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HRW Renews Call for Release of War Crimes Report

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- International watchdog Human Rights Watch (HRW) renewed its call for the release of the war atrocities report compiled by the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) as the presidential election draws closer.

HRW researcher in Afghanistan Heather Barr said that Afghans will want justice over the past crimes committed against them and those responsible identified. "I can understand why people believe that there is no solution other than peace process – it is difficult to see otherwise [how] there can be peace in Afghanistan. But you cannot be so eager to have a peace process that you

are ready to forget all of the crimes that have been committed against the Afghan people in the last three decades," Barr told TOLONews.

"At the same time as there is a discussion about peace with the Taliban, there should also be an effort to look at justice for the crimes that have happened in the past. This is one reason that the report was prepared by the Afghan Human Rights Commission and should be released," she added.

Afghan human rights activist Ajmal Ballochzada believes that President Hamid Karzai fears that if the report is released the war criminals identified in the report who are in the government would be pushed to oppose the government.

"The reason for not releasing this report is that the President is worried about turning those war criminals who hold high-ranked government offices to the opposition," Ballochzada told TOLONews on Tuesday.

The AIHRC reiterated its past response to calls for the report's release saying that it was up to the government to disclose the findings.

"It is up to the government to practice its obligations regarding the report. The Independent Human Rights Commission has done its job," chief executive Musa Mahmoodi told TOLONews.

The report, commissioned by Karzai in 2005, interviewed nearly 60,000 Afghans and covers the war crimes committed from the Soviet era until 2001.

Its release has been suppressed by senior officials in the government with most analysts agreeing that the report held sensitive information linking people still in power to the crimes documented.