

# TERROR TRACKER

*Newsletter by Counter Terrorism Centre*



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR  
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES  
मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान



## DANIEL PEARL 'KILLERS' ACQUITTED

Pak Supreme Court frees Omar Saeed Sheikh, three other accused

## 11 SHIITE HAZARA MINERS KILLED NEAR QUETTA

ISIS claims responsibility for gruesome atrocity

## INDIA'S 8-POINT ACTION PLAN TO COMBAT TERROR

External Affairs Minister castigates Islamabad in UNSC Debate

+ MORE NEWS & ANALYSES

## TRAVESTY OF JUSTICE

# PAK SUPREME COURT ACQUITS ‘KILLERS’ OF DANIEL PEARL



Daniel Pearl (left), Omar Saeed Sheikh (right)

## BIDEN ADMINISTRATION ‘OUTRAGED’ BY VERDICT

*All four accused of the brutal murder of US journalist Daniel Pearl in 2002, including prime suspect Omar Saeed Sheikh, acquitted by Pakistan’s apex court and ordered to be released*

On 28 January 2021, the Supreme Court of Pakistan dismissed the appeal of the Sindh provincial government to overturn the High Court’s decision to acquit Omar Saeed Sheikh and three other (Fahad Naseem, Sheikh Adil and Salman Saqib) accused of the murder of US journalist Daniel Pearl in 2002.

Then the South Asia bureau chief of the *Wall Street Journal*, Pearl was abducted in Karachi while researching on religious extremism and the graphic video of his decapitation was later sent to the US consulate.

Omar Sheikh was later arrested in 2002 and sentenced to death by a trial court. But in April 2020, the Sindh High Court overturned the conviction. However, Pearl’s parents and the Sindh government later appealed to the apex court against the High Court’s ruling. But the three-judge bench of Pakistan’s Supreme Court, headed by Justice Mushir Alam also directed the suspect to be released, even though one member of the bench opposed the decision. A lawyer of Pearl’s family called the verdict ‘a travesty of justice’.

Meanwhile the White House has expressed ‘outrage’ over the verdict and said that it is an ‘affront’ to the victims of terrorism everywhere. US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken spoke to Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureishi on how to “ensure accountability for convicted terrorist Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh and others” responsible for the kidnapping and murder of Daniel Pearl.

Earlier, Blinken said “Omar Saeed Sheikh was indicted in the United States in 2002 for hostage-taking and conspiracy to commit hostage-taking, resulting in the murder of Pearl, the South Asia Bureau Chief for the *Wall Street Journal*, as well as the 1994 kidnapping of another United States citizen in India”.

He urged Pakistan to explore all legal options to ensure that Pearl’s killers are brought to justice. The murder of Pearl came three years after Sheikh, along with Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar and Mushtaq Ahmad Zargar, was freed in exchange for nearly 150 passengers of the hijacked Indian Airlines Flight 814.

The verdict by Pakistan’s Supreme Court does not bode well for the country’s attempt to keep itself out of the FATF’s Black List that would place it under international sanctions. – [BBC](#), [The Hindu](#), [The Times of India](#), [The Dawn](#)

## FARCE FOR FATF: NO ACTION ON COURT ORDER FOR ARREST OF MASOOD AZHAR

There is no word about any action by Pakistan’s law enforcement agencies over the decision by an anti-terrorism court on January 9 for the arrest of Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) chief Masood Azhar by January 18.

In fact, Pakistan seems to be back to its usual tricks in its attempt to hoodwink the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) before its next plenary session in February.

Although the JeM had claimed responsibility for the Pulwama attack, Masood Azhar only faces arrest warrant in a terror financing case.

Similarly, Mumbai attack masterminds and Lashkar-e-Taiba leaders Hafiz Saeed and Zaki-ur Rahman Lakhvi have been jailed for 15 years each for terror financing.

The US has urged Pakistan to try Lakhvi for Mumbai attacks also.

India’s External Affairs ministry has said that Pakistan’s “farcical actions” are in view of FATF’s upcoming session and has called for ‘credible actions’ by Pakistan against terror groups. — [The Hindustan Times](#), [The Hindu](#)

## ISIS CLAIMS RESPONSIBILITY

# 11 SHIITE HAZARA MINERS KIDNAPPED, KILLED IN PAKISTAN

On 3<sup>rd</sup> of January 2021, armed men abducted and killed 11 Hazara coal miners, in the small mining town of Mach, about 50 kms southeast of Quetta, the provincial capital and largest city of the Province of Balochistan.

It was yet another gruesome atrocity in the long and painful saga of persecution against the ethnic Hazara community, who belong to the minority Shiite sect, in a majority Hanafi Sunni Muslim population of Pakistan.

All the victims were ethnic Hazaras, who are often the target of Sunni extremists in Pakistan and Afghanistan. According to officials, the attackers had blindfolded the miners, tied their hands behind their backs and shot them at close range. Most of the victims' throats were also cut.

It is said that six miners died in the mountains where they were shot, while five others were critically injured there and died on the way to hospital. The administration officials visited the site after the incident. Local television footage showed security troops surrounding a desolate mountainous area diverting traffic and guiding ambulances to pick up the bodies.

The initial probe into the matter showed that the terrorists specifically targeted the miners belonging from the Shia Hazara community and left the others unharmed. An activist Ali Raza told media outlets that the clothes of the slain miners were bloodstained. "Bruises on bodies also suggest that they were dragged," he added. The bodies of the deceased were found in Quetta. Later that day, ISIS claimed responsibility of the carnage, through its Amaq news agency via its Telegram communications channel.

Although ISIS has claimed responsibility, some security experts still suspect the hand of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi — a hardline Sunni terrorist movement operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan — known for targeting the minority Hazara community in Balochistan in the past. From 2012 to 2017, over 500 Hazaras were killed in terror attacks in Balochistan. In 2018, the community members went on a hunger strike, which ended after reassurances from Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa. However, less than a year later, a bomb blast in Quetta's Hazarganj area killed at least 20 people and wounded 48 others.— [The New York Times](#), [Al-Jazeera](#), Agencies

## HAZARAS BURY SLAIN AFTER 6-DAY PROTEST, GOVT DEAL

Following the incident, members of Hazara community in their hundreds sat in a protest along with the coffins of victims in the Western Bypass area of Quetta (National Highway 65) amid cold weather for six days, insisting that they would bury the dead only when the Prime Minister personally visited them to hear their plight.

The government eventually succumbed to pressure. PM Imran Khan and the Army chief visited families of the victims. For now, government has agreed to set up a commission for investigations, punish militants and give compensation to victims' families. — Agencies

## WHO ARE HAZARAS?

### THE FACE OF A HUNTED FAITH!



Hazaras are a Persian-speaking ethnic group, native to Hazarajat region in Afghanistan. They have a total population of about 8 million, of which 4 million live in Afghanistan and about 900,000 stay mainly in the Balochistan province of Pakistan, while many more live in Iran and Western countries. The city of Quetta alone is home to over 600,000 Hazaras, confined within two walled ghettos. With easily identifiable facial features, belying their Turkic-Mongol origin, the ethnic community has been persecuted for a long time because of their belief in Twelver ('Ithna Ashariyya') Shiite faith in Sunni-dominated Afghanistan and Pakistan. Believed to be named after the strength of Genghis Khan's military unit, which had 1000 soldiers ('ming' or 'hazar'), Hazaras lost 60 percent of their people during their uprising against the Afghan Amir in the 1880s. Many migrated to Balochistan for refuge. They faced even more persecution in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when they were massacred in large numbers by the Taliban in the 1990s. Even Pakistan never gave them a safe haven, where they face persecution and slaughter frequently. - Agencies

## **EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER SAYS COVID-19 AGGRAVATES TERRORISM**

# **INDIA PRESENTS 8-POINT ACTION PLAN TO COMBAT TERROR**

COVID-19 has further aggravated the threat of terrorism for global security, India's External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar has said.

Speaking at an 'Open Debate' held by the United Nations Security Council on the topic: 'Threats to International Peace and Security Caused by Terrorist Acts', Dr. Jaishankar said that "to relative isolation and extended disruption due to the lockdowns and the associated distress and economic uncertainty has made the world more susceptible to radicalizing narratives and extremist propaganda".

Addressing the UNSC Ministerial Meeting of the 20th Anniversary of the Security Council Resolution 1373 and the establishment of the Counter Terrorism Committee: 'Achievements in international cooperation, challenges and opportunities', the External Affairs Minister proposed an eight-point action plan in order to combat the menace of terrorism. He stressed, "...We must not countenance double standards in this battle. Terrorists are terrorists; there are no good and bad ones. Those who propagate this distinction have an agenda. And those who cover up for them are just as culpable."

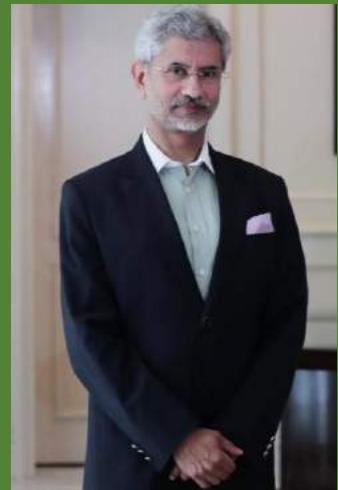
Dr. Jaishankar exhorted that linkages between terrorism and transnational organized crime must be addressed vigorously. In an apparent reference to Dawood Ibrahim, he said: "India has seen [the] crime syndicate responsible for the 1993 Mumbai bomb blasts not just [being] given State protection but enjoying 5-star hospitality in that country".

The External Affairs Minister also gave a call to all the member countries to fulfill the obligations enshrined in the international counter-terrorism instruments. He said "enlisting and delisting individuals and entities under the UN sanctions regimes must be done objectively, not for political or religious considerations. Proposals in this regard merit due examination before circulation".

Dr. Jaishankar also pointed out that some nations lack legal and operational frameworks and technical expertise to detect, investigate and prosecute terrorist financing cases. According to some observers, the Minister was referring to Pakistan when he said there are nations that are "clearly guilty of aiding and supporting terrorism and wilfully providing financial assistance and safe havens.

The Minister noted that terrorist groups and even lone-wolf attackers are gaining access to emerging technologies, including drones, virtual currencies and encrypted communications. He said that the Internet, particularly social media networks, have contributed to greater radicalization and recruitment of youth.

The External Affairs Minister called for enhanced United Nations coordination with FATF for checking the financial aid to terrorist organisations. He called for a relook of the functioning of the various committees in this regard and asked for greater transparency, accountability and effectiveness. — *The Times of India, The Hindu*



*Strait Times Photo by KELVIN GHNG*

## **HON. MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DR. S. JAISHANKAR**

### **8-POINT ACTION PLAN**

(1)

Enforcing the duties of every member state as enshrined in International Counter Terrorism Conventions

(2)

No double standards. All terrorists to be treated alike.

(3)

Reform of the committees dealing with Sanctions and Counter Terrorism.

(4)

Discouragement of exclusivist thinking and radical notions

(5)

Enlisting and delisting entities under the UN Sanction list to be done objectively

(6)

Links between terrorism and organized crime to be investigated thoroughly

(7)

Enhanced coordination between UN and FATF movements as well as increased resources for FATF

(8)

Adequate funding to UN Counter Terrorism bodies

## PM Modi Assures Israeli Premier after Minor Blast outside Embassy

Israel is treating a low-intensity IED-blast near the Israeli embassy in New Delhi on 29 January, as a terrorist incident. Although New Delhi police said there had been no injuries and there was no damage to embassy. Meanwhile, *Times Now* reports that it has accessed a terror note which was recovered by investigative agencies from the site and written by a previously unknown group ‘India Hezbollah’. The terror note was reportedly addressed to Israel’s Ambassador, warning that his movements were being tracked and vowed to avenge the killings of Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh and IRG commander Qasem Soleimani. ‘You start counting your last days. Not just you but even your partners are on our radar’, the letter states. On 1 February, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi received a message of thanks from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for his efforts to safeguard Israeli diplomats and officials in the wake of the blast. Prime Minister Modi assured India’s commitment to the security of Israelis in the country and of cooperation with Israel to fight terrorism. — [Reuters](#), [The Times of Israel](#), [Times Now](#)

### ISIS Blasts in Baghdad kill 32

Two suicide bombings ripped through a crowded marketplace in Baghdad 21 January, which killed at least 32 people and wounded about 75 others in the first such attack in Iraq’s capital in more than two years. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack, which took place in the busy Bab Al-Sharqi area of the capital. The blasts shattered a period of relative calm, after ISIS lost its territories in Iraq and Syria in 2019. — [The Wall Street Journal](#), [AP](#)

### Bali Bombing ‘Mastermind’ Released

Indonesian Islamic cleric Abu Bakar Bashir, the leader of Jemaah Islamiah (JI) and suspected mastermind of the 2002 Bali bombings that killed 202 people, walked free from prison after serving 10 years for setting up a militant training camp. The 82-year-old Bashir was linked to the Bali attacks but not convicted of a direct role in the bombings. After release on 8 January, he entered a de-radicalisation programme amid concerns over his continued influence in extremist circles. — [Reuters](#), [BBC](#)

### NIA Charge-Sheet against SFJ

A case has been filed by the Delhi Police against the banned group, Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) under sections of the UAPA and sections of the IPC for provoking people for a separate Sikh state. The Special Cell of the Delhi Police has reportedly registered a case in the third week of January 2021. Last December, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) filed a charge-sheet against 10 of its members, including G. S. Pannu, at a special NIA court in Mohali in connection with a case related to the SFJ. - [ANI](#)

### Two Women SC Judges Shot Dead In Kabul

Two women judges of Afghanistan’s Supreme Court were shot dead and a man was injured by unidentified gunmen in Kabul on 17 January 2021. The gunmen opened fire on the women judges, as they were travelling to their office in a court vehicle. The driver of the car was also wounded in the attack, local newspaper Tolo News reported. — [The Indian Express](#), [BBC](#)

### US Terror Alert After Riot at Capitol

A national terrorism bulletin issued by the US Department of Homeland Security on 27 January has warned of the potential of violence from people harbouring anti-government sentiment after the election of President Joe Biden. The bulletin states that the 6 January riot at the Capitol has set a precedent and may tempt more extremists to carry out additional attacks. The warning sees the potential for violence from “a broad range of ideologically motivated actors” and did not single out any particular brand of terrorism. — [AP](#)

### Four Pakistanis Held for Attack in France

Four men of Pakistani-origin men were arrested in late December by French security agencies for their involvement in an attack outside the former office of *Charlie Hebdo* magazine last September. The men are believed to be relatives and friends of the main attacker Zaheer Hassan Mehmood, who was motivated by speeches of Khadmi Hussain Rizwi, extremist leader of Tehreek-e-Taliban party. Meanwhile, in an interview to a web-based channel Naya Pakistan, Zaheer Hassan’s father said his son had “done a great job” and he is “very happy” about it. — [ANI](#), [The Hindustan Times](#)