

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PRESS RELEASE

AI index: PRE 01/033/2011  
25 January 2011

### **Afghan parliament inauguration highlights crisis of accountability**

The Afghan government must investigate thousands of allegations of human rights violations, criminal activity and electoral fraud by members of the country's parliament, which begins its second term on 26 January, Amnesty International said.

At least 40 parliamentarians are accused of serious human rights abuses while serving, including murder, kidnapping, extortion, intimidation of activists and journalists, and election related violence.

Dozens of members face credible allegations of war crimes like attacks on civilian targets and massacres committed during Afghanistan's long-running civil conflict.

"We fear that the criminals and warlords in the Afghan parliament and government could keep getting away with human rights abuses unless they answer to the ongoing investigations," said Sam Zarifi, Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific director.

Amnesty International is urging the Afghan authorities to continue investigation of human rights violations committed by parliamentarians by the Electoral Complaints Commission and the Afghan judiciary, without recourse to parliamentary immunity.

"There are a number of brave parliamentarians who strive to represent the interests of the Afghan people and push for a better, more just government, but unfortunately they are outnumbered by those with little respect for the rights and demands of their constituents "

President Karzai had delayed the parliamentary inauguration, demanding that parliamentarians submit to his own special tribunal for investigating widespread claims of fraud during the September elections.

"Karzai's special tribunal has no legal basis and seems designed to pack Parliament with his supporters rather than to fairly and properly assess the conduct of candidates," said Sam Zarifi. "In this stand-off, the right answer is to stick to the rule of law, not bend it for the sake of political advantage."

"For the last four months a parliament full of human rights violators has been pitted against a president trying to circumvent legal checks on his power. The losers have been the Afghan people," said Sam Zarifi, Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific Director.

The Electoral Complaints Commission received nearly 6,000 complaints, including more than 2700 that the UN termed "serious" enough to affect the outcome of the polling. Some 2300 complaints were registered against the candidates and their agents, and more than 700 complaints of intimidation and violence.

"Credible investigations by the ECC will be vital for bringing much needed legitimacy to this new parliament" said Sam Zarifi. "And if there are more serious allegations of human rights

abuses by sitting members of Parliament, the Afghan judiciary needs to provide justice and redress to the victims.”

“Both Karzai and the parliament have squandered their public legitimacy because of their poor record of performance and their failure to provide responsive, responsible, accountable governance.”

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