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Remembrance

Tributes showered on mother of democracy

Writes activists VOW to highlight Nusrat Bhutto's sacrifices by setting up a trust in her name

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She was not acknowledged for her struggle when she was alive. Even on her deathbed, there was little recognition for her sacrifices, but on Thursday women rights activists and civil society representatives at a condolence reference vowed to bring forth Begum Nusrat Bhutto's remarkable struggle against military dictators and for restoration of democracy.

The reference was organised by Aurat Foundation to pay tribute to the wife of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and mother of late Benazir Bhutto. The participants decided to set up a trust in her name. It was also demanded that in order

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to highlight the illustrious lady's struggle, the government should pass and implement all the pending laws to ensure protection of women rights.

Prominent among those who paid tribute to the former first lady were poet Kishwar Naheed, women rights activists Nasreen Azhar and Tahira Abdullah, Zamurd Khan.

"It is very unfortunate that majority of the people do not even know about her," lamented Manager of Society for Alternative Media and Research (SAMAR), Arshad Rizvi.

"No one took pain of paying her tribute when she was alive. Nusrat Bhutto, the iron lady, was not only a big inspiration for women but even to the males she gave them the courage to stand up against the dictatorship and fight for their rights," he added.

Ignorance with regards to Bhutto's work also bemused Dr Rakhshanda Parveen. "There is a dire need to inform our new generation about all those heroes and legends who made sacrifices and big contributions for Pakistan," she said.

Senator Syeda Iqbal said,



PAYING TRIBUTE: Kishwar Naheed speaks at the condolence reference. PHOTO: MUHAMMAD JAVAID

"She fought with courage and patience without compromising her dignity and respect and set an example for others."

Bhutto lost her husband, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, during General Zia's rule. Her two sons were then killed and in 2007, it was the two-time Prime Minister and her daughter Benazir, who was assassinated at a public rally

in Rawalpindi.

Women activist Rehana Hashmi said, "Even my daughter asked me why the government had announced Monday as a public holiday. Though it was a bit embarrassing, but I got a chance to tell her about the courageous lady."

Bhutto, who has been posthumously crowned as the mother of democracy,

will also be remembered for her brave resistance against General Zia's rule. During the oppressed times, she was the one to lead the way for many in the struggle against the dictator.

Sumera Gull, general secretary PPP Women Wing said, "After her husband's death she never made her family feel weak, instead she instilled a fighting spirit in them."

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Dr Rakhshanda Parveen

Another participant asked the government to include tales of the courageous woman to be included in the curriculum.

Speaking in context of the crisis currently being faced by the country, another activist Marvi Sirmed said, "Nusrat Bhutto was the first lady who appeared on television and created awareness among general public to save electricity."

"She was not only the symbol of democracy but also solidarity," she added.

On the occasion, Kishwar Naheed read her poem, 'teri jasi maa...' to pay tribute to Begum Nusrat Bhutto. She also shared a few memorable moments that she had spent with Bhutto.

Tahira Abdullah reminded the participants Nusrat Bhutto also served as the Chairperson of Red Crescent.