

Benazir Bhutto assassinated

by UPI

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan -- Benazir Bhutto, who rose to become prime minister twice in Pakistan, was assassinated Thursday as she campaigned to contest scheduled elections Jan. 8. The 54-year-old Harvard-educated scion of a prosperous family from Pakistan's Sindh province had returned to her country only in October from her long self-imposed exile after corruption charges against her were dropped by the government of President Pervez Musharraf. Bhutto, whose father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto also was the country's prime minister, had been campaigning hard to restore democracy in her country and perhaps become prime minister for the third time after holding the same post from 1988 to 1990 and from 1993 to 1996. She was the only woman in Pakistan to reach such political heights despite heavy odds in the male-dominated Islamic society. She rose to prominence after her famous father was jailed in 1977 on murder charges by Gen. Zia ul-Haq's military government, which later executed him. Bhutto's untimely death brings to end an extraordinary political career and shatters the hopes of those in the West who had relied on her to restore democracy and political stability to a country which is now in the throes of Islamic fundamentalism and escalating violence. Although she was dogged by charges of corruption while in office, Bhutto managed to maintain her high profile image of a highly articulate and glamorous leader until the end. She spoke boldly against Islamic violence in the country and vowed to fight it if she was returned to power as head of her Pakistan People's Party. Bhutto is survived by her husband Asif Zardari and three children.

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