

Mosque standoff enters sixth day

by UPI

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan - Pakistani forces reportedly turned off water and electricity to flush out the remaining Islamic radicals barricaded in a besieged mosque in Islamabad.

The forces, ready for an all-out assault on the Red Mosque, said they were concerned about women and children they claimed were being held hostage by the militants as the standoff entered the sixth day Monday.

CNN reported the forces were creating routes through the mosque's walls to allow any hostages to escape.

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf warned that those in the mosque will be killed if they don't surrender, the report said.

Abdul Rashid Ghazi, the mosque's cleric who is leading the standoff, said some 1,900 people are inside but that number hasn't been confirmed.

The standoff started last Tuesday following gun battles in which several people were killed. Since then about 1,200 of the radical students have surrendered.

The Voice of America quoted Pakistani Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao as saying that some 50 to 60 well-armed militants have locked the women and children inside the compound.

Militants in the compound reportedly want Islamic law imposed on Islamabad.

In other developments, three Chinese workers at a auto-rickshaw factory were killed Sunday and a fourth seriously wounded in a shooting incident near Peshawar in northwest Pakistan. It wasn't known if the shootings were related to the mosque standoff in Islamabad.

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