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Senators Accuse Karzai, His Family of Corruption

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Afghan senators on Sunday accused President Hamid Karzai, some of his family members, his two vice presidents and several cabinet members of corruption.

Senate chairman Fazel Hadi Muslimyar said some members of the Karzai family and some politicians close to Mr Karzai took money from several banks in Afghanistan but predicted they will never be prosecuted. He said finance minister Hazrat Omar Zakhilwal would also probably escape prosecution.

He added, however, that if an investigation indicated Mr Zakhilwal was corrupt, the Senate would be the first institution to help the judiciary bring him to justice and put him in prison.

"The president, his family members, his deputies and his cabinet members are involved in corruption and looted banks and none of them were prosecuted. If the allegations about the finance minister are proved, the Senate would be the first organ to help in his prosecution and put him in jail," Mr Muslimyar said.

Meanwhile, several other senators accused the government of turning a blind eye to Mr Zakhilwal's alleged corruption. They urged Mr Karzai to break his silence on the matter.

Senator Nesar Ahmad Ares raised concerns about the dual citizenship many government officials hold, saying this permits people who are accused of corruption to flee the country before they face justice. He urged President Karzai to look into the matter.

President Karzai is under pressure to rein in corruption in his administration. At a conference in Tokyo in July, donors said Afghanistan will get the \$16 billion in aid money pledged only if serious efforts are made to stamp out graft and nepotism.