

Musharraf says mosque radicals face doom

by UPI

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan -- The president of Pakistan Saturday warned militants holed up inside the "Red Mosque" they face annihilation if they don't surrender and leave their redoubt.

President Pervez Musharraf said bluntly the siege at the Islamabad mosque must end and the several hundred students and other radicals inside "must surrender or else they will be killed," Press Trust of India reported.

The so-called Red Mosque, formally known as Lal Masjid, has been an anti-government thorn for Musharraf in recent years and the reputed staging area for attacks on government troops. The downtown building has been surrounded for the past week and pitched gun battles have raged.

Maulana Abdul Aziz, the mosque's top cleric, called for the students to surrender Thursday, a day after he was arrested trying to slip out of the mosque disguised in a burqa, the head-to-toe covering worn by some Muslim women.

CNN said government troops Saturday blew up a fuel-oil tank inside the complex. There was no immediate word on any casualties.

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