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Protest demonstration

Civil society decry attack on foreign tourists, tourism industry

Tour operators condemn killings, demand govt action against culprits

OUR CORRESPONDENT
ISLAMABAD

Students, civil society activists and tour operators held a protest demonstration to condemn the recent attack on foreign tourists at the base camp of Nanga Parbat outside the Islamabad Press Club on Monday.

They demanded the government to bring the culprits to book and to ensure the security of all visiting tourists.

The protesters from Islamabad and Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) held banners and placards and chanted the slogans, "Zalmon jawaab do," "Dashatgardi murdabad" and "We want justice."

A man in the crowd accused military forces of involvement in the attack, a comment that invited the wrath of a female civil society activist. Upon raising an anti-military slogan, the man was asked to leave the event.

Zeemia of Amal Pakistan, an NGO, was visibly worked up over the accusation and said that the tourism industry earned revenue from



SOLIDARITY: Protesters gathered outside the Press Club in Islamabad to condemn the indiscriminate killing of 10 foreigners at the Nanga Parbat base camp this Saturday. MYRA IQBAL/EXPRESS

tourist activities in G-B. "We are peaceful people, we condemn the attack but who-soever blames the military is brewing a conspiracy and we will not put up with it," she added.

"By raising anti-military

slogans, some try to politicise such gatherings. We do not support their claims," said Waqar Rizvi, an Amal Pakistan representative. He added that the Chinese Foreign Office's call should be answered as soon as pos-

sible. On behalf of the NGO, he suggested that the special task force assigned to provide security to VIPs and politicians be restored and assigned to provide security to tourists in the region.

Aurat Foundation's Naeem

Mirza delivered a speech wherein he condemned the attack and expressed solidarity with the governments of the countries to whom the slain tourists belonged.

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Aurat Foundation CEO
Naeem Mirza

intended message was to cast doubts about G-B's safety. It appears that certain powers with vested interests are behind the attack. It is a shame for the state, who should do something to put it right or risk facing further attacks," he said.

A candle-lit vigil was organised at event's conclusion. The protest was organised by Amal Pakistan in collaboration with Pakistan Association of Tour Operators and G-B Volunteers Movement.

Earlier on Sunday, gunmen dressed as paramilitary Gilgit Scouts killed 10 foreign climbers, including Chinese, Ukrainians and Slovaks, at the foot of Nanga Parbat. The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan assumed responsibility for the attack, dubbing it retaliation for a US drone attack in May that killed the militant group's second-in-command.