

A federal appeals court has ruled that former Attorney General John Ashcroft may be held liable for people who were wrongfully detained as material witnesses after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

In a harshly worded ruling handed down Friday, a three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals called the government's use of material witnesses after Sept. 11 "repugnant to the Constitution and a painful reminder of some of the most ignominious chapters of our national history."

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