

Islamabad: Countrywide protests against the release of the double murder accused CIA contractor, Raymond Davis, the US Embassy in Islamabad will halt its work and shut its consulates in Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar on Friday.

Demonstrations have broken out across the country after Davis, who gunned down two men in Lahore in January this year, was set free on Wednesday after paying \$2 million in “blood money” to the families of the dead.

A number of religious and political parties, including the Jamaat-e-Islami, Sunni Ittehad Council and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), have called countrywide strike and protests on Friday.

“The US embassy and consulates will be closed for routine business tomorrow,” embassy spokesman, Alberto Rodriguez, said. The decision was made “for public safety at large because there may be demonstrations tomorrow (Friday)”. In view of the widespread protests, security has already been beefed up in major cities of the country.

On Thursday, lawyers, traders and various student unions put up a massive show of protest against the release of the American and called upon the authorities to bring him back to Pakistan.

The biggest protest was in Lahore, where some 800 students rallied at the Punjab University campus chanting anti-US slogans such as “Death to America”. Security was tightened at the US consulate in Lahore, with several roads near the building blocked with barbed wire and concrete slabs.

In Peshawar, activists of the Islami Jamiat Talba (IJT) and People’s Students Federation, a students’ wing of the Pakistan People’s Party, held demonstrations on the premises of the University of Peshawar. Both the protests were held in a peaceful manner. A third protest was staged by the ISO, a PTI students’ wing, which resorted to violence and pelted stones at police officials. The police used teargas, clubbed them and arrested nine of them.

In Multan, activists of various religious organisations rallied and chanted anti-US slogans. In twin cities, Rawalpindi and Islamabad, lawyers boycotted court proceedings. In Quetta, enraged protesters torched a US flag. Demonstrations were also staged in Kohat, Mardan, Dera Ismail Khan, Swat, Lakki Marwat, Sukkur, Manpur, Hyderabad, Kashmore, Sargodha, Daska, Jhang, DG Khan, Muzaffargarh, Charsada, Bahawalnagar and Azad Kashmir.

## Protests throughout country on Davis release

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Staff Reporter