

## Repeal of discriminatory laws demanded

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ISLAMABAD – Representatives of civil society and minorities gathered under the auspices of the Insani Haqooq Ittehaad (IHI) Thursday to denounce the recent decision on Women's Protection Act from the Federal Shariat Court and demanded its abolishment and parallel judicial systems in the country.

They were demanding the abolition of Federal Shariat Court, Council of Islamic Ideology, local Jirgas, Panchayets, and repeal of all laws, which to them were discriminatory to women, and minorities included Blasphemy laws and Hudood laws. They also called for the immediate dismissal of Maulana Shirani as the Chairman of the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII). Moreover, the protesters also demanded that the Government should stand up to the retrogressive religious forces in the country and should not capitulate to their

blackmailing. They called upon the government to ensure the rights of religious minorities by immediately releasing Aasiya Bibi and repealing the blasphemy laws.

The participants of the rally were a diverse mix of civil society organisations, women's rights groups, human rights activists, political workers, students' organisations and minority communities of the country. They raised slogans for a secular and democratic Pakistan. They insisted that the government must work towards the realisation of the democratic, secular, and peaceful vision of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah's Pakistan, a vision he clearly articulated in his speech on 11th August 1947 when he stated that religion would have no role to play in the business of the state.

The protesters chanted slogans and demanded repeal of laws that discriminate against women such as Hudood Laws

and Qisas and Diyat Law. They also reminded the government that the state has a due diligence duty to ensure protection for women, minorities and other vulnerable sections of the society and should not bow down to political pressures and blackmailing by religious parties.

It is relevant to mention that the demonstration was part of countrywide campaign of the human rights organizations and activist against the Federal Shariat Court decision, in support of its abolishing and repeal of Blasphemy laws. This protest was the beginning of a national campaign that civil society organizations are starting in all parts of Pakistan from today. Similar protests are planned in all provinces. A national conference and other follow-ups are also planned to demonstrate that the progressive elements of Pakistani society will not bow down to the attacks by the religious right against women and minorities.