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APS attack anniversary

Twin cities stand united to honour victims

People from all walks of life vow to play a part in eliminating terrorism

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

ISLAMABAD/ RAWALPINDI

A year after the APS Peshawar attack, the nation still feels the trauma that moved the country to unite against militants. On the anniversary of the attack, educationists, women and human rights activists in Islamabad gathered at the Press Club to show solidarity with the victims.

Aurat Foundation Coordination and Resource Mobilisation Director Farkhanda Aurengezeb told *The Express Tribune* that it is important to protest to let the perpetrators and their fellows know that attacks will not be accepted in the future. "This is to let them know that we have not forgotten and we never will. Today, we are better prepared and alert to watch their activities. Protests are important to create a deterrence and not just because it is an important day to remember but also because we have

learnt from the massacre", she said.

She further added that the terrorists thought their act would scare the masses, but now the extremists have to be on guard. "The reason why schools were off today is not because we are scared but because we wanted to show solidarity with the families and children who lost their lives on this day last year".

Saheera Siddiqui, a student of Viqarun Nisa College, said that as a student, she feels strongly about the Peshawar attack. "We are here for those children and their families. We are here to make a point that we will never stop educating others and ourselves just because of the threat of attacks. The power of education and the pen is strong," she said.

Expressing similar views, Rimsha, a teacher of Malison Montessori School, said that they had gathered to protest to eliminate terrorism from the country. "Children who lost their lives were not at fault and this incident not only left a lasting impact on their families but on all students and teachers across the



IN MEMORY: Locals hold candlelight vigils for APS Peshawar victims on the anniversary of the attack. PHOTO: REUTERS

country. As a teacher, it was very difficult for me to instil the confidence in students to learn and gain education after the incident," she explained.

"Extremism is the reason behind terrorism and we need to stand together against extremism to eradicate it from the society," representative of the Women Action Forum

Mehnaz Rehman said.

Roohi Saif, who lives near Army Public School in Peshawar, said what she witnessed last year was barbaric, horrific and absolutely heartbreaking. "We cannot even begin to imagine what the mothers went through. Every corner of the defence colony had a funeral".

In another speech, Rumana Bashir, an activist, said that last year the majority and minorities gathered here to raise their voices and this year "again we have gathered to voice against terrorism and extremism. We must not tolerate anyone who attacks our children, our schools, our women and innocent ones".

Vigils in Rawalpindi

Politicians, traders, government officials and members of civil society organised a candlelight vigil outside Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) Office to pay homage to the martyrs of Army Public School (APS) Peshawar.

Pictures of the victims were put on display and the participants offered prayers for the departed souls and laid down floral wreaths.

Meanwhile, glowing tribute was paid to the martyrs of APS, by female poets of the region at a function held at Rawalpindi Arts Council (RAC).

The mehfil-e-mushaira was chaired by Lubna Rehan Pirzada, a PML-N MPA. Fakhira Batool and Farheen Chaudhary, both poetesses, were guests of honour on the occasion. Lubna said that being a woman, she could truly feel the sorrow of mothers of the martyred children. It was a tragic incident but they bore it with courage.

MNA Isphanyar Bhandara said the barbarism and cruelty shown by attacking innocent children shows that the attackers had no religion.