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Joint candidate for president: says Opp

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Seasoned politicians in northern Balkh province on Sunday accused the President Hamid Karzai-led government of failing to take measures to ensure a fair presidential ballot in 2014. The accusation was levelled at a press conference in Mazar-i-Sharif, the provincial capital, by opposition leaders including Ahmad Zia Massoud, Rashid Dostum, Mohammad Muhaqiq, former spymaster Amrullah Saleh and Balkh Governor Atta Mohammad Noor.

They said the central government was yet to initiate efforts at conducting the election in a manner that could meet internationally recognised standards and respecting people's voting right. Massoud said the Afghans wanted an end to 'monarchy' in their country, a reference to President Hamid Karzai's 11 years in office and the power wielded by his family. He said there were rumours the present regime was being given in inheritance and embodied to a single family.

Massoud warned if it was the case, the masses would take to the streets and would do their last-minute effort to prevent the county's governance system from taking the form of "constitutional monarchy."

The Afghanistan National Front, a coalition of several political groups, would field a consensus presidential candidate soon, said Massoud, who represents the Jabha-i-Milli Party in the alliance. "It is the utmost responsibility of the incumbent government to pave the ground for free and fair elections with efforts focused on bringing about a satisfactory turnout," Massoud said, claiming the government had failed so far to take a signal step towards that end.

Governor Atta Mohammad Noor, though refused having membership of Massoud's party, said he was supportive of his views.

On his own candidacy in the next presidential race, Noor said he would consider it once his seniors advised him to do so and thought to be able for the fray.

Sahel accused the government of making numerous excuses that hindered a fair conduct of elections. He insisted new vote cards should be distributed ahead of the presidential elections and the old ones could threaten the vote's credibility. "Some government officials blame the lack of fund for failing to distribute new voter cards. It is just an excuse to fool the masses," the former NDS chief said.

Muhaqiq called next presidential election crucial to deciding the country's fate. The politicians issued a joint declaration, calling for new voter cards. It accused the government of leveling false allegations against Dostum, Noor and Muhaqiq. The declaration also asked the government to incorporate the opposition's views in making peace with the rebels.