Pakistani parliament criticizes murders of Hindus

by Anto Akkara
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November 16 (ENInews)--Pakistan's parliament on 15 November condemned the killing of three Hindu brothers at a medical clinic in what observers said was an unusual show of support for religious minorities.

The National Assembly observed a minute's silence in solidarity with the families of Ajeet Kumar, Naresh Kumar and Ashok Kumar, who were shot dead by unidentified gunmen on motorbikes in Shikarpur in Sindh province on 8 November.

"It is a positive development that all the political parties have condemned this shocking killing," Michelle Chaudhry of the All Pakistan Minorities Alliance (APMA), told ENInews on 16 November. "The demand for a parliamentary inquiry into this massacre shows that atrocities on minorities have reached alarming levels," said Chaudhry, spokesperson for the organization founded by Shahbaz Bhatti, the minister for religious minorities who was assassinated last March.

Representatives of the Catholic church as well as the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan deplored the shootings. According to a news release from the commission, Hindus in the area had been facing threats from Muslims over reports that a Muslim female dancer had been brought into the Hindu area three weeks earlier.

The murders, the commission said, "demonstrates that the perpetrators believe they can get away with murder simply because the victims are non-Muslim." Although Hindus had sought police protection, the commission noted that the killings took place "no more than a few meters away from the local police station."

"Non-Muslims are citizens of Pakistan and any form of violence against them is absolutely not acceptable ... We are Pakistanis; our religion is a personal matter," said the APMA. Nearly 95 percent of Pakistan's 180 million people are Muslims while Christians, Hindus and other minorities account for five percent.