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Afghans condemn Hazara killings in Pakistan

Hundreds stage rally in Kabul demanding end to deadly attacks on minority ethnic group in Balochistan province.

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Protesters say there has been a surge in the killings of Hazara Shia in Balochistan province [AFP]

Hundreds of Hazara Shia have taken to the streets of the Afghan capital, Kabul, to protest against what they call the **targeted killings** of members of their minority group in neighboring Pakistan.

Protesters, numbering about 400, hoisted placards reading "Death to Terrorism" and "Shame, Shame Pakistan" on Friday as they called on Pakistan to protect members of the ethnic group after **dozens of Shia** were killed in the southwestern province of Baluchistan in the past few

months.

Speaking to the Reuters news agency, Fatima Jahfari, a female protester, asked when the killing of Hazara would stop.

"Until when will being a Hazara be a crime? Until when will we be told that because we are Hazara, we have to be martyred and until when will we be martyred because we are Shia?" she said.

Kazim Waheedi, organiser of the protest, said the killing of Hazaras in Pakistan was on the rise.

"In the past two months, 150 Hazaras have been killed, which shows a huge increase. And the reason of our gathering is against this inhuman action by Pakistan," Waheedi, a medical doctor and activist, said.

The heavily guarded demonstration was blocked by Afghan police officers from reaching the Pakistani embassy in Kabul.

Friday's protests come weeks after other similar rallies in major world cities, including protests **last month** in Quetta, the capital of Baluchistan province, where a tight-knit community of about 500,000 Hazara Shia live.

Violence against Shia in Afghanistan has been fairly rare since the ousting of the Taliban from power in 2001, but more common in Pakistan, where many Afghans have migrated during the decades of war in the Central Asian nation.

A Pakistani embassy official in Kabul dismissed criticism that Hazaras or other Shia was being neglected.

In a sign of growing worries about security, protesters on Friday divided into three groups to avoid possible attacks like a **series of blasts** in December, 2011, on Shia ceremonies in Kabul and two other areas that killed scores.