

Aides Of Afghan Presidential Candidate Shot Dead

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Officials in Afghanistan say gunmen have shot dead two aides of Afghan presidential candidate, Abdullah Abdullah in Herat on the eve of the official election campaign.

The spokesman for Mr Abdullah, Sayed Fazel Sangcharaki says armed men killed Dr Ahmad Hamdard who was to lead their election campaign team and another team member.

He says the incident at the beginning of the election campaign is a bad sign.

Police spokesman, in the western city of Herat, Abdul Rauf Ahmadi has confirmed the incident.

"Unfortunately two people, namely Ahmad Hamdard and Shujahideen were killed in the fourth district of Herat city this evening.

"Unidentified gunmen opened fire on them in the middle of street," he said.

He says it appears the security forces are either incapable of providing security for the election campaign or that they do not take their job seriously.

Afghanistan's election campaign begins today with 11 candidates vying to succeed President, Hamid Karzai.

Chief Electoral Officer for the Independent Election Commission, Ziaulhaq Amarkhil says the election on April 5 will be a crucial election for the nation.

He says there will be a "huge difference" between the coming vote and the previous two presidential elections, in 2009 and 2004.

This is the first time from an elected president we are going to go to another elected president," he said.

One of the 11 candidates running in the polls is Abdul Qayyum Karzai, the eldest brother of President Hamid Karzai.

Mr Karzai has essentially run Afghanistan since the American-led invasion in 2001, drove the Taliban from power.

While he is constitutionally barred from seeking a third consecutive term, his presence alone will complicate the run-up to the election.

His refusal to sign a security agreement allowing some American troops to remain there after 2014 has caused tensions in US-Afghan relations and made the issue a central part of the campaign.