

**CANDLELIT VIGIL**

## Shahbaz remembered on first death anniversary

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Islamabad

Large number of human rights activists and civil society representatives held candlelit vigil in front of the Super Market to remember former federal minister for minorities Shahbaz Bhatti on his first death anniversary.

They demanded the government to bring perpetrators to justice and urged the Supreme Court to take *sue moto* notice of the barbaric killings by extremists groups. They recited poetry by Faiz Ahmed Faiz and praised the services and bravery of Shahbaz Bhatti in their speeches. Besides other known names, Shehryar Taseer, son of late Salman Taseer, also attended the vigil.

Shahbaz Bhatti was assassinated in an attack on his vehicle in Islamabad. He was the first Christian parliamentarian who was offered and took oath as federal minister for minorities affairs in Pakistan. Bhatti was one of the founding members of the organisation 'All Pakistan Minorities Alliance' (APMA) in



**ISLAMABAD:** Members of the civil society holding banners and candles at a vigil to mark first death anniversary of former federal minister Shahbaz Bhatti at Super Market. — Naveed Akram

1985 and was considered a representative of the religious minorities in Pakistan.

Speaking on the occasion, Shehryar Taseer said that Shah-

baz supported their father. "I have come here to acknowledge the contributions of Shahbaz for the protection and development of minorities. Only brave people

like him can ensure future peace in the country," he said.

Eminent human rights activist, Tahira Abdullah said that they have gathered to protect

the future generation of Pakistan. "We have gathered not only to remember a brave heart, but also for the better Pakistan," she said. "We want the Pakistan of Muhammad Ali Jinnah," she added while demanding the end to extremism in the country.

Columnist Haris Khaliq regretted that even after losing some great leaders and thousands of innocent people in past decade, the state machinery is not ready to learn the lesson. He condemned the recent killings of people belonging to Shia community in Kohistan. "The silent majority in the country is against extremism, but there are few who dare to challenge such elements in public. Shahbaz was one such brave person," he said adding that there is still a long way to go.

Civil society representative, Jameel Asghar Bhatti, said that those who lost their lives while fighting extremism are martyrs and the nation is proud of them.

Artist and civil society representative Fauzia Minallah stressed for creating an environment where the children of minority community are as safe as the Muslim children.

Chief Operating Officer Naeem Mirza termed it unfortunate that extremists are continuing their activities. "They are threatening the media persons and people working for human rights," he said. "They should remember that they can pluck all flowers, but they can't stop the spring." The vigil ended with the recitation of Faiz's poetry.