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Afghan Election Commission Calls for 9 Lawmakers to Be Replaced

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Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission has called for the replacement of nine lawmakers after reviewing voter fraud allegations that have paralyzed the Afghan parliament for almost a year.

At a news conference Sunday, commission chairman Fazel Ahmad Manawi said the nine unseated lawmakers come from eight Afghan provinces. He said they will be replaced by nine new lawmakers, including a powerful former militia leader in northern Afghanistan, Gul Mohammad Pahlawan.

Some Afghan lawmakers denounced the commission's move as illegal. The lower house of parliament has been in limbo since its inauguration in January because of accusations of massive fraud in the September 2010 election.

A special tribunal set up by Afghan President Hamid Karzai issued a ruling in June, calling for 62 lawmakers to be disqualified for fraud - one quarter of the 249-seat assembly. Karzai later scrapped the court after critics accused him of using it to reshape the parliament more to his liking.

The Afghan president issued a decree last week giving the Independent Election Commission the final say on election complaints. The Commission refused to recognize the authority of Karzai's tribunal but agreed to examine its findings.

It is not clear if the commission's decision to disqualify nine lawmakers will end the political stalemate.