

Resume turning over detainees, Canada told

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GLOBE AND MAIL UPDATE

FEBRUARY 1, 2008 AT 10:47 AM EST

Canada should resume transferring detainees to Afghanistan's notorious intelligence service because holding them would mean a propaganda victory for the Taliban, the country's largest human-rights agency says.

The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission says officials from Canada and other countries fighting in southern Afghanistan will meet at the AIHRC headquarters on Feb. 6, exactly three months after Canada halted the handovers.

“We will ask them to start transferring to the Afghan authorities,” said Farid Hamidi, a lawyer for the commission. “If they don't transfer these detainees to the Afghan authorities, it will raise some questions among the people of Afghanistan.”

He continued: “Maybe some people will do propaganda against the coalition forces in Afghanistan, they will raise questions about the mistreatment of these prisoners and some other things. It will open the way of propaganda against the coalition forces.”

Many ordinary Afghans have a deep mistrust of foreign prisons, which they associate with U.S. detention centres in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and Bagram, Afghanistan.

The AIHRC recently had difficulty inspecting the Kandahar detention facilities of the National Directorate for Security, the Afghan intelligence service, but those problems have recently been solved, Mr. Hamidi added.

“The problem of access is solved I think within one month,” he said.

The Afghan commission may also push for access to the detention facility operated by Canada, because of the recent decision to hold detainees longer than the customary 96 hours allowed under existing agreements, the lawyer said.

The AIHRC estimates that Canada now holds 18 to 20 detainees in Kandahar, Mr. Hamidi said.

In addition to the Canadians, the Kabul meeting is expected to include representatives from Britain, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, the United Nations, and the NDS.

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