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Khalili Denies Allegations of Land Grabbing

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The second vice president denied Saturday that he is involved in land grabbing and said that government officials and politicians should not be accused without proper evidence.

Vice President Khalili was accused of land grabbing by a senator recently. In response to the accusation, Khalili sent a letter of protest to President Karzai, criticizing the accusation.

"Freedom of expression is everyone's right, but it should not be used to lower the prestige of other people, and government officials should not be accused without evidence," Khalili said in the letter, adding that allegations against him should be investigated.

MP Shokria Paikan supported Khalili's position.

"Investigations are underway to find those involved in land grabbing, but no one has the right to accuse a government official or anyone else of land grabbing without sufficient evidence," Paikan said.

Several Afghan lawmakers also accused government officials more broadly of involvement in land grabbing, and urged the Attorney General's Office to make public the names of those involved.

"Unfortunately, some government officials and lawmakers are involved in land grabbing. A commission is working to prepare and release a list of those officials involved in land grabbing," MP Ghulam Hussain Naseri said.

Land grabs have turned into a major issue for the Afghan government as thousands of state-owned lands are believed to have been usurped by powerful figures. These include high-ranking government officials and warlords.