

Candle light vigil for Taseer held

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Islamabad

The civil society members has termed it a responsibility of the government to arrest those who are openly issuing 'fatwas' to kill people and are promoting extremist values that ultimately result in unfortunate incidents like the murder of Punjab Governor Salman Taseer.

They were speaking at a candle light vigil organised by Insani Haqooq Itehad (IHI) at main Kohsar Market to pay tribute to Salman Taseer. They were carrying candles, flowers and placards inscribed with slogans against extremism. The IHI is a coalition of more than 30 civil society representatives and human right activists.

Around 300 civil society representatives and human rights activists gathered at the vigil. They were also joined by a big number of Islamabad residents including small children. Some of the Member National Assembly and senators also joined the gathering and expressed their views. Prominent among them were Javed Jabbar, Bushra Gohar, Saeeda Iqbal and Jamila Gilani.

They said that fight between extremism and liberalism has entered its final stages and urged the government to come clear on the category they belong to. They said that majority of Pakistanis are peaceful and such acts reflect the ideology of a small minority. "There is no place for terrorists in Pakistan" said one placard. "Don't kill people in the name of religion," read another.

They also demanded repeal

of all discriminatory laws and vowed to take forward the mission for which Salman Taseer gave his life. "Long live Salman Taseer, We Reject Religious Extremism," said another placard held by a child.

In his speech, former senator Javed Jabbar said that Pakistan is historically a country of peaceful people who have always promoted respect for all opinions and religions. Referring to the rally of religious parties on December 31, he said that it was given extraordinary importance by media. "They intentionally organise such rallies after Friday prayers so that they can show more number," he pointed out.

He said that these elements fail to get votes in election which goes to show that the silent majority rejects them and their ideology and wants to live as peaceful citizens.

Javed said that demand of amendment in Blasphemy Law is intended to make it more according to Islam.

Chairperson National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) Anis Haroon said that all they demand is a society open for dialogue not the environment where people are afraid of indulging into any kind of discussion. "Those who are supporting this radical attitude, if they have any logic, they should come and prove that through dialogue," she added.

MNA Saeeda Iqbal said that everyone has the right of difference of opinion. She said that Salman Taseer was a great human being and a genuine political worker. "We are ready to tolerate any kind of opinion

but I promise you that Pakistan People's Party will liberate Pakistan from extremist groups," she said.

MNAs from ANP Jameela Gilani and Bushra Gohar also spoke on the occasion and demanded the government to immediately arrest those who were involved in provoking extremist religious sentiments that resulted in the murder of the Punjab governor. They also demanded arrest of Ulemas who issued 'fatwas' of killing people.

Human right activist Farzana Bari said that People's Party has always taken stand with liberals but politicians like Babar Awan has damaged the reputation of the party by taking the side with extremists. "In the end, Salman Taseer was left alone because of political leaders like Babar Awan," she said.

Activist Hasan Nasir said that January 4 will always be remembered as a black day in the history of Pakistan. He termed this incident a conspiracy to curb religious harmony in the country.

He urged the silent majority to speak up against terrorist and extremist forces or otherwise, he warned, that no one will be able to raise voice for rights.

The area where the Punjab governor was attacked was completely cordoned off by the administration.

The party worker of Pakistan People's Party also held another candle light vigil near the market where they chanted slogans against Rana Sanaullah and the Punjab government. The participants observed one minute silence at the end.