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Mourning yet another victim of extremism

Scores of civil society activists gather at the Super Market to pay tribute to the slain minister

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Hundreds of civil society activists on Thursday organised a candlelight vigil in front of the Super Market in F-6 to pay tribute to the slain Minister for Minority Affairs Shahbaz Bhatti.

The participants, including members of Pakistan Catholic Woman Organisation, strongly condemned the assassination and termed it "an attack on the entire country and not just an individual."

Carrying banners and placards inscribed with slogans against the extremists, the participants said that the government has failed to protect the lives of its citizens.

Speaking at the occasion, human rights activist Tahira



IN MEMORY: Civil rights' activists gather at the site of the attack on Shahbaz Bhatti and demand justice, while people light candles during a candlelight vigil in Super Market on Thursday. PHOTOS: AFP



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A relative of Shahbaz Bhatti,
Shahid Massih

Abdullah said, “It is unfortunate that there is no writ of the government as nobody is secure in this country.” She said that if the government is unable to protect the lives of minorities, “then they have no right to govern.”

Pakistan People Party Senator Saeeda Iqbal condemned Mr Bhatti’s as-

assassination and said the government is committed to continuing his mission.

The participants later gathered in the house of the slain minister in sector I-8/3 and expressed solidarity with his family.

The event was organised by a civil society network, Insani Haqooq Ittehad.

“I was shocked to know that the government did not provide him foolproof security despite continuous threats from militants. It was the prime responsibility of the state to provide him security especially after the killing of Salmaan Taseer,” said Shahid Massih, a relative of Bhatti.

While reminiscing, a

close friend of Bhatti, Ram Singh, said when they last met, the minister gave him Rs500,000 in compensation for the death of his relative, who was killed by militants. “Bhatti worked towards interfaith harmony in Pakistan and his assassination is a huge loss for the country,” he said.

“The white crescent in Pakistan’s flag represents the minorities in the country, whose rights were emphasised by the founder of our country,” said Member Provincial Assembly Akram Masih Gill. “Unfortunately, the incumbent government has failed to implement the principle of the founder.”