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PTI Dissidents Stand Firm, Refuse to Withdraw from Senate Elections

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In a bold defiance of party directives, disgruntled leaders of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) have vowed to contest the upcoming Senate elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), scheduled for July 21, 2025, rejecting calls to withdraw their candidacies. This internal revolt threatens to disrupt a proposed agreement between the KP government

and opposition parties for unopposed polls, highlighting deep divisions within PTI and raising stakes for Pakistan's political landscape.

The rebellion, led by PTI members including Khurram Zeeshan, Irfan Saleem, and Ayesha Bano, stems from frustration over the party's decision to align with opposition parties, including the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), for a 6-5 seat-sharing deal. During a heated meeting, Zeeshan criticized the KP leadership, questioning, "Is this what our leader envisioned?" as reported by The News. Saleem echoed this sentiment, declaring, "We will contest and never become part of this flawed system," emphasizing their commitment to PTI's founding principles over political compromise.

The KP government, led by Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, aimed for an uncontested election to secure six Senate seats for the PTI and five for the opposition. However, the dissidents' refusal to step down has sparked threats of protests outside the Chief Minister's House, as noted by the Associated Press of Pakistan. PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan warned that candidates defying party founder Imran Khan's approved list face expulsion, stating, "Those not appointed by the PTI founder must withdraw or face removal," according to Geo News.

This standoff underscores broader tensions within PTI, amplified by allegations of electoral manipulation in the 2024 general elections, where PTI claimed a stolen mandate. For conservative audiences, the dissidents' resolve reflects a principled stand against establishment-driven politics, prioritizing ideological purity over pragmatic deals. As the July 21 polls approach, the PTI leadership faces a critical challenge:

reconcile with its base or risk further fragmentation, potentially weakening its influence in the Senate and beyond.