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'Parallel judicial systems should go'



PHOTO: EXPRESS

Civil society protests demand repealing of blasphemy laws

NEWS DESK

People of Islamabad got together in front of the Parliament House on Thursday in order to protest against the blasphemy laws and parallel

judicial structures in the country, said a press release issued by Insani Haqooq Ittehaad on Thursday.

The group is a human rights' alliance of more than 30 civil society organisations. Students, human rights activists, media personalities and academicians, among others, participated in the procession.

The participants pressed for the release of Aasiya Bibi, a Christian woman recently sentenced to death under blasphemy laws. They called upon the parliament to go for a repeal of Blasphemy Law or make it "toothless" by making heavy amendments to it. The protesters also expressed their disappointment over govern-

ment officials who had issued statements in favour of these laws.

The protesters decided to carry on with the demonstration despite heavy rains that had engulfed the capital since last night. "We are not ready to leave the field open for the religious right to play," said a student from Iqra University

in Islamabad.

They said that parallel judicial systems, ie Council of Islamic Ideology, Federal Shariat Court, jirgas and panchayets, along with other such setups needed to be looked in to. "The tendency [of these systems] to discriminate against women and minorities should be addressed,"

they said.

This protest was the beginning of a national campaign that civil society organisations are starting in all parts of Pakistan from Thursday. A national conference and other follow-ups have also been planned by the alliance to raise their voice against "discriminatory laws".