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Tears roll in capital over Peshawar carnage



ISLAMABAD: A boy of Pakistan Sweet Home holding a meaningful placard. — INP

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Islamabad

The capital mourned the killing of innocent children at the Army Public School along with the aggrieved families in Peshawar.

Markets remained closed, special prayers were offered in every school, office and household and a large number of people from political parties, civil society, schools and colleges gathered at different places of the city to express solidarity with parents who suffered the loss of their beloved ones.

They organised candlelight vigils, protests and prayer gatherings in different parts of the city. Schoolchildren started their day with special prayers for the students and teachers killed in the horrific incident. "It was very difficult for me to prepare my children for school today. There shall be no mercy for the people behind this cowardly act," said Amnosa, a housewife.

The hub of activities in the evening was the ground in front

of National Press Club (NPC). People from all age groups and every section of society, including students, minority representatives, NGO workers, human rights activists, political party representatives, traders, doctors and religious party workers, started arriving at NPC in the afternoon.

Many were holding pictures of children killed in the attack. They chanted slogans against Taliban and demanded the government to hang those proved with the charges of terrorism. "I don't understand why they are targeting us. Are they not human?" said a little girl representing Pakistan Minority Forum at the protest.

"I think we should now forget about party flags and become united to save the country," said Adam Khan, a young boy who looked disappointed with people standing in groups holding flags of their parties.

A quite gathering of women from Women Chamber of Commerce was standing in a corner

along with their placards. "We would not let this scarifies go waste. We will show them that we are united against them," said Shama Ashufla from Women Chamber of Commerce.

In ground were the most vocal groups including Jamnat ul Dawa, Awami National Party, JUI-F etc. Fiery speeches were made by the political leaders condemning the attack and expressing their resolve to fight back. "We are standing united with Pakistan Army in tough times. We urge them to continue operation. We are with them," said Yameen Saeed, a student who joined protests from neighbourhood.

Civil society blocked roads in front of Super Market and NPC, chanted slogans and made speeches urging the government, establishment and political parties to adopt unanimous policy towards extremists.

"There are no good Taliban or bad Taliban, they are all bad. Taliban are the dead Taliban," said eminent human rights activist

Tahira Abdulla. "We have to go after all extremists taking refuge under any name," she said.

National Commission on the Status of Women Chairperson Khawar Mumtaz said that even in open war, children enjoy protection. She said that no war could be won by killing children. "In our capacity as citizens, we should identify and reject all such elements around us we have seen how brutal and heartless they are," she added.

Human rights activist Naem Mirza said that there is no time left for ifs and buts. "I am amazed and ashamed to see that some elements in media are still giving time to those who are protecting such elements. All of us need to be clear about our enemies and all of us have a role to play to fight this sick mindset," he said.

Journalists held candlelight vigil and special prayers along with the Sweet Home children in the vicinity of NPC. A large number of children attended the vigil. They were holding the



ISLAMABAD: A woman finds it hard to hold back her tears during a candlelight vigil. — APP

pictures of children killed in Peshawar attack and had black bands tied on their arms. "Stop killing the innocent," was all that little Ahamer from Sweet Home had to say when asked to give a message to the terrorists. "It will take them to hell

not Jannah," he said. The gathering was addressed by Zamarrud Khan, President Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) Afzal Butt, Shehryar Khan and Javed Chandry. They said that this incident has further strengthened

the resolve of Pakistani nation to fight back. "Our enemies saw that we went back to attend Wagah Border ceremony the next day of a blast that killed 55 people. We are all on the roads today to give them the same message," said Shehryar Khan.