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Civil society mourns Bhatti's assassination

OUR STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD - Civil society organisations on Wednesday organised a vigil to mourn the assassination of Federal Minister for Minority Affairs, Shahbaz Bhatti, and to press the government to take immediate action against his killers.

The participants holding placards condemned the incident and chanted slogans that self-proclaimed laws would not be accepted.

The participants said that there had been incitement to violence and religious hatred had been used as a tool since the regime of General Zia-ul-Haq. They demanded legislation to put an end to such incidents of violence and militancy in the name of religion. They also asked for review of all laws that violated the fundamental rights of citizens and provided extremists with the opportunity to provoke violence.

The participants asked all political and democratic forces to

denounce such acts and reinforced efforts to pave the way for a tolerant and equitable society. They said that the real issues the country faced were poverty, inequality, and lack of peace, economic instability and lack of continuity of democratic governance.

Forces of hate and violence were deliberately diverting attention and resources from real issues by promoting religious conflict.

They also expressed their concern at the glorification of Taseer's killer and demanded responsible media coverage as well as political discourse and public debates encouraging freedoms of thought, speech and rule of law. They appealed the citizens not to support elements that preached a campaign of hate.

Rehana Hashmi while talking to this correspondent said that people should oppose militants who left to them to lead the country into extremism and certain destruction. "I strongly con-

demn the brutal killings and demand justice from the government." She said, added that the murderer must be tried according to the law of the land. "Don't hide behind security lapse we saw what happened to Salman," she said, adding that stop this madness and religious extremism. She was of the view that if violence and extremism were not stopped then it would swallow the whole country.

Dr Aisha Siddiqi on the occasion condemned the killing of minorities minister. She said that the state should stop these extremist elements, which worked in guise of Islam to deceive the common man.

Furthermore, Marvi Sarmad from Citizens for Democracy (CFD) speaking on the occasion, strongly condemned the killing and said this brutal act had embarrassed the whole nation. She criticized the role of media for presenting these extremist elements in a more glorified way.



ISLAMABAD: Activists of the civil society hold placards during the candlelight ceremony against the murder of Minorities Minister Shahbaz Bhatti on Wednesday.-INP