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Protest camp set up opposite Presidential Palace

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KABUL - Outraged over the non-implementation of the special tribunal's verdict, a number of unsuccessful 2010 parliamentary election candidates, coming all the way from central Maidan Wardak province, on Wednesday set up a protest camp in front of the Presidential Palace.

The candidates and their supporters, with some of them carrying weapons, warned to resist law enforcing personnel, if they were intercepted.

The protestors claimed about 5000 people were taking part in the protest, but a Pajhwok Afghan News reporter, who visited Arghandi intersection west of the capital Kabul, said there were 10 failed candidates and nearly 200 of their protesters.

After spending the night in Arghandi intersection, the protestors in a number of vehicles drove towards the busy Pashtonistan intersection close to the Presidential Palace where they erected tents next to 'Da Afghanistan Bank.

One of the losing poll runners, Daud Sultanzoy, who had been declared as winner along with 61 others by the special tribunal assigned with investigating election irregularities, claimed the IEC decision to reinstate only nine candidates was illegal and based on political settlement.

All the 62 candidates declared winners by the special election tribunal must be reinstated, he said, warning they would continue their protest until their demands were met.

Protesters also blocked the intersection against traffic for more than two hours on Wednesday noon.

Haji Abdul Qader a failed Kochi candidate warned: "Our demonstration will expand, unless special tribunal's decision is enforced."

He said they had no intention to violate any laws, but wanted their voices to be heard.

Abdul Jabbar Shilgari, another failed candidate from Ghazni, warned they would turn the fountain at Pashtonistan intersection to another Tahrir square in Egypt, where people had gathered to oust Hosni Mubarak.

Shilgari accused the IEC chief and seven other commissioners of hatching a political plot against the 62 candidates.

Most of supporters of the candidates dispersed in the afternoon, but few of the candidates stayed at the protest tent.

The IEC had declared 9 of the 62 failing contesters as winners in last year's parliamentary elections. The nine were administered oath on the fifth day of Eid-ul-Fitr, amid strong criticism outside and inside the parliament, where the coalition to support the implementation of law warned not to attend the house sessions until the unseated lawmakers were reinstated.