

Faisalabad: Christians and Muslims together, call for "human rights for all"

by Shafique Khokhar, AsiaNews, 13 Dec 2011

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In conjunction with the Universal Human Rights Day, celebrated on December 10, more than 150 people joined a march to raise awareness. Meetings, exhibitions, seminars were held across Pakistan to convey a message of "equality" and "unity in diversity".



Faisalabad (AsiaNews) - Two Christian organizations in Faisalabad (Punjab) launched a peaceful march entitled "Human rights for all", which was attended by dozens of Muslims and representatives of civil society. The event was held on 10 December, to coincide with World Day for Human Rights, during which they remembered the 63 years since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, one of the most important objectives proposed in the history of the United Nations. As in the rest of the world, in Pakistan throughout the day and in different areas of the country there were seminars, conferences, marches, demonstrations, discussion groups, exhibitions, performances, panel discussions to promote the "spirit of human rights", its universal value, while conveying the message of "equality" among all citizens and "unity in diversity".

The march was sponsored by the Faisalabad Peace and Human Development (PHD) foundation led by activist Christian Suneel Malik, and the Association for Women's awareness and motivation (Awami), led by Sardar Nazia, Christian activist for the rights of women. The event kicked off at the Press Club and ended, after having marched peacefully through the streets of the city, at the clock tower. Leading the parade "Human rights for all" was a parliamentarian Khalida Mansoor, who walked along with 150 other people, among them teachers, students, activists and Christian and Muslim representatives of civil society.

Many other groups adhered to the initiative, including the local branch of the National Commission for Justice and Peace of the Catholic Church (NCJP), the Harmony Foundation, the Qaumi Movement for work, the Freedom Party union and the Pakistan Bhatta of workers. Inspired by the Universal Declaration for Human Rights, the protesters "armed" only with signs and slogans (pictured) called for peace, justice, dignity, freedom and equality for all, without sectarian differences, bluntly condemning corruption, violence and discrimination of the sexes or religions in Pakistani society.

Addressing the participants, the Parliamentarian **Khalida Mansoor** said that the nation is home to "all living beings" and for this equal importance must be provided to each individual. "Pakistan has signed the most important UN treaties on human rights – he recalled - but people are often unaware of their rights. To clarify this matter, we have launched a national movement to raise awareness. " **Suneel Malik** said that " violations of human rights in

Pakistan are growing ", especially against women, religious minorities, children and persons with disabilities. The activist **Shazia George** added that "discrimination" is the root of all conflicts and called for a ban of schools' books or other materials that incite hatred. " Finally, Christian feminist **Nazia Sardar**, expressed her hopes for more protection for women in the family and workplace, combined with the recognition of "domestic workers" among jobs that have legal protection.