

Another Opinion Limiting the Alien Tort Statute

Today, Judge Scheindlin of the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York dismissed a case filed by a class of South Africans against Ford Motor Company and IBM (see here [SDNY SAAL](#)). Those companies had been sued under the Alien Tort Statute for allegedly aiding and abetting human rights violations during the Apartheid regime. Put simply, the plaintiffs alleged that Ford and IBM oversaw operations of a subsidiary in South Africa that led to human rights violations in South Africa. Given that the plaintiffs were unable to plead relevant conduct in the United States that would give rise to a violation of customary international law, the case was dismissed. According to Judge Scheindlin, “That these plaintiffs are left without relief in an American court is regrettable. But I am bound to follow *Kiobel II* and *Balintulo*, no matter what my personal view of the law may be.”

In addition to this case, the Eleventh Circuit recently dismissed a case against Chiquita for similar reasons.

Besides these two cases, the Fourth Circuit permitted a case to go forward against CACI Premier Technology for alleged abuse and torture occurring at Abu Gharib. See here for a roundup on the Chiquita and CACI cases.