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Protesting students block parliament's entrance

by Abasin Zaheer

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Hundreds of students on Saturday staged another protest against naming the Kabul University of Education and Training after former president Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani and blocked the entrance to the parliament building.

On Cabinet's recommendation, President Hamid Karzai issued a decree last week, renaming the university after Rabbani, the *Jamiat-i-Islami* party head and the government's chief negotiator who was killed in a suicide bomb attack in Kabul on Sept. 20, 2011.

About 300 protesting students prevented lawmakers from entering parliament. Some MPs and secretariat staffers managed to find their way into the building but others returned.

Hamdullah, a student of literature, told Pajhwok Afghan News a number of legislators forcibly entered parliament and threatened protestors. One parliamentarian's vehicle hit the demonstrators, wounding three of them, he alleged, without naming the public representative.

An MP from western Herat province, Nazir Ahmad Hanafi claimed the protestors kicked and stoned his car in front of the parliament building. His driver entered the building as he spoke to a friend over the telephone, he said, denying his vehicle had injured anyone.

A Physics student, Mohammad Ausat warned: “Our protests will turn violent if the presidential decree is not withdrawn. The president would be “held responsible” if anyone suffered as a result of the demonstrations, he said.

Another participant, Zhmana said plaque inscribed with Rabbani’s name would be removed if their demand was not met soon. “We have been protesting for six days, but no one is heeding our call,” she complained.

Parliamentarians also took up the issue during the *Wolesi Jirga* session, with one member suggesting that educational institutes should not be named after the political figures involved in the civil strife.

Shukria Barakzai, a public representative from Kabul, supported the protest and said the Afghans did not have good memories about jihadi leaders. She believed there was no need for renaming the university.

Speaker Abdur Rauf Ibrahimy promised he would convey the students’ demand to President Karzai. He said the president would be urged to find an amicable solution to the problem.