian citizen who claims Australian officials collaborated with U.S. agents in sending him to Egypt, where he was tortured.

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