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Afghan tribal chief killed, dozens of others threatened

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A tribal elder was killed in the southern Afghan province of Kandahar, where around 70 other elders have received letters threatening them with death, officials said Saturday.

Khalifa Abdullah was shot in Arghandab district on Friday night, Zalmay Ayoubi, spokesman for the provincial governor said.

No group took responsibility for the attack.

Members of Kandahar's provincial council told local media that around 70 tribal elders in Panwayi district had received death threats unless they leave the country within five days.

The officials said the letters bore Taliban's stamps.

Taliban militants, whose government was toppled by the US-led invasion in 2001, have killed dozens of tribal elders on suspicion of working with the Western-backed government, according to Afghan and NATO officials.

In an effort to woo Taliban militants to renounce violence and re-join mainstream society, the government recently urged tribal elders to mediate between officials and rebel fighters.

NATO said earlier this month that Taliban chief Mullah Omar had sent to his followers a list of tribal leaders to kill.

Mullah Omar, who has a 10-million-dollar bounty on his head, is believed to hiding in Pakistan's Balochistan province, according to US and Afghan officials. Islamabad denies the claim.