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Candlelight vigil held for Shahbaz Bhatti

Civil society vows to continue struggle for rights of minorities

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Islamabad

Vowing to continue their struggle to protect minorities' rights, a large number of civil society activists, Christian community representatives and political workers held candlelight vigil in the memory of federal minister for minorities affairs Shahbaz Bhatti at the busy Super Market on Thursday evening.

Holding placards inscribed with slogans, the participants of the vigil chanted slogans against religious intolerance. They termed the incident a cowardly act and demanded the government to arrest the killers and provide security to all those who are on the target list of religious extremists.

The vigil that was organised by Insani Huqooq Itihad (IHI) was also attended by Robina Bhatti, the cousin of federal minister, who was killed in a car ambush on Wednesday morning. "Our family has been shattered

with the incident," she said while talking to media persons. "He was very brave and fearless," she added while describing the personality of her cousin.

She said that going to his mother's place was his daily routine. "He was a role model for all of us and it was a terrible scene for us to see his body sprayed with bullets like that," she said. Talking about the life threats to Shahbaz, she said that many times, the family elders suggested him to leave the country, but he always used to say that he will prefer to die in his country," she said with tears rolling down from her eyes.

Speaking on the occasion, human rights activist, Rehana Hashmi said that all Pakistanis stand with the Christian community in this time of grief and sorrow. She said the minorities are equal citizens of Pakistan and civil society will continue their struggle for equal status of minorities



ISLAMABAD: Members of civil society holding a candlelight vigil in memory of Federal Minister for Minorities' Affairs Shahbaz Bhatti in Sector F-6. — NNI

in this country as envisioned by Quaid-i-Azam. "We will save the Pakistan of Quaid-i-Azam," she said.

Eminent activist, Tahira Abdullah said that through these cowardly actions, the religious fanatics actually want to get hold of the state. She said that the government has failed to maintain its writ that has created a

vacuum in the power structure of the country. "Through terror, these extremists are trying to take over that vacuum and their intention is to one day rule the country."

She said that these elements had infiltrated in the urban cities and it seems that the government has no control over them. "The only solution

is that the instead of staying silent, the government should try to maintain its writ, but it should happen without the American money," she added.

Waseem Wahga from Aurat Foundation said that the assassination of Shahbaz Bhatti does not depict the strength of religious extremists, but

it actually shows that they are getting weaker day by day and are using violence to maintain the status quo.

Senator from PPP Saeeda Iqbal said that PPP will take forward the mission of Shahbaz Bhatti. "We have the history of sacrificing our lives for Pakistan and we are ready to maintain this tradition."