



TERROR TRACKER

Newsletter by Counter Terrorism Centre



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES
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MOBS RAZE 19 CHURCHES IN PAKISTAN

TTP Suicide Blast Kills 9 PAK Soldiers

ISIS CLAIMS SECOND SHIRAZ ATTACK

Iran Foils Major Plot to Target Arbaeen Festival

ISIS LEADER DEAD, NEW CALIPH NAMED

Pakistan Arrests Five ISIS Women Terrorists

+ MORE NEWS & ANALYSES

MOBS ATTACK CHURCHES IN PAKISTAN BLASPHEMY ROW

19 CHURCHES, 89 HOMES RAZED, TEHREEK-I-LABBAIK LEADS VIOLENCE



A mob desecrating a church in Jaranwala in the province of eastern Punjab. - BBC

On 16 August 2023, Jaranwala's Christian community (Faisalabad, Pakistan) was struck by widespread mob violence triggered by charges of blasphemy and desecration of the Quran.

Human Rights Focus Pakistan, a non-governmental organisation, released a report stating that at least 89 homes, 19 churches, and several Bibles were burnt or razed to the ground. Many residents were forced to flee and seek refuge in nearby fields or areas considered safe elsewhere.

Overall, approximately 400 houses belonging to ordinary citizens and pastors were deliberately targeted. Valuables from churches and private properties were looted amid the violence. Furthermore, community halls, a graveyard, and two additional churches were also targeted by violent mobs.

The local police have been accused of sitting on their hands as the rampage involving knives, daggers, sticks, bricks, and iron rods continued for nearly ten hours. It has also been reported that Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan, a militant Barelvi outfit, spearheaded the violence, and an announcement from a local cleric fuelled the fire.

A local leader is said to have announced, leading up to the rampage, "Christians have desecrated the Holy Qu'ran. All the clerics, all the Muslims, should unite and gather in front of the mosque. Better to die if you care about Islam." A senior Bishop, Azad Marshall, expressed his anguish at what transpired, and Anwaar ul Haq Kakar, Pakistan's caretaker Prime Minister, promised stern action. More than 100 people have been arrested in connection with the riots. – [The Economic Times](#), [Reuters](#), [ABC News](#), [The Guardian](#), [BBC News](#)

TTP SUICIDE BLAST KILLS 9 PAKISTANI SOLDIERS



Site of the deadly suicide blast

On 31st August 2023, a suicide attack by Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) on a security forces convoy killed nine soldiers and injured five others in Pakistan's northwest region.

According to Pakistan military's media wing (ISPR), a bike-ridden bomber hit the convoy in the district of Bannu in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, thereby killing nine soldiers and injuring five others.

The TTP has recently taken the total number of its attacks to more than 300 between January and August 2023. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces have been some of the worst affected by the escalation in violence. TTP has primarily targeted security personnel and armed forces in recent times. — [The Times of India](#)

IRAN FOILS MAJOR ISIS PLOT TO TARGET SHIA FESTIVITIES



ESMAIL KHATIB

Iran's Minister of Intelligence Esmail Khatib announced on 19 August 2023 that 200 ISIS terrorists had entered the country via neighbouring countries such as Iraq to destabilise the country during the Arba'een ceremonies. Arba'een, central to the Shiite faith, involves covering an 80-kilometre distance between Najaf and Karbala, bringing together millions of pilgrims.

He made this statement at the 24th Supreme Assembly of Commanders of the Guard Corps while emphasising the robust collaboration between the Ministry of Intelligence and IRGC's Intelligence Organisation.

He also pointed out that most of these planned attacks were neutralised through arrests and counter-terror operations.

– [The Siasat Daily](#)

ISIS CLAIMS SECOND ATTACK ON SHIRAZ SHRINE, 4 KILLED

10 FOREIGN NATIONALS ARRESTED BY IRAN'S INTELLIGENCE MINISTRY



The injured being taken to hospital after shooting at Shah Cheragh shrine in Shiraz. - AFP

On 13 August 2023, Iran's Shah Cheragh Shrine in Shiraz (capital city of Fars province) came under a deadly terrorist attack for the second time since October 2022, killing four people and leaving several injured in the most recent attack after the attackers entered through the Bab al-Mahdi Gate, according to state media reports.

One of the reports indicate that another person succumbed to his wounds in the hospital. Although no group immediately claimed responsibility for the August 2023 attack, Iran's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Security Council, Amir Saeed Iravani, later pointed out that Daesh (the Arabic name for ISIS) was responsible. Later, ISIS sources claimed responsibility. The person primarily responsible for carrying out this heinous attack, Rahmatollah Norozov, a Tajik national, was arrested quickly following the deadly rampage at the shrine.

Further investigations revealed that ten 'foreign nationals,' have been arrested after an operation carried out by Iran's Intelligence Ministry.

Mohammad Hadi Imanieh, Fars' Provincial Governor, claimed the attacker wanted to "take revenge for the execution of two terrorists" involved in the attack, which occurred in October last year, killing at least 15 individuals.

Furthermore, Ahmad Vahidi, Iran's Minister of Interior, asserted that the perpetrator had been associated with a terrorist network abroad. – [Ynet News](#), [VOA News](#), [nournews](#), [Reuters](#)

ISIS DECLARES DEATH OF ITS CALIPH, APPOINTS NEW HEAD

ABU HUSSEIN AL-QURASHI KILLED IN CLASH WITH HAYAT TAHEREER AL-SHAM



- A representative picture of ISIS terrorists

On 3 August 2023, ISIS announced the death of its former leader Abu Hussein al-Husseini al-Qurashi, following ‘direct clashes’ with Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a rival organisation controlling the Idlib province.

He is the third leader to have been eliminated since February 2022. The announcement was made on Telegram. Furthermore, Abu Hafs al-Hashimi al-Qurashi was announced as the new replacement.

However, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan provided contradictory remarks regarding how the previous ISIS leader was eliminated, crediting his intelligence forces instead. He said, “The suspected leader of Daesh (ISIS), codename Abu Hussein al-Qurashi, has been neutralised in an operation carried out by the MIT (National Intelligence Organisation) in Syria.”

Media footage released by Türkiye depicts the operation which lasted four hours to take out Abu Hussein al-Husseini being carried out in Afrin region, which borders Aleppo. It has also been pointed out that no Turkish forces were harmed during this operation.

Additionally, ISIS, which has frequently claimed HTS of colluding with Türkiye, has accused its rival group of killing its former leader before handing the corpse to Turkish authorities.— [Al Jazeera](#), [News On Air](#), [The National News](#)

PAKISTAN ARRESTS FIVE ISIS WOMEN



- Representative Pic

Police in Pakistan’s Punjab province recently arrested five women allegedly belonging to the terrorist group ISIS from Lahore and Sheikhpora after receiving a tip-off.

According to the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) of Punjab Province weapons, cash, banned literature and mobile phones were recovered from these women. “The women are active members of Daesh (also known as ISIS) and involved in terror activities in the country,” the CTD statement said.

The arrested women have been identified as Aiman, Javeria, Sadia, Faiza and Fakhra. Terrorism cases have been registered against them. They have been shifted to an undisclosed location for further investigation. — [NDTV](#), [The Hindu](#)

TERRORISTS BLOW UP VEHICLE IN PAKISTAN, 11 WORKERS KILLED

On 20 August 2023, Rehan Gul Khattak, Deputy Commissioner of North Waziristan (Pakistan), announced that 11 labourers died and two were wounded in a terrorist attack when explosives detonated near Gul Mir Kot.

An IED placed under the vehicle carrying the labourers resulted in the fatalities. They were working on a construction site where a government building was being built.

Anwaar ul Haq Kakar, Pakistan's caretaker Prime Minister, tweeted following the attack, "Heartbreaking to know about the terrorist attack in North Waziristan which claimed the lives of 11 innocent labourers. Strongly condemn this senseless act of violence and stand in solidarity with the families affected."

This attack adds to the growing tally of terrorism-related incidents in the tribal region, which have risen, per official records, to at least 300 this year alone. – [India Today](#), [Al Jazeera](#)

Security Situation Worsening in Africa, Asia: UN

The United Nations (UN) Security Council recently released a report highlighting the deteriorating security situation in West Asia, Afghanistan, and Africa.

It asserted that "North Atlantic Treaty Organization-calibre weapons typically associated with the former Afghan National Defense and Security Forces were being transferred to ISIL-K by groups affiliated with the Taliban and Al-Qaida, such as the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, also known as the Turkistan Islamic Party." – [News18](#)

Three African Americans Shot Dead in Florida

Ryan Christopher Palmeto, a 21-year-old white supremacist, killed three African Americans in a Dollar General Store in Jacksonville, Florida, on 26 August 2023 before killing himself.

He used an AR-15 style semi-automatic rifle and a Glock handgun to carry out the killings with Swastikas drawn on them.

He had laid out his manifestos detailing his hatred for the Black people.

US Attorney General Merrick Garland has announced that the Justice Department will be "investigating this attack as a hate crime and an act of racially motivated violent extremism." – [Reuters](#), [AP News](#), [BBC News](#)

Jihadists Kill 17 Soldiers in Mali

Niger's Ministry of Defence announced on 15 August 2023 that at least 17 soldiers were killed and 20 were wounded (6 of them critically) in a suspected jihadist attack near the border with Mali.

Furthermore, at least 100 terrorists were neutralised in a counter-terror operation. – [africanews](#)

Six LeT Terrorists Arrested in Kashmir

India's security forces arrested 6 terrorists associates affiliated with Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) in J&K's Baramulla and Budgam Districts on 8 August 2023.

After receiving actionable intelligence and questioning suspects apprehended from Baramullah, officials recovered 2 grenades, 1 pistol magazine, 1 Chinese pistol, and 4 live rounds. The perpetrators are accused of participating in illicit arms and ammunition trafficking on LeT's behalf for carrying out terror activities in the region. The remaining 3 suspects arrested from Budgam were busted with 57 live rounds, 1 Chinese hand grenade, and 2 magazines.

– [Hindustan Times](#)

UAE Sends Anti-Terror Equipment to Chad

The United Arab Emirates has supplied the Republic of Chad with security equipment and military vehicles to bolster border security measures and counter terrorism. This assistance falls under the broad framework of the military cooperation pact between the two countries. Daoud Yaya Brahim, Chad's Minister of Defence, explained that "This equipment allows us to strengthen our defence forces in the framework of fight against terrorism." – [VOA News](#)

Uptick in Under-18 Propensity to Terror: UK

The United Kingdom's Counter Terrorism Policing Unit has pointed out a worrying trend of a 16 per cent increase in the number of under-18 individuals arrested for 'terrorism-related offences' between 2019 and 2022. The easy availability of extremist ideologies on social media adds to the challenge. – [BBC News](#)