

Thursday, December 11, 2014

Live screening

Islooites celebrate Malala's award



RAISING AWARENESS: Participants marched from the National Press Club to Super Market chanting slogans against govt 'apathy' on punishing those who commit acts of violence against women. PHOTOS: MUHAMMAD JAWAID/EXPRESS

Separately, rally taken out to highlight violence against women

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As the world lauded Malala Yousafzai while she received the Nobel Peace Prize, celebrations were also in the air in her home country. Fanatical cheers echoed as hundreds gathered at the National Press Club to watch the live transmission of the Award Ceremony in Oslo on Wednesday evening. Students, members of the civil society and journalists had gathered to watch the live screening of the event organised by The Aurat Foundation in collaboration

with Rawalpindi Islamabad Union of Journalists. With broadened smiles and numb eyes, participants watched the programme on a projector screen. With affixed expressions on their faces, participants heard the speech live and appreciated Malala's struggle for girls' education and her courage to stand against all odds. "When the world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful. Her words are so motivating," said Ali Kazmi, a student who had come to the event. Afzal Butt, president of the PFUJ, said Malala is the pride of the nation and this award had brought with it a reason for everyone to get together and celebrate. "Malala's victory is a clear message to ex-

tremists that our women and even girls are not scared to raise their voice" said Butt. RIUJ President Ali Raza Alvi said Malala proved the point that the pen is powerful than the bullet and that her courage must be appreciated.

Rally raises awareness on women's rights

With almost 7,500 cases of violence against women recorded in Pakistan this year, hundreds of rights activists gathered at the National Press Club to express solidarity and support for those who have been affected by the 'heinous' crime on Wednesday afternoon. Orange flags piled at the reception desk were guarded by a team of youngsters that handed out placards with

"These [figures] are just the tip of the iceberg. There are so many cases that go unreported" Aurat Foundation Advocacy Director **Rabeea Hadi**

heart-wrenching messages of support and courage for victims of gender-based violence. A large tent eclipsed hundreds of chairs, filled up by men and women who had traveled from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab to raise their voice for the voiceless. "Of course all of those present here have been affected by some kind of harassment at some level" said Samina Saeed from Rawalpindi, adding that



"some will speak about it and some won't." Saeed, whose family is not supportive of her participating in such events, said more women were now speaking up in the country. She explained that women learn about their rights in such events and go back and educate their children.

A total of 7,852 cases were reported last year and 7,450 have been reported so far in 2014, said Rabeea Hadi, director advocacy at Aurat Foundation while talking to *The Express Tribune*. Providing details, Hadi said from January to September this year, 1,543 cases of kidnapping/abduction were reported; 1,256 women were murdered and 1,149 were raped and gang-raped. Moreover, she informed, that 604 women were killed in the name of 'honour' and 392 cases of domestic violence were reported during the period. A total of 55 cases of acid throwing and 33 of burning were also reported this year. "These [figures] are just the tip of the iceberg" said Hadi, adding that "There are so many cases that go unreported." Asyia Nasir, a lawmaker from the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl, said effective leg-

Kishwar Naheed recited verses on ending violence against women, and said girls should be taught self-defence lessons in schools

islation needs to be in place for domestic violence to really end. Akram Khurshid from the Strengthening Participatory Organization read resolutions for ending violence against women, saying domestic violence should be declared a crime and the law on marrying young girls be amended with minimum age set at 18 years. He added these laws needed to be extended to Gilgit-Baltistan and the tribal areas. Renowned poet Kishwar Naheed recited verses on ending violence against women, and said girls should be taught self-defence lessons in schools so they can protect themselves. At the end, supporters marched from the National Press Club to Super Market chanting slogans against perpetrators of violence against women and the government's 'apathy' in punishing them.