

# **SHIA GENOCIDE: A CRISIS IN PAKISTAN**

**Report Commissioned by:**

**Lord Avebury – Vice-Chair, Parliamentary Human Rights Group**

**Contributors:**

**Fatima Mullick  
Charlie Cooper  
Emman El-Badawy**



**International Imam  
Hussain<sup>(A.S)</sup> Council**

[www.khudipakistan.com](http://www.khudipakistan.com)

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Hussain <sup>(AS)</sup> Council

## Executive Summary

The right to practise religion is a universal one that extends to every inhabitant of the world. In Pakistan, however, this right is frequently violated, as religious minorities face social, political and economic marginalisation on a daily basis, and the enforcement of harsh and archaic blasphemy laws allow state persecution. As such, events that have created deep divisions within Pakistan's complex religious landscape are increasingly being manifested in outbursts of violence.

Pakistan's Shia community, despite its formidable size and advanced level of integration, is one of the primary victims of this phenomenon. A set of very particular circumstances – wrought by domestic and global political trends, current and historic – have created an environment where Shia Muslims have had all sense of security fundamentally undermined, with anti-Shia attacks and intimidation by violent extremists fast becoming a social norm.

The following report seeks to explicate this understudied issue, by exploring its origins, causes and practicalities. It also offers an understanding of why the persecution of the Shia can be classified as genocide, as well as recommendations on what action needs to be urgently taken by the Pakistani government, local and international NGOs, the United Nations and the international community in order to address the grievous concerns it raises.



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## What is Genocide?

The term genocide first emerged in the wake of the Holocaust. Combining the Latin for “tribe” or “race” (*genos*) with the Greek for “kill” (*cide*), lawyer Raphael Lemkin sought to introduce a term into the legal-political lexicon that could be used to describe this act and the intention behind it.<sup>1</sup>

While the word itself is simple enough, it must be used with care to avoid its misapplication. For the purposes of this report, the definition as laid out at the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide has been adopted. Article II classifies genocide as:

‘Any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group’.<sup>2</sup>

Genocide is the culmination of a specific set of circumstances in which both the *mens rea* (mental element) – meaning the ‘intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such’ – and the *actus reus* (physical element) – any of the five acts described in sections a, b, c, d and e above – are present.<sup>3</sup> A crime *must* incorporate both elements to be classified as “genocide”, something that has often been done incorrectly, thereby detracting from its gravity.<sup>4</sup>

In a sense, then, it is the intent *behind* a killing that determines whether an act could be classed as genocide. Indeed, as former Secretary General of Medecins Sans Frontieres Raphael Destexhe once asserted, ‘genocide is distinguishable from all other crimes by the motivation behind it’.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ‘Prominent refugees: Lemkin, Raphael’, *UNHCR*, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=3b7255121c&query=genocide%20convention>, (16-04-14).

<sup>2</sup> ‘Convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide’ *UN Treaties*, 12-01-51, available at <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%2078/volume-78-I-1021-English.pdf>, (23-04-14).

<sup>3</sup> Otto Triffterer, ‘Genocide, its particular intent to destroy, in whole or in part, the group as such’, *Leiden Journal of International Law*, 14 (2001), 399.

<sup>4</sup> Triffterer, ‘Genocide’, 399.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Analysis: defining genocide’, *BBC News*, 27-08-10, available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-11108059>, (16-04-14).



So, when combined with the intent to eradicate an entire group, the physical act of murder becomes genocide; similarly, incitement to do so becomes a conspiracy to genocide. Both are crimes punishable under international law.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> 'The crime of genocide', *UN Treaties*.



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## Context

### Pakistan's Security Landscape

The security situation in Pakistan is characterised by multiple active conflicts which, despite having distinct origins, dynamics and traits, often play off each other and add to the overall complexity of the local landscape. Loosely, these conflicts include, but are not limited to: ethnic and provincial tensions, intra-political rivalries, 'jihadist' terrorism and sect-based persecution.

Ethnic and provincial tensions have had a long history in Pakistan, with the relatively under-developed provinces of Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber-Pukhtunkhwa nursing simmering grievances against the Punjab for wielding a disproportionate amount of control over the country through the federal government and armed forces. In recent years Balochistan has been a particular flashpoint, where armed separatist groups have engaged in numerous clashes with the country's security forces. This has also manifested in attacks against civilians, including Punjabis living in Balochistan and Baloch citizens residing in various parts of the country.

Intra-political rivalries between feuding groups also frequently result in violence. Karachi, Pakistan's most populous city, has suffered most greatly from this as rival gangs and political parties vie for dominance over the sprawling metropolis.<sup>7</sup>

Added to this is the growing strength and influence of 'jihadist' groups such as the Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Al-Qa'ida, that have been responsible for a spate of bloody attacks against soldiers and civilians alike, thus far having claimed an estimated 50,000 lives. While these are by no means the only two groups associated with such militancy in the country, they are easily the most prominent, and are inextricably linked with instability in the immediate region as well as further afield.

Connected to but not synonymous with the above are conflicts played out along sectarian lines. While friction among Pakistan's myriad sects and discrimination against religious minorities is not a new phenomenon, what has recently emerged is a situation where hardline Sunni elements, mostly hailing from the Deobandi sect, have orchestrated a campaign of hate speech and militancy against Pakistan's religious minorities, including Shias, Ahmadis and Christians.

The Deobandis, who make up an estimated 15% of Pakistan's total population, are believed to run nearly 65% of Pakistan's many thousands of *madrassahs*; as such, they have come to enjoy an increasingly tight grip on religious discourse within the country.<sup>8</sup> It is from within extremist Deobandi *madrassahs* that militant groups like the Sipah-e-

<sup>7</sup> Declan Walsh, 'The Karachi ruling party "run like the mafia" from an office block in London', *The Guardian*, 02-06-07, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/jun/02/uk.pakistan>, (24-04-14).

<sup>8</sup> Tahir Kamran, 'Evolution and impact of "Deobandi" Islam in the Punjab', *The Historian*, 2006 (4), 28.



Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) have emerged. This extremist Deobandi mindset has also found perfect synergy with Wahhabi extremists in the country, to whom they give 'full support'.<sup>9</sup> It is thus unsurprising that the SSP, LeJ, TTP and Al-Qa'ida have grown ever more assertive through the mutual cooperation they have extended to one another in the achievement of what they believe are common goals.

These complex and multifarious forces have contributed towards Pakistan's grave security concerns; indeed, the country was recently placed at the top of a list of the 198 countries most suffering from social hostilities involving religion.<sup>10</sup> However, crucial to addressing this situation is the individual understanding of these levels of conflict, their distinct characteristics, and the ways in which they manifest within the general context of insecurity.

The current report solely examines the persecution of the Shia community, something which has gained unprecedented visibility and intensity in recent years as the result of a carefully coordinated effort by a range of actors in pursuit of various vested interests.

### **The Shia Demographic**

Pakistan is home to an estimated 29 million Shia Muslims who constitute around 15% of its nearly 200 million strong population.<sup>11</sup> Geographically they are spread across the country, with sizeable Shia populations in the urban centres of Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta. Large numbers of Shias also live in the Saraiki belt (stretching from Southern to North Western Punjab) including Bhakkar, Layyah, Jhang and Multan. The northern areas of Pakistan host Shia enclaves such as Dera Ismail Khan, Kurram Agency (with Parachinar as the capital) and Gilgit Baltistan, which has a majority Shia population.

As the second largest religious group in the country (after Sunni Muslims) Shias have historically formed an integral part of Pakistan's social fabric, playing an active role in all areas of public life and often enjoying positions of power and prestige: the widely respected founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, was a Shia Muslim; the Bhutto family, arguably Pakistan's most famous political dynasty, are also Shias; additionally, areas within Southern Punjab are home to influential Shia landlords and powerbrokers,

<sup>9</sup> Munawer Azeem, 'TTP getting active support from seminaries in twin cities: report', *Dawn*, 07-04-14, available at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1098291/ttp-getting-active-support-from-seminaries-in-twin-cities-report>, (24-04-14).

<sup>10</sup> 'Religious hostilities reach six-year high', *Pew Research Center: numbers, facts and trends shaping the world*, 14-01-14, available at <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2014/01/RestrictionsV-full-report.pdf>, (23-04-14), 15.

<sup>11</sup> 'Pakistan demographics profile 2013', *Index Mundi*, available at [http://www.indexmundi.com/pakistan/demographics\\_profile.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/pakistan/demographics_profile.html), (16-04-2014).



while Shia professionals have commonly excelled in their fields.<sup>12</sup> As such, the Shia community has long been (and continues to remain) fully integrated within the Pakistani state and society.

While records of small-scale sectarian clashes from Pakistan's earliest days do exist, the current persecution of the Shia community is a relatively recent phenomenon and is unprecedented in terms of scale, organisation and public visibility. This trend is the result of a specific confluence of factors that can be traced back to the late 1970s. The following sections provide an overview of the development of the problem and the institutional failures that have contributed to its persistence.

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<sup>12</sup> Murtaza Hussain, 'Pakistan's Shia genocide', *Aljazeera*, 26-11-2012, available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/11/201211269131968565.html>, (16-04-2014).



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Hussain <sup>(AS)</sup> Council



## Sources of Intolerance

### 'Islamisation' of Pakistan

Any understanding of current concerns within Pakistan requires an acknowledgement of the impact the military regime of General Muhammad Zia ul Haq (1977-1988) had on the relationship between Islam and the state and its far-reaching social implications.

Immediately after assuming power through a military coup, General Zia set about implementing an aggressive 'Islamisation' campaign in Pakistan. His preference for hard-line Sunni schools of thought brought into question which interpretation of Islam was more "superior", and over time this issue became central to the public consciousness.<sup>13</sup>

Zia's support for hard-line Sunni interpretations of Islam, coupled with his recognition of Saudi Arabia as a valuable ally, set the stage for sectarian disharmony within the country. Having introduced Sunni jurisprudence into state law, he also fostered increased discrimination against Shias in the military and civil service.<sup>14</sup> This sense of insecurity within the community initially acted as an impetus for an organised campaign of Shia political activism.<sup>15</sup>

Besides this, the newly established Islamic Republic of Iran had started helping Pakistani Shias to emphasise their sectarian identity, encouraged assertiveness and emboldened their political aspirations. However, domestic events diminished their potential, as Saudi attempts to fortify Pakistan against Iranian influence were directed towards the propagation of Wahhabi ideology, something which, by definition, viewed Shias as heretics.<sup>16</sup> This was by no means an isolated policy move; Saudi Arabia launched similar efforts across South Asia and the Middle East to counter Iran's growing regional influence following the 1979 revolution.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> See Bernard Haykel, 'Salafi Jihadists vs. the Shia' in Assaf Moghadam (ed.), *Faultlines in Global Jihad: organisational, strategic and ideological fissures*, London: Routledge, 2011.

<sup>14</sup> B. Raman, 'The northern areas of Jammu and Kashmir', in K. Warikoo (ed.), *Himalayan Frontiers of India: historical, geo-political and strategic perspectives*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2009, 80.

<sup>15</sup> For a detailed account of this phenomenon, see S. V. R. Nasr, 'Islam, the state and the rise of sectarian militancy in Pakistan', in Christophe Jaffrelot (ed.), *Pakistan: nationalism without a nation?*, New York: Zed Books, 2002, 87.

<sup>16</sup> Vali Nasr, *The Shia revival: how conflicts within Islam will shape the future*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007, 246.

<sup>17</sup> See Thomas Hegghammer, 'Jihad, yes, but not revolution: explaining the extraversion of Islamist violence in Saudi Arabia', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 36 (2009), 395-416.



## Saudi influence and the Wahhabi project

Financial assistance was the primary means through which Saudi Arabia sought to increase Wahhabi prominence in Pakistan. As such, Saudi funds were funnelled into Pakistan for the following purposes:

- The establishment of *madrassahs* – religious seminaries – that facilitated Wahhabi indoctrination in large numbers (many of Pakistan’s poor found it beneficial to enrol their children in seminaries where they were provided with free food and shelter).<sup>18</sup>
- The building and maintenance of Wahhabi-aligned mosques, including the sponsorship of preferred mosque imams.<sup>19</sup>
- The funding of local publishing houses to proliferate Wahhabi literature in Urdu and other local languages.<sup>20</sup>
- The awarding of substantial scholarships to Pakistani students to attend Saudi universities.<sup>21</sup>
- The provision of grants to Pakistani universities to ensure Wahhabi-friendly content was present within their curricula.<sup>22</sup>

## The doctrine of *takfir*

The implications of Wahhabi expansion into Pakistani religious society were grave, none more so than the spread of the *takfirī* doctrine, which called for the excommunication of fellow Muslims based on their perceived non-allegiance to a very narrow, highly intolerant interpretation of Islam. This was especially incendiary in the Pakistani context on account of the sectarian diversity that had traditionally been characteristic of South Asia’s Muslims.

Within a relatively short period of time, the concept of *takfir* became the cornerstone of the hard-line Sunni stance, as it provided religious justification for such groups to target members of the Pakistani Shia community, among others. With time, this religious schism was bestowed with increased importance, as militant forces began operating in the political rather than religious arena.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> See Paul M. P. Bell, ‘Pakistan’s *madrassas* – weapons of mass destruction?’, *Naval Postgraduate School*, Virginia: Defence Technical Information Center, 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Vali Nasr and Richard Holbrooke, ‘Analysis: *madrassas*’, *PBS Frontline*, available at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saudi/analyses/madrassas.html>, (16-04-2014).

<sup>20</sup> Yoginder Sikand, ‘The spectre of sectarianism: analysing Ahl-i-Hadith’, Georgia: Emory University, available at <https://www.law.emory.edu/ihr/yogi6.html>, (16-04-2014).

<sup>21</sup> Nasr and Holbrooke, ‘*Madrassas*’.

<sup>22</sup> Aparna Pande, *Explaining Pakistan’s foreign policy: escaping India*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2011, 156.

<sup>23</sup> UNHCR, ‘Pakistan: the Sipah-e-Sahaba (SSP), including its activities and status’, *Refworld*, available at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/440ed73f34.html>, (16-04-2014).



### **The Afghan ‘*jihād*’ and militant *madrassahs***

The above developments in Pakistan were also intrinsically linked to the Soviet invasion of neighbouring Afghanistan. The expansion of Soviet influence in the region meant that the United States now had a vested interest in boosting the resistance of the Afghans, something achieved by militarising the growing *madrassah* network in Pakistan, in collusion with General Zia’s military regime and the Pakistani Inter Services Intelligence (ISI).<sup>24</sup>

*Madrassahs* were soon to become heavily funded and encouraged to use the concept of *jihād* against what were perceived as “godless” communist invaders.<sup>25</sup> As the older generation of ‘*ulamā*’ was systematically replaced by the recent graduates of these militant *madrassahs*, they worked to harden sectarian identities within Pakistan, something which came as a by-product of their jihadist worldview. Sermons became more vitriolic and mosques were used as arms depots, all this coming on the back of the increased propensity to use violence that resulted from the war in Afghanistan. Soon sectarianism began to provide a religious cover for the criminal activities of frustrated *madrassah* graduates, where violent responses to socio-economic grievances were often justified through a sectarian lens.

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<sup>24</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, ‘Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: A political perspective on culture and terrorism’, *American Anthropologist* 104 (2002), 770

<sup>25</sup> Mamdani, ‘Good Muslim, Bad Muslim’, 770.



## The Perpetrators

### Creation and evolution of Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) / Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ)

The above trends came together in September 1985 when the anti-Shia extremist Deobandi cleric, Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, along with other like-minded extremist Deobandi clerics, helped to establish the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) – Guardians of the Companions of the Prophet. From the very beginning, the SSP enjoyed state support and Saudi funding, both of which came as a response to increased Shia political activism.<sup>26</sup> The local dynamics of the city of Jhang – where a Shia aristocracy had traditionally dominated the political scene – also contributed to the resentment towards Shias that had catalysed the emergence of the SSP.

The SSP began its violent campaign by targeting prominent Shia political activists, attacking Shia religious congregations and killing civilians. By the early 1990s, however, the SSP had become more mainstream by taking active part in Pakistani politics. It formed an alliance with the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and expanded its support base in the Punjab and Karachi.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, though, its militant campaign continued as it targeted numerous Iranian diplomats and members of the Hazara Shia community.<sup>28</sup>

In terms of its ideology, the SSP calls for Pakistan's declaration as an overtly Sunni state, in which Sharia law, based on Sunni schools of jurisprudence, is implemented.<sup>29</sup> This is a vision shared with many other militant organisations that hail from a Deobandi background. It also calls for Shias to be declared non-Muslims, which by default would mean that their civil rights would be undermined and persecution against them institutionalised.<sup>30</sup>

The SSP were banned by the Pakistani government in 2002 and now operate under the name Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ) – The People of the Way of the Prophet and the Community.<sup>31</sup> They are currently led by Muhammad Ahmed Ludhianvi, who is their sixth leader. Today, the group continues to enjoy a vast network of support through

<sup>26</sup> Ravi Shekhar Narain Singh Singh, *The military factor in Pakistan*, New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 2008, 252.

<sup>27</sup> 'Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan', *Mapping Militant Organisations*, Stanford University, 15-02-12, available at <http://www.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/147>, (17-04-14).

<sup>28</sup> Arif Jamal, 'A profile of Pakistan's Lashkar-e-Jhangvi', *Counter Terrorism Center at West Point*, 03-11-09, available at <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/a-profile-of-pakistan%E2%80%99s-lashkar-i-jhangvi-2>, (16-04-14).

<sup>29</sup> 'Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan', *Institute for the Study of Violent Groups*, available at [https://vkb.isvg.org/Wiki/Groups/Sipah-e-Sahaba\\_Pakistan](https://vkb.isvg.org/Wiki/Groups/Sipah-e-Sahaba_Pakistan), (16-04-14).

<sup>30</sup> 'Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan'.

<sup>31</sup> Syed Shoib Hasan, 'Pakistan bans Ahle Sunnat wal Jamaat Islamist group', *BBC News*, 09-03-12, available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-17322095>, (16-04-14).



control of Deobandi seminaries across Pakistan.<sup>32</sup> As noted above, it also receives funds from abroad, primarily originating in Gulf Arab countries.

The current relationship between the Pakistani government and the SSP is not entirely clear, though steps to curb their activities in recent years have not been forthcoming, in spite of the staggering increase in sectarian attacks on the Shia community. It is believed that the powerful support base in the Punjab, which can deliver bloc votes in key constituencies, is one of the reasons why many politicians not only refuse to tackle them, but openly support them. It is also important to note that a significant number of their followers do not endorse them because of their use of violence; rather, they do so as a means of buying security. This is a potent reminder of how the SSP has managed to exploit socio-economic conditions in places like Jhang to widen their support base.

### **Creation and evolution of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ)**

In 1996 a group of SSP activists, led by Riaz Basra, decided to leave the organisation due to an increasing sense of disenfranchisement that stemmed from the SSP's evolution into a political party during the 1990s. They established an even more militant offshoot which they felt better represented the vision of former SSP leader Haq Nawaz Jhangvi. Thus was formed the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) – The Army of Jhangvi, a group that went about distinguishing itself from the SSP by expanding the scope of its targets.<sup>33</sup>

Today, the LeJ is regarded as one of the most active Sunni sectarian groups operating in Pakistan. It has been held responsible for scores of brutal attacks on Shia targets throughout the country, which have included Shia civil servants, lawyers, doctors, traders and ordinary worshipers attending religious ceremonies.<sup>34</sup> Despite being banned by the Pakistani government in August 2001 and having their leader killed by the police in May 2002, the group's activities have dramatically increased in recent years.<sup>35</sup> This is believed to be linked to the release of key LeJ ideologue Malik Ishaq, who was arrested and incarcerated in 1997 for his role in sectarian militancy.<sup>36</sup> Having continued to pose a threat behind bars, he vowed upon his release in July 2011 that his organisation would carry on the 'good work' it had been doing up until then.<sup>37</sup> It should,

<sup>32</sup> Adnan Falak, 'How *madrassas* fuel sectarianism', *The Nation*, 29-11-13, available at <http://www.nation.com.pk/columns/29-Nov-2013/how-madrassas-fuel-sectarianism>, (16-04-14).

<sup>33</sup> 'Lashkar-e-Jhangvi', *START*, University of Maryland, available at [http://www.start.umd.edu/tops/terrorist\\_organization\\_profile.asp?id=65](http://www.start.umd.edu/tops/terrorist_organization_profile.asp?id=65), (16-04-14).

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/11/201211269131968565.html>

<sup>35</sup> Hussain, 'Shia genocide'.

<sup>36</sup> David Khattak, 'A Profile of Lashkar-I-Jhanghvi Leader Malik Ishaq', The Combating Terrorism Centre, US Military Academy at Westpoint, 14-01-13, available at <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/a-profile-of-lashkar-i-jhangvi-leader-malik-ishaq> (23-04-14).

<sup>37</sup> 'Pakistan 'militant leader' Malik Ishaq arrested', *BBC News*, 22-02-13, available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-21553492>, (16-04-14).



therefore, come as no surprise that the LeJ has proudly declared its role behind some of the most large-scale and bloody attacks the country has seen of late.<sup>38</sup>

While there is some variety within the organisational structure of anti-Shia groups, they are all loosely supportive of the SSP. As Arif Jamal puts it:

‘There are several factions among the LeJ also but all of them seem to be loyal to the parent party — the SSP — or its newest re-incarnation, the ASWJ. There have been serious differences among the different groups of the LeJ but they have not abandoned their loyalty to the parent party. Most differences revolved around the question of how much violence they should inflict on Shia Muslims. LeJ al-Alami is more inclined towards extremism than the LeJ.’<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Faisal H Naqvi, ‘An unholy alliance’, *The Express Tribune*, 25-02-14, available at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/512400/an-unholy-alliance/>, (16-04-14).

<sup>39</sup> Arif Kamal, quoted by Waqqar Gillani, ‘Sunnification of Pakistan is a real threat’, *The News on Sunday*, 01-12-13, available at <http://tns.thenews.com.pk/sunnification-of-pakistan-is-a-real-threat/#.U1fL01VdVWI>, (23-04-14).



## Patterns of Genocide

If one applies the definition of genocide previously laid out in this report to contemporary Pakistan, it becomes clear that this situation does exhibit the characteristics of former genocides and that, just because the government itself is not directly engaging in the persecution, this by no means renders the situation any less critical. It is imperative that what is taking place in Pakistan at the hands of anti-Shia groups is recognised as, at best, incitement to genocide and, at worst, genocide itself. With assertions that ‘it is a religious duty to kill all Shias and the popular mottos such as ‘kafir, kafir, Shia, kafir’, there can be little doubt about the motivations of these groups.<sup>4041</sup>

Below is an overview of the ways in which this genocide is being carried out. Even a cursory appraisal of the situation illustrates the scale and gravity of the persecution, as well as the speed at which it is intensifying. As was recently asked by one man who had lost six relatives to this systemic pogrom: ‘if this isn’t genocide, what is?’<sup>42</sup>

**Attacks on religious processions** – The festival of Ashura, which occurs during the Islamic month of Muharram, is the most significant religious observance for Shias the world over. In more peaceful times, it was also an occasion that people from all religious backgrounds would commemorate together. Of late, Ashura has become an annual flashpoint in anti-Shia violence, with terrorist attacks being carried out with alarming regularity and predictability. Such is the extent of the problem that the Pakistani government has in recent years suspended mobile phone services during this period in an attempt to stem the potential for violence.<sup>43</sup>

**Attacks on pilgrims** – With similar intent, militants also target convoys of Shia pilgrims returning from Iran in order to cultivate this climate of fear. The most recent example of a large scale attack on pilgrims came in January of this year, when 22 Shia were killed in a bomb that targeted a bus full of pilgrims in Balochistan.<sup>44</sup> Incidents where pilgrims have been forced off such buses, identified as Shia through their identity cards and then summarily shot, have also taken place on multiple occasions.<sup>45</sup>

**Destabilisation of Shia neighbourhoods and schools** – Neighbourhoods and schools known to be populated by Shias are also under threat from militants. Most notably of

<sup>40</sup> Hashim, ‘Hazara Shias’.

<sup>41</sup> ‘SSP: best flags of SSP’, available at <http://ssppakistan.blogspot.com/p/best-flags-ssp-kafir-kafir-shia-kafir.html>, (16-04-14).

<sup>42</sup> Zofeen T. Ebrahim, ‘If this isn’t a Shia genocide, what is?’, *Dawn*, 27-08-12, available at <http://www.dawn.com/news/744925/if-this-isnt-shia-genocide-what-is>, (16-04-14).

<sup>43</sup> Hussain, ‘Shia genocide’.

<sup>44</sup> Zulfikar Ali, ‘Pakistan bomb targets Shiite pilgrim bus’, *LA Times*, 21-01-14, available at <http://articles.latimes.com/2014/jan/21/world/la-fg-wn-pakistan-bomb-shiite-bus-20140121>, (16-04-14).

<sup>45</sup> ‘Pakistan Shias killed in Gilgit sectarian attack’, *BBC News*, 16-08-12, available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-19280339>, (24-04-14).



late was the attempted attack foiled by Aitzaz Hasan, a Shia teenager who lost his life obstructing a suicide bomber attempting to detonate his device in his school.<sup>46</sup> This is just one high-profile example of many such incidents. Indeed, in 2012 there were over 100 separate school attacks at the hands of Sunni militants.<sup>47</sup>

**Target killings** – In an attempt to undermine and destabilize any sense of security for Pakistan’s Shia community, a systematic spate of killings targeting well-respected Shia professionals has been carried out. In the last few years in particular, academics, doctors, lawyers and government officials alike have been identified as Shia and consequently murdered by militants who appear unrepentant, even proud, of their crimes.<sup>48</sup> The intensity of these attacks has been particularly high in the last few months, with a worrying surge of violence in Karachi, Lahore and Quetta noted by the international media.

**Harassment and intimidation** – Shia Muslims in Pakistan have faced a constant onslaught of psychological attacks. In the run up to Ashura in 2012, anonymous text messages were received by thousands warning of the violence to come: “Kill, kill Shia”.<sup>49</sup> This sustained, hostile rhetoric has served to normalise the mood of persecution, an action part and parcel of all former genocides.

**Forced migration** – Many have sought respite from daily death threats and persecution by relocating – either abroad or to Shia-majority areas of certain cities, Karachi and Lahore among them. However, as is made evident in Appendices II and III, even in these enclaves attacks regularly take place. Such is the situation that some (claiming to be Shia supporters) have asserted that Pakistani Shias should go into voluntary exile, asserting that “it is better to be alive in exile than to be splattered on a wall in Pakistan”.<sup>50</sup> Certainly, a mass migration cannot be considered the only resolution to this situation, especially as most have nowhere to go.

<sup>46</sup> Hannah Flint, ‘Tributes for Pakistani teenage who died tackling school suicide bomber’, *The Telegraph*, 09-01-14, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/10561706/Tributes-for-Pakistani-teenager-who-died-tackling-school-suicide-bomber.html>, (16-04-14).

<sup>47</sup> ‘World Report 2013: Pakistan’, *Human Rights Watch*, available at <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/pakistan>, (16-04-14).

<sup>48</sup> Hussain, ‘Shia genocide’.

<sup>49</sup> Hussain, ‘Shia genocide’.

<sup>50</sup> Murtaza Haider, ‘It is time for Shias to leave Pakistan’, *Dawn*, 17-02-13, available at <http://www.dawn.com/news/786738/time-for-shias-to-leave-pakistan>, (16-04-14).





## The Role of *Madrassahs*

Most observers agree that the *madrassah* network in Pakistan has not only been the main vehicle for hardening sectarian identities but also a focal source of the violence against Shias – and, indeed, members of other minority faith groups – that we see today.<sup>51</sup> While *madrassahs* have experienced a steady growth since Pakistan's establishment in 1947, their meteoric increase in recent decades is due to the specific confluence of factors as discussed in the previous sections - including the Sunni-dominant military regime of General Zia, the Afghan conflict and the United States' subsequent support for militant *madrassahs* and Saudi Arabia's campaign to curb Iranian influence in Pakistan following the Islamic Revolution. It is worth noting that relationships between these factors were by no means mono-directional. Instead, they worked in a symbiotic fashion: once they came in contact with each other new dynamics emerged that fostered mutual perpetuation and enabled the process to gain further momentum.

The proliferation of *madrassahs* continued unabated even after the end of the Afghan conflict in the 1980s, on the one hand, because Saudi support remained strong and, on the other, because of Pakistan's own rapidly changing socio-political landscape. By teaching rigid religious discourse with no tolerance for difference, the *madrassahs* were able to influence societal attitudes through the hundreds of thousands of students they reached, and through them their extended families and communities.

The current conundrum regarding the Pakistani *madrassah* network is a serious one, not least given the fact that there are no reliable figures available on the actual number of *madrassahs* operating within Pakistan today. A 2011 report by the Express Tribune newspaper cites that there are between 18,000 – 24,000 registered *madrassahs*, while the number of unregistered *madrassahs* is far higher.<sup>52</sup> Some unofficial but informed sources have estimated that the number is now close to an astonishing 150,000 in total.

There are several reasons for the discrepancy in reported numbers. First, *madrassahs* have remained privately operated institutions with very little monitoring from the government. Secondly, until recently there had been no academic interest in these institutions, so very little empirical data has been generated. Indeed, despite the intense public scrutiny they have been subjected to in recent years, there is a worrying lack of firsthand information on them.

Perhaps most importantly, it has been notoriously difficult to trace the means through which unregistered *madrassahs* receive their funding and support. Most financial

<sup>51</sup> Huma Yusuf, 'Sectarian violence: Pakistan's greatest security threat?', *NOREF*, 07-12, available at [http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow\\_site/storage/original/application/949e7f9b2db9f947c95656e5b54e389e.pdf](http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow_site/storage/original/application/949e7f9b2db9f947c95656e5b54e389e.pdf), (16-04-14).

<sup>52</sup> 'Need for *madrassa* reform', *The Express Tribune*, 13-12-11, available at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/306026/need-for-madrassa-reform/>, (16-04-14).



assistance, including that which originates from Gulf Arab countries, does not come in the form of official government aid. Rather, it is sent through various unofficial channels that are almost impossible to monitor.

All of these factors have resulted in a situation in which the vast majority of *madrassahs* fall outside the purview of government control. In the absence of checks and balances to their curriculum, their teaching methods, the suitability of the *madrassah* teachers and the activities that are carried out on their premises, *madrassahs* have been allowed to do as they please with little, if any, state regulation. Although \$70 million in aid was provided by the Education Ministry to modernise the *madrassah* curriculum, most of the funds were not utilised due to non-cooperation of the seminaries.<sup>53</sup>

Several *madrassahs* are known to be heavily armed and do not allow access to their building and their students.<sup>54</sup> It is perhaps a telling sign of how emboldened they feel that they have often resisted orders from the Government of Pakistan, at times going as far as threatening retaliation if the latter were to act contrary to their wishes.<sup>55</sup>

The most prominent incidence of this came when the Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) and Jamia Hafsa *madrassah* complex in Islamabad engaged in violent demonstrations, destruction of property, kidnapping, arson, and armed clashes with authorities, leading to a military siege against it in July 2007.<sup>56</sup> Despite such a forceful response by then President General Pervez Musharraf, the government was unable to completely dismantle the organisation, which still operates in a confrontational fashion in the heart of the country's federal capital. It has thus been suggested that many *madrassahs* must wield, behind the scenes, significant political clout, something which provides them with the impunity they need to carry out their agendas unhindered.

Meanwhile, documented instances of the hate speech and incitement to violence that is encouraged by *madrassahs* – in collusion with the SSP, LeJ and their affiliates – is freely available within the public sphere in Pakistan. Their propaganda campaign includes the effective use of anti-Shia literature distributed widely in public places and social media outreach that they have maintained through numerous Facebook pages, Twitter accounts and YouTube. Additionally, they regularly glorify violence against Shias by proudly taking credit for attacks, goading their followers to perpetrate violence wherever possible and issue threats to prominent Shias through phone calls, letters and digital messages.

<sup>53</sup> 'The trouble with: *madrassas* in Pakistan', *The Express Tribune*, 25-01-12, available at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/326941/the-trouble-with-madrassas-in-pakistan/>, (16-04-14).

<sup>54</sup> Syed Shoaib Hasan, 'Profile: Islamabad's Red Mosque', *BBC News*, 27-07-07, available at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/6503477.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/6503477.stm), (16-04-14).

<sup>55</sup> Carlotta Gall, 'What Pakistan knew about bin Laden', *The New York Times Magazine*, 19-03-2014, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/23/magazine/what-pakistan-knew-about-bin-laden.html>, (16-04-14).

<sup>56</sup> Hasan, 'Islamabad's Red Mosque'.



## The Role of the Media

Somewhat predictably, Pakistani media has played a formidable role in stoking anti-Shia sentiments. Surprisingly, though – especially given the authorities’ tacit support of certain anti-Shia groups – the role of state media in this has been less than significant.<sup>57</sup> Rather, the principal culprits are private outfits, many of which give a disproportionately large amount of air time to extremists and conspiracy theorists.<sup>58</sup> In addition to this, many are guilty of peddling the usual line of quasi-denial, blaming other countries and other peoples rather than encouraging ordinary Pakistanis to take ownership of these profound societal issues themselves.

Since Pakistan’s televised media industry was liberalised in 2002, outlets have competed rigorously for ratings, something that, while not necessarily negative in itself, has resulted in the amplification of certain groups’ wholly unpalatable ideologies. After all, as many corporations have correctly determined, sensationalist, alarmist news coverage will boost their viewership; as such, the rallies of the SSP and LeJ are regularly televised and their extremist ideology thus popularised.

Even if the majority of Pakistanis disagree with the content of these rallies, televising them serves to normalise these ideologies and desensitise the public’s reaction to them – a media outfit does not need to endorse a cause in order to help popularise it. Merely giving it a platform is enough. As such, for as long as Pakistani media is ruled by market forces and no reliable watchdog holds media groups to account for irresponsible journalism, it will only serve to exacerbate the issue at stake, boosting the reach of extremist forces in the country.

Besides the above, attacks against media outlets are also influencing what is covered on a daily basis. While it would be facile to equate all anti-Shia groups with, say, the Taliban, as extremists, they do have many corresponding ambitions, such that the political reverberations of attacking media facilities are beneficial to both. Bombs and suicide operations serve to entrench a climate of fear, one that encourages self-censorship.<sup>59</sup> There are many instances of such intimidation through attacks or threats – for example, Karachi-based Express Media has been attacked no less than four times since August 2013, while one of Pakistan’s only high-profile Hazara journalists was recently forced to flee the country on account of persistent intimidation by extremists.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> ‘What it means to be a Shia in Pakistan’, *Tehelka*, 21-02-13, available at <http://www.tehelka.com/what-it-means-to-be-a-shia-in-pakistan/>, (16-04-14).

<sup>58</sup> ‘Shia in Pakistan’, *Tehelka*.

<sup>59</sup> Jon Boone, ‘Liberal newspaper Express Tribune cowed into silence by Pakistani Taliban’, *The Guardian*, 28-02-14, available at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/28/liberal-newspaper-express-tribune-silenced-pakistani-taliban>, (16-04-14).

<sup>60</sup> Bob Dietz, ‘What should happen following the Razi Rumi attack’, *Committee to Protect Journalists*, 31-03-14, <http://www.cpj.org/blog/2014/03/what-should-happen-following-the-raza-rumi-attack.php>, (16-04-14).



In a more passive manner, other media outlets obfuscate and confuse coverage of the genocide even while they seek to be supportive of the Shia cause. References to ‘mysterious waves of terrorism’ and the fact that ‘Taliban policy cannot be delinked from the ongoing massacre’ simply serve to render abstract those domestic forces that are responsible for anti-Shia sentiments.<sup>62</sup><sup>63</sup> After all, this sectarian animosity is very much a Pakistani problem, far more so than any of its neighbouring countries.<sup>64</sup>

Social media of all forms serves as a means for internet activists to rapidly and easily polarise any incident of political unrest. A notable example of this came after the 2013 clashes in the city of Rawalpindi, when social media users made ‘their own statements book justifying this or that picture as the proof of a perpetrator to be “Shia” or “Sunni”’.<sup>65</sup> In this manner, any civil strife – whether it involves Shia/Sunni hostilities or not – can be manipulated into the Manichean worldview of *takfirī* extremists.

The Pakistani state could make significant gains by using the internet to tackle the spreading of extremist ideologies. Instead, it has been inconsistent. For example, while it readily solicited the banning of websites containing content that it deems unsuitable for an Islamic Republic, little or no efforts have been made when it comes to restricting the online presence of the likes of the SSP or LeJ, groups that incite genocide and encourage murder through Twitter and Facebook.<sup>66</sup> For a state to actively censor the internet is indeed a point of contention – however, if the state is willing to do so in some instances, it should not balk at the idea of censoring videos of beheadings.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Malik Siraj Akbar, ‘Threatened Pakistani journalist seeks asylum in Australia’, *Huffington Post*, 25-05-12, available at [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/malik-siraj-akbar/pakistani-journalism\\_b\\_1540936.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/malik-siraj-akbar/pakistani-journalism_b_1540936.html), (16-04-14).

<sup>62</sup> Raza Rumi, ‘Connivance at a cost’, *The News on Sunday*, 15-04-12, available at <http://jang.com.pk/thenews/apr2012-weekly/nos-15-04-2012/pol1.htm>, (16-04-12).

<sup>63</sup> Rumi, ‘Connivance at a cost’.

<sup>64</sup> Ebrahim, ‘If this isn’t a Shia genocide, what is?’.

<sup>65</sup> Qurat-ul-Ain Fatima quoted in Sana Jamil, ‘Pakistan government blames social media for fanning sectarian clashes’, *Global Voices Online*, 25-11-13, available at <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2013/11/25/a-closer-look-at-pakistans-sectarian-violence/>, (17-04-14)

<sup>66</sup> ‘Jhangvi’, Official Twitter Account, available at <https://twitter.com/JHANGVI>, (17-04-14) and ‘Lashkar-e-Jhangvi’, *Facebook*, available at <https://www.facebook.com/soomro.ssp?fref=ts>, (24-04-14).

<sup>67</sup> Nighat Dad, ‘2013 – a deadly year for Pakistan’s internet freedom’, *Index on Censorship*, 09-01-14, available at <http://www.indexoncensorship.org/2014/01/2013-deadly-year-pakistans-internet-freedom/>, (17-04-14).



## The Role of the State

### Institutional failures

With the worsening attacks on Shias and ever-deteriorating climate of insecurity, questions surrounding the role of the state and its institutions must be raised. At best, state institutions have acted with a concerning level of inefficiency, even apathy, towards the crisis.

First and foremost, it spells a complete failure of the security apparatus that there has been such little success in preventing the ongoing violence against the Shia community, particularly those high-profile attacks that have claimed several dozen lives at a time and have been carried out during periods of high security alert. For example, despite the common knowledge that Ashura is a time when Shias are especially vulnerable, security forces have been unable to provide them with the protection they have needed. In 2012, in the first ten days of the month of Muharram there were alleged to have been 51 attacks on Shias, leaving 55 dead and 324 wounded.<sup>68</sup>

Where perpetrators – who have often openly admitted to their crimes – have been caught, they have still escaped punishment due to the ineffective state of the judicial system.<sup>69</sup> The conviction rates in the country are dismal: 75% of alleged terrorists are acquitted by the anti-terrorism courts.<sup>70</sup> Malik Ishaq, the chief of the ostensibly banned LeJ has been in and out of Pakistani jails despite facing charges related to the killing of more than 100 people belonging to the Shia sect as well as masterminding the attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in March 2009.<sup>71</sup>

Although judicial reform is urgently required in Pakistan, the climate of fear within which judges are forced to operate cannot be ignored. Just as with Pakistani media, several judges, lawyers and witnesses involved in cases against militant leaders face death threats and are, therefore, reluctant to speak against them. Indeed, witnesses and their relatives willing to testify against Ishaq have routinely been found murdered.<sup>72</sup>

There are also no systems in place for the rehabilitation and protection of Shia victims and their families. Although compensation has been promised by the government,

<sup>68</sup> 'Shia Genocide: first ten days of Muharram 2012/13 in Pakistan (51 incidents, 55 killed, 324+ injured)', *Alexpressed: Diary of a Concerned Pakistani*, 26-11-13, available at <http://blog.ale.com.pk/?p=2172>, (17-04-14).

<sup>69</sup> Hussain, 'Shia genocide'.

<sup>70</sup> Dean Nelson, 'Pakistan incapable of prosecuting terror suspects', *The Telegraph*, 31-08-11, available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/pakistan/8733203/Pakistan-incapable-of-prosecuting-terror-suspects.html>, 17-04-14.

<sup>71</sup> Saeed Shah, 'Al-Qaida linked group claims Kabul suicide attack on Shia pilgrims', *The Guardian*, 06-12-11, available at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/dec/06/al-qaida-kabul-attack-shia-pilgrims>, (17-04-14).

<sup>72</sup> Asad Kharal, 'Shades of grey', *The Express Tribune*, 05-08-12, available at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/415931/shades-of-grey/>, (17-04-14).



particularly in those cases that have received widespread media attention, it has rarely been forthcoming. Survivors recount stories of undergoing a great amount of difficulty in their attempts to receive justice or relief from the authorities. Given the high cost of medical care and the losses that result from the destruction of their properties, survivors regularly face financial ruin as they have no recourse to official assistance of any kind.

Added to this is the troubling lack of initiatives on the part of the government to counter divisive and violent Sunni hardline narratives in both the *madrassahs* and the public sphere. With no efforts being made to challenge the de-humanisation of Shias, these ideas are having an ever greater impact on societal attitudes and beliefs. Interfaith programs that bring together religious organisations of varying denominations, educational institutions and civil society are notably absent. It is thus clear that the state has been incapable of formulating a response to the situation at hand.

Unsurprisingly, then, members of the Shia community are fast becoming disillusioned with the ruling authorities, with a growing belief that the latter have wilfully turned a blind eye to their plight. Regular protests and calls for the government to respond have thus far yielded little result. In January 2013, the families of victims killed in a deadly attack on Hazara Shias in Quetta registered their protest with the government by refusing to bury their dead until some action was taken.<sup>73</sup> The standoff lasted over three days, during which the bodies of those deceased were laid out on one of Quetta's main roads while the families participated in a sit-in. Directly because of the media coverage that this emotive reaction received, the government eventually made a symbolic gesture by officially dissolving the provincial government in Balochistan and imposing Governor Rule.<sup>74</sup> However, the incident soon took a backseat in the public eye and no serious efforts were launched to address grievances on a long-term basis. Since then, further attacks on Shias and further protests have ensued.

### State patronage

This troubling state of affairs has prompted accusations not just of inefficiency and failure on the part of the government, but active collusion with and support for those who are causing harm to Shias.<sup>75</sup>

Commentators who claim as such point to the free space militant Sunni organisations such as the SSP and LeJ (who are supposedly banned in Pakistan) enjoy throughout the country. Not only are these groups evading punishment, they have few, if any,

<sup>73</sup> 'Hazara Shias bury victims four days after deadly Quetta bombings', *Dawn*, 14-01-13, available at <http://www.dawn.com/news/778738/sit-in-3>, (17-04-14).

<sup>74</sup> 'Balochistan government dissolved, Governor Rule imposed', *Pamir Times*, 14-01-13, available at <http://pamirtimes.net/2013/01/14/balochistan-government-dissolved-governor-rule-imposed/>, (17-04-14).

<sup>75</sup> 'Pakistan: abuses, impunity erode rights', *Human Rights Watch*, 01-02-13, available at <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/02/01/pakistan-abuses-impunity-erode-rights>, (17-04-14).



restrictions imposed on their activities. Furthermore, events that draw great crowds, popularise inflammatory rhetoric and incite violence keep them firmly in the public eye.

Having moved into mainstream politics in the 1990s, the SSP-ASWJ has also managed to gain a foothold within the political establishment, with an SSP leader becoming a minister in Punjab's coalition government in 1993.<sup>76</sup> Politicians of other parties have since willingly entered into power-sharing agreements with them to take advantage of their support base in the Punjab.<sup>77</sup>

Furthermore, media reports in the run-up to the 2013 general elections revealed high-level talks between the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PMLN) party and the ASWJ leadership.<sup>78</sup> Such developments have naturally given these groups a far greater degree of legitimacy and acceptance within the political sphere and provided them with more access to state resources.

Such is the situation that the ASWJ leader Ahmed Ludhianvi was even able to run a successful election campaign from Jhang in 2013 on a virulently anti-Shia agenda, claiming second place with 71,598 votes.<sup>79</sup> He later demanded a recount of the vote, claiming that the government had "engineered" his defeat.<sup>80</sup> Recently, the Election Commission gave him the go ahead to take a seat in the country's National Assembly; although the Supreme Court cut short his rise to power soon after.<sup>81</sup> Ludhianvi's possible ascent within the political hierarchy to Member of the National Assembly coupled with the ties his group allegedly has with the ruling PMLN party, has outraged those concerned about this issue and offers little hope of any efforts to rein in these groups.

### The 'jihād paradox'

A strong case has been made by many quarters that the true source of support for Sunni sectarian groups does not stem from the civilian government and its representatives but

<sup>76</sup> 'Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan', *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, available at <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/terroristoutfits/Ssp.htm>, (24-04-14).

<sup>77</sup> Tufail Ahmad, 'The next decade of jihadism in Pakistan', *Hudson Institute*, 20-06-13, available at <http://www.hudson.org/research/9884-the-next-decade-of-jihadism-in-pakistan>, (17-04-14).

<sup>78</sup> 'PML-N moves to pacify ASWJ', *The News International*, 16-03-13, available at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-165643-PML-N-moves-to-pacify-ASWJ>, (17-04-14).

<sup>79</sup> 'Election NA-89 rescheduled; petition filed against PML-N MNA', *The Express Tribune*, 09-04-14, available at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/693316/election-in-na-89-rescheduled-petition-filed-against-pml-n-mna/>, (17-04-14).

<sup>80</sup> Rana Tanveer, 'Ludhianvi vows to go to assemblies, despite losing elections', *The Express Tribune*, 29-05-13, available at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/556043/ludhianvi-vows-to-go-to-assemblies-despite-losing-elections/>, (17-04-14).

<sup>81</sup> Nasir Iqbal, 'SC rains on Ludhianvi's victory parade', *Dawn*, 23-04-14, available at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1101649/sc-rains-on-ludhianvis-victory-parade>, (24-04-14).



from Pakistan's powerful security establishment.<sup>82</sup> It is a well-documented fact that the security establishment has historically drawn a distinction between what it has regarded as "good jihadists" and "bad jihadists", with the "good" considered as useful strategic proxies that could be leveraged to fulfil foreign policy aims in Afghanistan and Kashmir while the "bad" were those that were branded as enemies for their willingness to attack the Pakistani state.<sup>83</sup>

Despite the successes that this strategy yielded in the past, recent developments are proving that this distinction is becoming harder and harder to sustain as the line between these so-called "good" and "bad" groups becomes increasingly blurred. There is clear evidence that militant groups are working in closer cooperation with each other as they share resources and strengthen each other's aims.

For example, several research-based commentaries argue that violence against Shias has grown in affiliation with Taliban franchises in Pakistan that are, in turn, linked with Al-Qa'ida. In mid-2002 Al-Qa'ida began to cooperate with local sectarian organisations in Karachi, strengthening their networks and capacity. Indeed, it was asserted by Pakistani political scientist Amir Rana in 2010 that:

'Eleven major sectarian terrorist attacks have been reported in Punjab during [the] last five years. The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan and its affiliate groups have claimed responsibility for these sectarian attacks. This trend reveals the close nexus between the Taliban and several major sectarian and militant groups in Punjab, which are now labelled as "Punjabi Taliban"'.<sup>84</sup>

The dilemma this has caused for Pakistan's security establishment has been pithily termed as the "*jihād* paradox", depicting a situation in which the very assets they once fostered have now turned against them.<sup>85</sup> It is becoming increasingly clear that the state will at some point have to abandon this largely outdated and false distinction and go after these networks as a whole if there is to be any hope of comprehensively tackling the situation.

So far, this understanding does not seem to have been reached, as ground realities continue to be ignored and support for the "good jihadists" persists within certain quarters of the security establishment, as recently noted by Ali Dayan Hasan of Human Rights Watch Pakistan:

<sup>82</sup> Matthew Green, 'God's gravediggers: the politics of sectarian killing', *Tanqeed*, 08-13, available at <http://www.tanqeed.org/2013/08/shia-sectarian-killing-matthew-green/>, 17-04-14.

<sup>83</sup> Mamdani, 'Good Muslim, Bad Muslim', 771.

<sup>84</sup> Amir Rana quoted in Hisham Mohmand, Arafat Mir and Mehmoona Bashir, 'Extremism watch: mapping conflict trends in Pakistan, 2010-2011', *The Jinnah Institute*, 2011, 22.

<sup>85</sup> See S. Paul Kapur and Sumit Ganguly, 'The Jihad paradox: Pakistan and Islamist militancy in South Asia', *International Security*, 37 (2012), 111-141.





‘The Pakistani military’s default reaction has been that instead of challenging and seeking to curb militancy and extremism they seek as a matter of policy to appease and accommodate extremists. Also, because these militant groups have been allies of the state within the security establishment there are large numbers of sympathisers or people who are tolerant of these groups and their activities’.<sup>86</sup>

This conundrum has become all the more visible in recent months as negotiations between the newly elected government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and the TTP have unfolded. It has been observed that the government’s willingness to accept the TTP as a negotiating partner has been an erroneous move as it has automatically provided the latter with a legitimacy and status that they should not be privy to, given the fact that they are directly responsible for taking the lives of thousands of Pakistani soldiers and civilians. In addition to this, the TTP’s aggressive posturing, audacious demands and refusal to bow to state pressure have been indicative of the high level of confidence they feel with regards to the inroads they have made in entrenching their power within Pakistan. As the government’s weakness in bringing these non-state actors to book is progressively more exposed the longer the negotiations drag on, it only serves to further empower the sectarian outfits that ally with the TTP.

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<sup>86</sup> Asad Hashim, ‘Pakistan’s Hazara Shias living under siege’, *Aljazeera*, 18-01-13, available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/01/2013117124512947691.html>, (17-04-14).



## International Links

Besides the domestic dimensions of this conflict, there are also significant international implications. Continued support from the Gulf Arab countries - a leaked US diplomatic cable estimated that \$100 million a year was making its way to Pakistani extremist groups from the Arabian peninsula - has meant that Pakistan remains an important battleground in the bid for regional power, particularly in light of Tehran's advances in its nuclear programme, whether it is in pursuit of weapons or not.<sup>8788</sup> Continued attacks against Pakistan's Shia population could stoke tensions between Pakistan and Iran, threatening bilateral cooperation on a potential gas pipeline project and various counter-terrorism initiatives.<sup>89</sup> The recent news that Pakistan received a \$1.5 billion 'gift' in Saudi aid indicates which way the state currently leans.<sup>90</sup>

Regional stability is threatened on other fronts as well. Closer cooperation between the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistani LeJ in an effort to target Shia Hazaras could facilitate militant cooperation across the Durand Line. In 2012, Sunni sectarian outfits formed a major part of the movement launched by an alliance of jihadist religious forces, the Defence of Pakistan Council, to put pressure on civilian leaders not to reopen NATO supply routes through Pakistan.<sup>91</sup>

In addition, these groups provide both political and military support to Pakistani objectives vis-a-vis India in the disputed region of Kashmir and Afghanistan. While the Kashmir issue remains a dangerous flashpoint, the Afghan end-game - in which Pakistan is vying for a major role - is yet to play out to the finish as the 2014 withdrawal of US and NATO troops draws closer.

The growing strength of Pakistan's militant Sunni sectarian outfits has even reached as far as the conflict in Syria. Reports claim that Pakistanis form one of the largest contingents of foreign combatants in Syria and their number is likely to rise with the growing Saudi influence in the country.<sup>92</sup> There are two categories of militants from Pakistan in Syria: those belonging to Sunni sectarian groups like LeJ and others from

<sup>87</sup> See 'Extremist recruitment on the rise in southern Punjab', *Wikileaks*, 13-11-08, available at [http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08LAHORE302\\_a.html](http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08LAHORE302_a.html), (23-04-14).

<sup>88</sup> For a detailed account of regional dynamics in the context of Iran's nuclear potential, see Dalia Dassa Kaye and Frederic M. Wehrey, 'A nuclear Iran: the reaction of neighbours', *Survival*, 49 (2007), 111-128.

<sup>89</sup> Shireen T. Hunter, 'Pakistan strains Iran's patience', *Asia Times*, 28-02-14, available at [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/SOU-03-280214.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/SOU-03-280214.html), (17-04-14).

<sup>90</sup> Mehreen Zahra-Malik, 'Saudi Arabia loans Pakistan \$1.5 billion to shore up economy', *Reuters*, 13-03-14, available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/13/us-pakistan-saudi-idUSBREA2C13G20140313>, (17-04-14).

<sup>91</sup> Bill Roggio, 'Jamaat-ud-Dawa banners dominate Defense of Pakistan rally against reopening of NATO supply lines', *The Long War Journal*, 08-07-12, available at [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/07/jamaat-ud-dawa\\_banne.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/07/jamaat-ud-dawa_banne.php), (17-04-14).

<sup>92</sup> Zia Ur Rehman, 'Pakistani fighters joining the war in Syria', *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, 24-09-13, available at <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/pakistani-fighters-joining-the-war-in-syria>, (17-04-14).



militant outfits such as the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). It is apparent that the main motivation for groups like LeJ is to fight the Shia-dominated Assad regime.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Bill Roggio, 'Hundreds of Pakistani jihadists reported in Syria', *Long War Journal*, 14-07-13, available at [http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2013/07/hundreds\\_of\\_pakistani\\_jihadist.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2013/07/hundreds_of_pakistani_jihadist.php), (17-04-14).



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## Concluding Remarks

Given the situation on the ground, it can be confidently asserted that anti-Shia outfits such as the LeJ-SSP-ASWJ and their widening affiliates will not desist in their efforts to achieve their stated goal of ‘exterminating’ the Shia population of Pakistan.<sup>94</sup> Quite apart from the moral issues involved, setting out to destroy a community as large, widespread and well integrated as the Shias is also a practical impossibility. As these groups gain power and traction however – with little hindrance from the state, civil society and international community – they will increasingly present an existential threat to Pakistan. They promise more bloodshed, more sectarian division and the grave potential for an outbreak of civil war.

While it is remarkable that the concerted anti-Shia campaign has as yet produced little response in terms of armed retaliation, there is a very real risk of this becoming a reality in the future. Young Shias across the country, many of whom have suffered great personal losses and who live in a climate of perpetual fear, are already becoming disillusioned with the state and are disheartened by Pakistani society’s silence over these atrocities. This makes them extremely vulnerable to extreme sectarian discourses.

At this stage it is imperative that immediate steps be taken to prevent the increasing alienation of Shias within their own country. This can only be achieved through national solidarity against a minority ideology that seeks to polarise Pakistani society, requiring not only a robust civil society response but also decisive action on the part of the government; the latter must demonstrate its commitment to protecting the rights of Shias as equal citizens of the country as well as penalizing those responsible through a rigorous and fair judicial process.

Since civil war is not a desirable outcome for any of the countries that maintain ties with Pakistan (including the United States, India and China), a collective international response must be formulated to place diplomatic pressure on the Pakistani government with regards to its domestic responsibilities.

The importance of averting such an outcome in Pakistan is even more significant given that it remains one of the few examples of a functioning democracy in a Muslim-majority country today. It is thus firmly in the international community’s interest to assist Pakistan in this decisive period of its democratic transition.

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<sup>94</sup> John J. Xenakis, ‘World view: Pakistan “peace process” collapses on first day’, *Breitbart*, 05-02-14, available at <http://www.breitbart.com/Big-Peace/2014/02/04/5-Feb-14-World-View-Pakistan-peace-process-collapses-on-first-day>, (17-04-14).



## Recommendations

### To the Government of Pakistan

- Strictly enforce existing bans on militant sectarian organisations and ensure that these bans apply to any changes of identity that these groups adopt;
- Bring to justice those responsible for attacks against Shias. This includes providing special security for judges, public prosecutors and witnesses involved in cases against suspected perpetrators;
- Increase law enforcement capacity by training and equipping special police force units to track, investigate and detain militants;
- Boost security measures in Shia-majority areas and during Shia religious gatherings to protect those who are most at risk, particularly during Ashura;
- Conduct a comprehensive census of the number of *madrassahs* currently operational in Pakistan;
- Develop a robust regulatory framework that all *madrassahs* must legally abide by. This includes submitting to curriculum review, strict inspection of their premises, transparency of their funding sources and sensitivity training for their teachers;
- Identify and block all sources of funding for violent sectarian organisations, especially those originating outside of Pakistan;
- Rigorously enforce a zero-tolerance policy on *madrassahs* using and storing arms and ammunition on their premises;
- Introduce specific legislation outlawing sectarianism, which makes the promotion of sectarian disharmony and support for extremist sectarian outfits a criminal offense;
- Firmly strengthen and enforce all laws pertaining to hate speech and incitement of violence against any individual or community (written and/or verbal);
- Provide adequate compensation for the rehabilitation of victims' families as well as support programs to provide trauma healing for those affected by violence and/or psychological attacks;



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- Investigate all government officials and politicians accused of maintaining links with sectarian organisations, and disqualify political parties and politicians found guilty of such associations from participating in elections;
- Incorporate interfaith harmony as a compulsory component of the national school curriculum and establish a Peace Studies department in every major university that will be dedicated to the study of reconciliation;
- Establish a national council of religious scholars of various sects to implement programs that focus on interfaith harmony
- Implement the recommendations of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in respect to freedom of religion or belief;
- Extend an official invitation to the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief to visit Pakistan.

### **To Local and International Human Rights Organisations**

- Undertake exhaustive research to document dynamics on the ground, including the characteristics and *modus operandi* of specific organisations and individuals who are responsible for spreading sectarian hatred against the Shias;
- Provide policy recommendations based on this research and press the government to pass appropriate legislation and implement it with due rigour;
- Monitor and evaluate the progress of initiatives launched to hold the authorities accountable;
- Use local and international media as well as online platforms to disseminate and popularise counter-narratives to sectarian hatred.

### **To the United Nations and International Community**

- Urge the Government of Pakistan to take decisive action along the lines of the recommendations listed above, which are also in line with the recommendations from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in respect to freedom of religion or belief;



- Provide support to credible civil society efforts working at a grass-roots level in Pakistan;
- Press the Saudi and other Gulf Arab governments to monitor sources of funding for anti-Shia activities emanating from within their countries;
- Urge the Government of Pakistan to invite the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief to visit the country.



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## Appendix I – Deobandis, Ahl-e-Hadith and Barelvis

The **Deobandi** movement was initially a Sunni revivalist movement created in Deoband, a city of Uttar Pradesh in pre-independence India as a reaction to British colonialism seen as corrupting Islam. Post-independence it survived as a revivalist movement in India, but in Pakistan it became the inspiration of several conservative religious political organisations. Deobandis account for approximately 20% of the population, and more than 65% of all madrassahs are run by Deobandis.

In its contemporary form the **Ahl-e-Hadith** movement emerged in northern India in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is a reformist Sunni movement which draws its membership from the upper class and rejects folk Islam and Sufism, often popular with the poor and working class. In Pakistan it inspired some of the most radical organisations.

The **Barelvi** movement was created in the Indian city of Bareilly at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in defence of Sunni Islam. In Pakistan it soon found itself in opposition to the Deobandi and Ahl e Hadith organisations . approximately 50% of Pakistanis identify as Barelvis.



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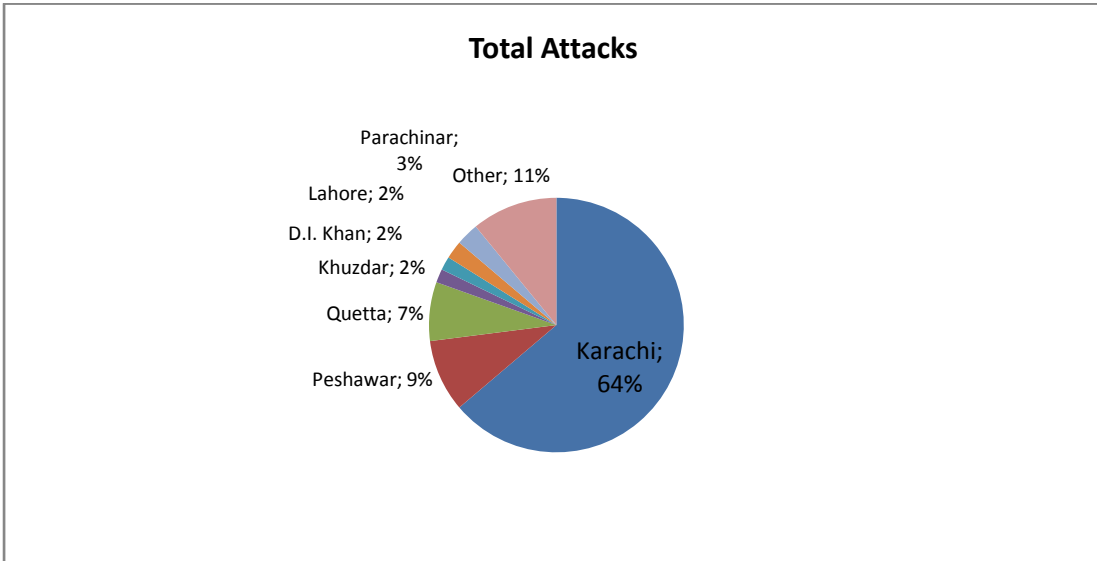


## Appendix II - Timeline of attacks, January-March 2014

- 01.01.14 – 3 killed and 30 injured in a suicide attack in Akhtarabad, Balochistan.
- 04.01.14 – 3 killed and 4 injured in Karachi.
- 06.01.14 – Aitazaz Hassan killed when obstructing LeJ bomber from entering school in Ibrahimzai.
- 08.01.14 – prominent Shia Muslim, Nazir Hussain Imran, shot at and injured in Rawalpindi.
- 20.01.14 – Shia Muslim scholar killed in Peshawar by unidentified assailants.
- 21.01.14 – 24 Shia pilgrims killed and 40 injured in bomb attack in Mastung.
- 24.01.14 – 23 “cracker attacks” carried out by SSP suspects.
- 29.01.14 – Shia leader and Jamia Ali Akbar Trust member shot dead in Khanpur.
- 04.02.14 – militants shoot dead leader of Tehreek-Nifaz-e-Fiqah Jafria, Syed Asghar Ali Shah.
- 12.02.14 – TTP calls on Kalash Ismailis to convert to Islam or face death.
- 22.02.14 – Imambargah leader, Sher Muhammad Tori, shot dead in Kohat.
- 27.02.14 – Shia scholar, Allama Taqi Hadi Naqvi, shot dead in Nazimabad.
- 28.02.14 – One Shia youth and one official shot dead in a targeted killing.
- 07.03.14 – SSP militants kill one Shia and one Sunni in targeted killing in Karachi.
- 11.03.14 – Ahl-e-Sunnat w-al-Jamaat shoot two in Karachi.
- 17.03.14 – Shia man shot in Karachi.
- 18.03.14 – Shia teacher shot in pro-SSP attack.
- 20.03.14 – Doctor killed by SSP in Hassan Abdal.
- 23.03.14 – Shia deputy head of Federal Investigation Agency and his son shot at in Lahore.
- 23.03.14 – Shia member of National Accountability Bureau shot dead in Karachi.
- 27.03.14 – Karachi attack by SSP leaves one dead.

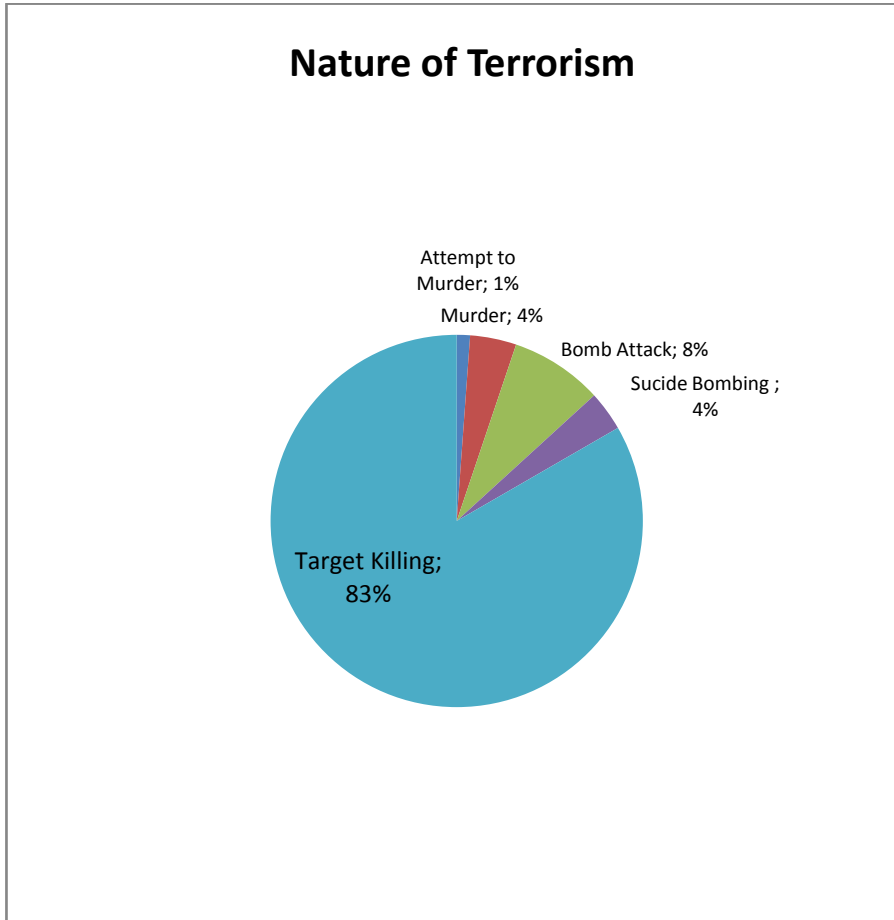


### Appendix III – total attacks in 2013



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## Appendix IV – the nature of terrorism in 2013



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