

## **Won't be 'scapegoat' for papers scandal: Panama govt**

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**Panama City:** The Panamanian government said that it would not accept the country being used as a "scapegoat" for the apparent financial misdeeds detailed in the Panama Papers.

"We are not going to allow Panama to be used as a scapegoat by third parties. Each country (implicated) is responsible," presidential chief of staff Alvaro Aleman said on Tuesday.

Panama "rejects and regrets" that anyone should want to "trample" its good name, "conveniently forgetting the participation in offshore operations of institutions and individuals of other nations", Efe news agency quoted Aleman as saying.

Aleman demanded that media take the time to "understand the situation in depth and avoid repeating commonplaces and old prejudices about our country.

Panama has changed and we are promoting dramatic reforms that can in no way be ignored," Aleman said.

The minister also criticised that the name of Panama Papers has been used for the roughly 11.5 million confidential documents from the law firm Mossack Fonseca, which specialises in wealth management.

Panama, Aleman said, is not the only country involved but that "21 different jurisdictions have been mentioned" as offshore tax havens where companies have been created.

As a result of the leak, French Finance Minister Michel Sapin announced on Tuesday that Panama would again be included on its blacklist of tax havens, from which it was eliminated in late 2011.

Aleman recalled that "in Panama, there is a law that sets out retaliation measures against countries that include Panama in 'gray lists'."

Deputy Foreign Minister Luis Miguel Hincapie regretted the "irresponsible statement" by the head of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Angel Gurría, who urged on Monday that Panama "immediately" apply the international standards of fiscal transparency, criticising the central American country for having long resisted appeals to take that step.

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