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Afghan vice president accused of sexually assaulting rival

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Allegations that Afghanistan's first vice president and his guards sexually assaulted a political rival while holding him captive in his private compound prompted calls Tuesday from the country's Western allies for a government investigation.

Abdul Rashid Dostum, a former warlord who has a catalog of war crimes attached to his name, is accused of ordering his guards to seize Ahmad Ishchi last month in northern Jowzjan province during a game of buzkashi, or polo with a carcass.

Dostum allegedly kept Ishchi hostage in his private enclave for five days, where he was said to be tortured and sodomized.

"He told me 'I will throw you under the horses and do buzkashi on you'," Ishchi, a former Jowzjan governor, told local Tolo television Tuesday.

"He (Dostum) said first I want to have sex with him. His men rolled up my clothes ... Then Dostum told 10 of his men to sodomise me until my anus ruptures and bleeds."

Dostum's office dismissed the comments as a conspiracy to defame him.

But the United States joined a slew of Western governments to call for a thorough probe.

"The unlawful detention and reported mistreatment of Mr. Ishchi by the First Vice President raises serious concerns," the U.S. Embassy in Kabul said in a statement.

"We would welcome the Afghan government's move to swiftly investigate these allegations."

The European Union along with Australia and Canada also demanded a "fair and transparent investigation" into what it called "gross human rights violations and abuses against Ishchi."

The presidential palace in Kabul, under fire from human rights campaigners, said the government was committed to investigating the allegations.

The controversy has once again drawn attention to how warlords and strongmen throughout Afghanistan operate with impunity, hobbling Western-backed efforts to restore peace and rebuild the nation after decades of conflict.

Dostum, who has come under a storm of criticism for his alleged brutalities and war crimes in the past, joined the the country's National Unity Government in 2014 in a bid by President Ashraf Ghani to attract the support of his mostly ethnic Uzbek constituency.