

Pakistan

The Unabated Killings of the Hazaras[♦]

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If there ever was a sign of the demise of the Pakistani state it is the killing of the Hazara community of Quetta¹

The persecution of minorities in Pakistan in recent decades has been systematic, sustained and continuous. Even among the minorities, “The targeting of the Shia Hazaras² of Balochistan is one of the most violent and persistent persecution (*sic*) of any community in Pakistan on account of religious beliefs.”³ Not surprisingly many have termed it ‘ethnic cleansing’ while the BBC in 2013 had termed Quetta “hell on earth” and that

♦ Portions of the article have been excerpted from the author’s forthcoming book on the region.

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1 Khaled Ahmed, *Sleepwalking To Surrender: Dealing With Terrorism In Pakistan*, Penguin Random House, Gurgaon, 2016, p. 273.

2 Though not all Hazaras are Shias the majority are.

3 Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), 2013, Balochistan: Giving the People a chance: Report of a Fact-Finding Mission, June 2013, <http://www.hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/wp-content/pdf/Balochistan%20Report%20New%20Final.pdf> (accessed May 15, 2018).

‘Quetta’s Hazara community is on the front line of Pakistan’s battle with violent extremism.’⁴ Since 2002, close to 3,000 Shias have been killed, most of them belonging to the Hazara community.⁵ A popular, though macabre, saying in Quetta is that a Hazara is born in Afghanistan, grows up in Pakistan and is buried in Iran.⁶

The wanton killings have come to such a pass that the pro-active Chief Justice of Pakistan, Mian Saqib Nisar, was compelled to observe, on April 10, 2018 that his “head hangs in shame due to targeted killings of the Hazara Shia community.”⁷ A month later he termed the attacks “ethnic cleansing”⁸ adding that, in his opinion, the Hazara killings were “equivalent to wiping out an entire generation.”⁹

The systematic targeting of the Hazaras has been compounded by the inability or unwillingness of the state to prevent further attacks or prosecute the perpetrators who openly proclaim their involvement.

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- 4 Mobeen Azhar, ‘Hell on Earth: Inside Quetta’s Hazara community’, *BBC World Service*, May 1, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-22248500> (accessed May 15, 2018).
 - 5 Mushtaq Rajpar, ‘No end in sight’, *The News*, October 19, 2017, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/238136-No-end-in-sight> (accessed May 15, 2018).
 - 6 Farid Kasi, ‘Feeding the forces of Extremism,’ *Newsline*, February 2014, <http://newslinemagazine.com/magazine/feeding-the-forces-of-extremism/> (accessed May 15, 2018).
 - 7 ‘CJP says ‘head hangs in shame’ over Hazara Shia killings’, *Pakistan Today*, April 10, 2018, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/04/10/cjp-says-head-hangs-in-shame-over-hazara-shia-killings/> (accessed May 15, 2018).
 - 8 Muhammad Zafar, ‘CJP calls killing of Hazaras ‘ethnic cleansing’, *The Express Tribune*, May 11, 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1707695/1-hazara-killings-tantamount-ethnic-cleansing-cjp/> (accessed May 15, 2018).
 - 9 Syed Ali Shah, ‘Hazara killings tantamount to wiping out an entire generation, says chief justice’, *Dawn*, May 11, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1407011> (accessed May 15, 2018).

The targeting of the Hazaras is not an isolated process. It forms part of the larger problem of the targeting of Pakistan's Shia community, which constitutes about 20 per cent of the country's overwhelmingly Muslim population. The Hazaras in Balochistan, numbering about half a million, have been particularly vulnerable to targeted attacks due to their distinctive facial features and Shia religious affiliation. Despite being forced to live in virtual ghettos in Quetta, they continue to suffer the same fate while going to/returning from pilgrimages to Iran, or while going about their daily lives. According to the Human Rights Watch (HRW), "There is no travel route, no shopping trip, no school run, no work commute that is safe."¹⁰

Recognising this, the then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in a statement on October 23, 2016, urged the Pakistan Government to bring to justice the perpetrators of the preceding terrorist attacks on Shia Muslims, which killed over 40 people, including several children. The attacks had been carried out by the banned Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ).¹¹

WHO ARE THE HAZARAS?

There are at least three theories about the origins of the Persian-speaking Hazaras.¹²

According to scholars like Armenius Vambery,¹³ Mountstuart Elphinston,¹⁴ Alexander Burns¹⁵ and H.W. Bellew,¹⁶ the

10 Human Rights Watch, 'We are the Walking Dead: Killings of Shia Hazaras in Balochistan, Pakistan.' June 2014, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/pakistan0614_ForUpload.pdf (accessed May 15, 2018).

11 Malik Siraj Akbar, 'Who Is Killing Pakistan's Shias?' *Huffington Post*, October 26, 2016, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/malik-siraj-akbar/who-is-killing-pakistans_b_8396140.html (accessed May 15, 2018).

12 They should not be confused with the Hindko-speaking largely Sunni Hazaras (*Hazarewal*) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK).

13 John Murray, *Travel in Central Asia*, 1864, London.

14 *The Kingdom of Kabul*, 1978, Nisa Traders, Quetta.

15 John Murray, *Travels into Bokhara*, 1839, London.

16 Thacker, *The Races of Afghanistan*, 1880, Spink & Co, Calcutta.

Hazaras are the descendants of Mongol soldiers who came to Afghanistan with Changez Khan's army in the 13th century. According to Bellew, Mongol soldiers were,

...planted here [central Afghanistan] in detachments of a thousand fighting men by Changez Khan in the first quarter of the thirteenth century. It is said that Changez Khan left ten such detachments here, nine in the Hazarah of Kabul and the tenth in the Hazarah of Pakli [Pakhlai] to the east of the Indus.¹⁷

According to this version, the word Hazara is the Farsi equivalent of the Mongol word *ming* or *mingan*, meaning a thousand. The Mongols divided their troops into groups of ten: *dah*, hundred: *sad*, and thousand: *hazar*.

According to Olaf Caroe, Changez Khan left Afghanistan in 1222, after having decimated large parts of it. On his death bed in 1227, he bequeathed the Afghan provinces to his second son Chaghatai. Chaghatai and his successors did not make any efforts to occupy or administer these Afghan provinces. What he left were military colonists in central Afghanistan. These Mongol colonists came to be known as Hazaras, derived from the Persian *hazar* for one thousand.¹⁸

Most western scholars and specialists on Afghanistan, such as E.F. Fox, W.K. Fraser-Tytler, E.E. Bacon, W. Thesiger and G.K. Dulling and certain Afghan scholars like Sayed Jamaluddin Al-Afghani have accepted the theory of the Hazaras as descendants of the Mongols.¹⁹

17 Sayed Askar Mousavi, *The Hazaras Of Afghanistan: An Historical, Cultural, Economic And Political Study*, 1998, Curzon Press, Surrey, p.24-25.

18 Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans*, 1958, OUP, Oxford. This edition is OUP, Karachi, 2009, pp.135-36.

19 Sayed Askar Mousavi, Op cit. p.26.

A variation of this theory as developed by H.F. Schurmann,²⁰ is that the Hazaras are not the descendants of the Mongols alone; rather they represent a mixture of races – Mongols, Turks, Tajik, Afghan, etc. According to this theory, the Hazaras emerged between the 13th and 15th centuries as a mixed people from the integration of several races and cultures.

According to M.H. Kakar,²¹ the Mongol soldiers who entered Afghanistan were either unmarried or did not have their wives with them; they married Tajik women of the central and neighbouring regions of Afghanistan. Inter-marriage with the Tajiks, who were of Iranian origin and spoke Farsi, influenced the language of these newcomers and laid the foundation for the new Farsi dialect known as *Hazaragi*.²²

A third theory, as developed by French scholar J.P. Ferrier,²³ is that the Hazaras have inhabited Afghanistan since the time of Alexander. As proof of his theory, he quotes battle accounts by the Greek historian Quintus Curtius, of the excursions of Alexander into central Afghanistan. Ferrier seeks to establish that the people mentioned in these battle accounts were in fact the forefathers of the people currently known as the Hazaras.²⁴

According to Afghan scholar Abdul Hay Habibi, the existence of the name *Hazara* in ancient Chinese and Greek works discredits claims that the name is of Mongol origin coined at the time of Changez Khan. Habibi maintains that *hazara* is an ancient Aryan word, meaning ‘pure-hearted’ and ‘generous’, and not in this case *hazar* (or thousand), the Farsi

20 *The Mongols of Afghanistan*, 1962, University of California.

21 *Afghanistan: A Study in International Political Development: 1880-1896*, 1971, Punjab Educational Press, Lahore.

22 Sayed Askar Mousavi, Op cit., p.29-30.

23 John Murray, *Caravan Journeys and Wanderings in Persia, Afghanistan, Turkistan and Baluchistan*, 1857, London.

24 Ibid, pp. 21-22.

translation of the Mongoli *ming*.²⁵ Subscribers to this idea point to the similar facial structure of the Hazaras with those of Buddhist murals and statues in the region.²⁶ Firdousi also mentions the fiercely resistant warriors of Babaristan which can be identified as Hazarajat or the central province of Bamyan. Famous Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang passed through central Afghanistan in 644 and mentioned two capitals, Ho-See-Na (Ghazni) and Ho-See-La (Hazara) in Archosia (Afghanistan).²⁷

Anthropologists and historians will no doubt continue to discuss the merits of each theory endlessly, but for our purposes suffice to say that the Hazaras were settled in central Afghanistan.

HAZARA MIGRATION INTO BRITISH INDIA/ PAKISTAN

The Hazaras moved into what is Pakistan today in three distinct waves. The first was a trickle when some Hazaras came to British India, largely to seek employment as manual labourers in construction projects like the railways (including the Bolan Pass railway connecting Quetta and Karachi), mining and quarrying. During the first Anglo-Afghan War (1838-1840) some Hazaras from Afghanistan enlisted in the British-Indian Army as scouts and infantrymen and served in 'Broadfoot's Sappers'.²⁸

The second wave was much more substantial and induced by the persecution during the reign of Amir Abdul Rehman (1880-1901) in Afghanistan. According to some reports, almost half of the Hazara population in Afghanistan was either killed or

25 Ibid, p. 23.

26 Imran Yusuf, 'Who are the Hazara?' *The Express Tribune*, October, 5 2011, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/267225/who-are-the-hazara/> (accessed May 16, 2018).

27 Sayed Askar Mousavi, op cit, p. 22.

28 Sayed Askar Mousavi, op cit. p. 142.

forced to flee. It was during this time, especially after 1893, that pockets of Hazara refugee population started forming in Quetta.

The third wave, after Pakistan was created, was during the Taliban period in Afghanistan in the 1990s and thereafter. The Taliban, who view the Shias as blasphemers, targeted the Hazaras for supporting the Northern Alliance, forcing them to seek refuge in Pakistan, Iran or Central Asia. In August 1998, when Taliban forces entered the northern Afghanistan city of Mazar-i-Sharif, they killed at least 2,000 civilians, the majority of them Hazaras. In the immediate aftermath of the city's occupation by the Taliban, the newly installed governor, Mullah Manon Niazi, delivered public speeches in which he termed the Hazaras "infidels" and threatened them with death if they did not convert to Sunni Islam. These events caused many Hazaras to flee.²⁹

HAZARAS IN BRITISH INDIA

While there was a smattering of Hazaras in the British Indian army in the 19th Century, a more sustained presence came about in the 20th. Lord Kitchner, the then commander-in-chief (C-in-C) in India, while touring the North West Frontier in 1904, directed Major C.W. Jacob to raise a battalion of Hazara pioneers. Previous to this, the bulk of the Hazaras in the Indian army were those enlisted in the 124th and 126th Balochistan Infantry and a troop in the Guides Cavalry. Major Jacob (later Field Marshal) created the famous 106th Hazara Pioneers by combining the 124th and 126th Balochistan Infantries. The composition of the battalion was eight companies of Hazaras and their permanent peace station was Quetta. At this point the Pioneers were mostly engaged in non-combative service such as road-building and other heavy works. During WWI,

29 Human Rights Watch, *op cit*.

the 106th Hazara Pioneers were sent to fight in Mesopotamia and later to France in 1915 where the company served with distinction. Still later it served in the NWFP, Kurdistan, Baghdad, East and North Africa and in Waziristan in 1923-24.³⁰ Due to the economic crisis threatening Britain after WWI, all Pioneer Regiments in India, including the Hazara Pioneers, were disbanded in 1932-33.³¹

However, during WWII the British recruited more Hazaras in the British Indian Army. Some thrived: one of them was General Musa Khan, who later became C-in-C of the Pakistan army and was the army chief during the 1965 war against India.³² Other Hazaras joined the colonial government of British Balochistan in the civil service; some started small businesses and cottage industries that flourished alongside the colonial economy of Quetta.³³

Gradually, over a period of time, the Hazaras were able to assimilate into British-run Quetta. A key factor for this was that many Hazara children received English education in British-run schools. They were considered to be among the most developed communities, being educated, hardworking and with impressive women's literacy figures. The women worked in hospitals, schools and universities. By the 1940s, the Hazaras, who then numbered about 50,000, were better established in the civil and military bureaucracy of the province, as compared to the much larger Baloch and Pashtun populations.³⁴

30 Sayed Askar Mousavi, op cit. p.143.

31 Ibid, p.144.

32 According to Khaled Ahmed, op cit. Musa Khan probably foresaw the fate of the Hazaras in Pakistan and left a will to get himself buried in Mazar-i-Sharif.

33 'The Shia Hazara of Pakistan; A Community Under Siege', *Minority Support Pakistan*, Ohio: USA, February 2012, https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/msp/pages/181/attachments/original/1410931791/The_Hazara_Shia_of_PakistanvApril_16_edited.pdf?1410931791 (accessed May 16, 2018).

34 Ibid.

HAZARAS IN POST-PARTITION PAKISTAN

The Hazaras, living in what became Pakistan in 1947, were among the first groups to accept and endorse the leadership of Mohd Ali Jinnah. The first group of Hazaras led by one Ustad Gholam Nabi, arrived in Delhi on October 1, 1946, for a meeting with Jinnah, almost a year before Partition eventually took place. Later, they would send representatives to Karachi, the then capital of Pakistan, as a further sign of their support.³⁵

Since the creation of Pakistan, the Hazaras have become an underprivileged community there. At present about 500,000 to 600,000 of them are mainly confined to Quetta, where they are dispersed around two main areas of the city: Hazara Town and Marriabad. The second largest concentration is in Mach. Marriabad is near the cantonment and the commercial district of Alamdar Road. Hazara Town is situated at the eastern extreme of the city. A prominent Hazara businessman established it in the late 1980s as affordable housing for lower-income Hazara families as well as for recent Hazara arrivals fleeing the Talibanization of Afghanistan.³⁶

Though well integrated into Pakistan society, it was not until May 10, 1962, that the government of Pakistan formally declared their status. This was operationalized on June 15, 1963, when the City Magistrate in Quetta issued a formal notification: "This is to certify that, [the] Hazara tribe has been declared as a local tribe of Quetta division by the Government of Pakistan." Thus the Hazaras, who had migrated to British India at the turn of the century, found themselves formally, some sixty years later, as nationals of Pakistan.³⁷

The Hazaras have served Pakistan with distinction. Apart from Gen. Musa Khan, others who have won gallantry awards

35 Sayed Askar Mousavi, *op cit.* p.145.

36 The Shia Hazara of Pakistan, *op cit.*

37 Sayed Askar Mousavi, *op cit.* p.145.

include Air Marshal S.A. Changezi, Lt. Col. Zafar Ali, Flt. Lt. Samad Ali, Maj. Mohammad Ali, and Capt. Zulfiqar Ali. The last two died fighting in the Kargil War.

The eminent position that the Hazaras enjoyed got a jolt when a quota system was implemented in Balochistan in 1972, to accommodate the relatively undereducated and underrepresented population of the province. As a result, quota recruitment gradually replaced merit placements and it is believed that the last generation of all-merit Hazara civil servants had retired by the beginning of the 21st Century. The Hazaras thus lost “their educational advantages due to a system in which ethnicity was prioritized over ability.”³⁸ Consequently, the public workforce in Balochistan today is approximately 95 per cent non-Hazara, almost all Pashtun and Punjabis, with a smattering of Baloch. Prior to the quota system, the Hazaras had occupied nearly 50 per cent of all civil service positions in Quetta. According to statistics compiled from the Balochistan Public Service Commission, Hazaras today still score, on average, two to three hundred points higher on civil service and university entrance exams than do their Baloch and Pashtun counterparts. Yet, their total share of civil service positions has fallen to less than 5 per cent in 2012 due to the quota system.³⁹

With 5 per cent representation in the civil service, the Hazaras have lost the kind of access to power that they had formerly enjoyed. Now, they have to depend on others to resolve their issues. The impact of this is visible when they are faced with violence and have to run from pillar to post to get justice.

The Pakistani Hazaras have developed significant differences with the Hazaras in Hazarajat in Afghanistan.

38 The Shia Hazara of Pakistan, op cit.

39 Ibid.

For example, the two speak with different accents. While the latter speak a very pure Persian with a Hazaragi accent and dialect, the former speak a Persian greatly influenced by Urdu and English, to the point where other Hazaras understand them only with difficulty. Another major difference is the lessening of tribal prejudices and feuds among the Pakistani Hazaras, while these are still very much in existence inside Afghanistan. Such prejudices and feuds have been replaced with a unity of identity. This strong sense of identity has led to the glorification of Changez Khan, who is hailed as the true father of all Hazaras, and the supreme politico-military leader of all times.⁴⁰

SECTARIAN MILITANCY IN PAKISTAN

The targeting of the Hazaras, has to be seen in the larger context of the growth of intolerance and sectarianism in Pakistan and the large-scale killing of the Shias in different parts of the country. Over the years, the minorities in Pakistan have become victims of hate speech, frequently accused of blasphemy and subject to attacks on their person and places of worship. Mohammad Ali Jinnah's August 11, 1947, speech in the National Assembly, "you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques...", and so forth, has been all but forgotten, resurrected and dusted out only on his birth anniversary, if that. Today, not only are non-Muslims the victims but also Muslim sects like the Sufis, Ahmadis and Shias. As the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) notes: "pervasive intolerance [is] widely tolerated" and the "religious and sectarian minorities [pay] the price for that with their blood."⁴¹ According to Farahnaz Isphani, in the

40 Ibid, pp.146-47.

41 *'Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Annual Report 2012'*, HRCP (2012): Islamabad.

eighteen months period between 2012 and part of 2013, there were seventy-seven attacks against Shias, fifty-four against Ahmadis, thirty-seven against Christians, sixteen against Hindus and three against Sikhs.⁴²

Shias in Pakistan are the second largest Shia population after Iran. They are spread across the length and breadth of the country. Concentrations are in Gilgit-Baltistan, where they are in a majority, Quetta and other cities like Lahore, Karachi, Rawalpindi and Multan. Shia mosques dot the landscape across the country.

The majority of Pakistan's Shias are adherents of the Twelver school of thought. There are also other sub-sects like the Ismailis, Khojas and Bohras. Most of the Shia are not easily distinguishable by either name or identity, except for the Hazaras, who stand out because of their facial features and language. It is the Hazaras who have borne the brunt of the killings. According to estimates, of every 10 Shias killed in Pakistan, five are Hazaras.⁴³ As a result of the targeted killings, Hazara women have started wearing *purdah* in order to hide their distinctive features, something they had not done earlier. The men have taken to wearing sunglasses to prevent identification.⁴⁴

The roots of religion playing such a fundamental part in the country's politics can be traced to the Pakistan movement and, specifically, the opportunistic use of Islam sanctioned by

42 Farahnaz Ispahani, *Purifying The Land of The Pure: Pakistan's Religious Minorities*, 2015, Harper Collins India, Noida, p. 3.

43 Uzair Hasan Rizvi, 'The Rising Threat Against Shia Muslims in Pakistan', *The Wire*, June 11, 2016, <https://thewire.in/politics/the-rising-threat-against-shia-muslims-in-pakistan> (accessed May 16, 2018).

44 Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), "Balochistan: Giving the people a chance", June 2013, p.28. <http://www.hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/wp-content/pdf/Balochistan%20Report%20New%20Final.pdf>.

Jinnah in the run up to the 1945-46 elections.⁴⁵ With slogans like: “Pakistan ka matlab kya? – la ilah illallah” [What is the meaning of Pakistan – there is no God but Allah], there was no way that the religious genie could be put back into the bottle. The Constituent Assembly, even before it had drafted the constitution, approved the Objectives Resolution in which Muslims were enabled to “order their lives, in the individual and collective spheres, in accordance with the teachings and requirements of Islam as set out in the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah”, while the religious minorities were promised “adequate provision to freely profess and practice their religions and develop their cultures.” Zia would surreptitiously remove the word ‘freely’.⁴⁶

Chandra Chattopadhyaya, the leader of the Opposition in the Constituent Assembly voiced a passionate plea against the adoption of the Objectives Resolution: “I say, give up this division of the people into Muslims and non-Muslims. Let us call ourselves one nation. Let us call ourselves one people — people of Pakistan.” But his words fell on deaf ears. He went further, arguing: ‘I do not consider myself a member of the minority community. I consider myself to be one of seven crore Pakistanis. Let me have the right to retain that privilege’.⁴⁷ No one paid attention.

The Justice Munir Commission that was set up in the wake of the 1953 anti-Ahmadi riots in Lahore debated the status of the Shias, since leading Deobandi *ulema* had issued edicts

45 For details, see the authors’ *Pakistan: Courting the Abyss*, 2018, Harper Collins India, Noida, pp. 33-37.

46 Khaled Ahmed, *Pakistan: Behind The Ideological Mask*, 2004, Vanguard Books, Lahore, p.15.

47 Raoof Hasan, ‘Look, there is blood on our hands’, *Daily Times*, May 1, 2018, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/234387/look-there-is-blood-on-our-hands/> (accessed May 16, 2018).

of apostasy against them. The report clearly recognized the dangers that the use of Islam in the Pakistan movement had created and tried to warn succeeding generations about the explosive issue of sectarianism, that is tearing Pakistan apart today. “What is happening now”, said the judges, “seems almost a writing on the wall, and God help us if we do not stop these... people from cutting each other’s throat.” Unfortunately, the fundamentals of the report were ignored then and continue to be ignored now.

Prior to the early 1980s, clashes between the Sunnis and Shias in Pakistan were sporadic and occurred usually during Muharram processions. With the exception of Z.A. Bhutto’s 1974 constitutional amendment declaring the Ahmadis as non-Muslims, the state itself did not really have a sectarian agenda. This changed under Zia under whom Islamization moved inexorably towards ‘Sunnification’⁴⁸ and that too, of the Deobandi variety. It created dissensions among various Islamic sects and the government’s effort to implement *sharia* brought out the old juristic and doctrinal differences not only between the Shias and the Sunnis, but also among the four Sunni schools themselves. Additional factors like the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the Afghan *jihad*, among others, culminated in the exponential growth of sectarianism. Pakistan became the playground between Iran which supported the Shias in their effort to counter Zia’s Islamization, and Saudi Arabia, which backed his efforts.

The Pakistani Shias set up the Tehrik-e-Nifaze-Fiqh-e-Jafaria (TNFJ) in 1979 to protect the community from Zia’s efforts to create a Sunni state, while the Sunni Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) supported the establishment of the militant Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) in 1985, founded by Haq Nawaz Jhangvi. SSP was an outright militant

48 Farzana Sheikh, *Making Sense of Pakistan*, 2009, C Hurst & Co., London, p.64.

organization, whose objective was to erode the Shia influence in Pakistan. It indulged in several high-profile assassinations of Iranian diplomats, including that of the Iranian Consul-General in Lahore, Agha Sadiq Ganji, in 1990. With militant organisations on both sides, there was a spate of assassinations of government and military officials, both Shia and Sunni, as well as the targeted killings of ordinary citizens, mostly Shia, on the basis of sectarian identity.

Of late, many of the attacks in Quetta, including those on the Hazaras and the Christian community, have been claimed by or have been linked to the Islamic State (IS, previously Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham, ISIS). IS and LeJ have claimed some of these attacks jointly. There does appear to be an understanding between the two: LeJ providing the operatives who carry out the attacks while using the IS moniker to enlarge its appeal and reach. The ideological common ground between the two terror outfits is violent anti-Shia bigotry.

The impact of the growth of sectarianism has been such that even enforcement officials have not escaped it. According to Raza Rumi,

While Mumtaz Qadri's case⁴⁹ is, perhaps, the best known, but across the country, the police, judges and other state functionaries demonstrate worrying signs of bias, ideological posturing, and in rare cases, direct violence. Judges have also shown fear and sometimes bias influences their decisions. State officials are influenced by society and we have turned the country into a cesspool of ideological confusion with vague theocratic aspirations.⁵⁰

49 Mumtaz Qadri was the security guard who shot dead Punjab Governor Salman Taseer in January 2011, accusing him of blasphemy.

50 Raza Rumi, 'Pakistan's beleaguered Hazaras', *The Express Tribune*, November 16, 2014, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/791727/pakistans-beleaguered-hazaras/> (accessed May 15, 2018).

According to partial data on the South Asian Terrorism Portal (SATP) targeted violence against Shias from 2001 to May 2018 has resulted in a total 2693 killed and 4847 injured in 471 incidents. The violence peaked in 2013, with 504 killed and 965 injured in 81 incidents.⁵¹

HAZARA KILLINGS

The objective of the organized and systematic violence against the Hazaras in Quetta is nothing less than their complete extermination in the country. According to Farahnaz Isphani, “while human rights experts quibbled over whether the numbers of dead merited the use of the term ‘genocide’, other convincingly argued that the purpose of the anti-Shia attacks in Balochistan was, in fact, similar to that of genocide – to eliminate an entire people.”⁵²

Such violence has developed over three phases.

The first phase, from 1981 till the mid-1990s, consisted of vicious propaganda and the spewing of hatred. Prior to 1981 there was very little anti-Shia propaganda in Quetta, or anywhere else in Pakistan for that matter. It was Zia-al-Haq’s rule that injected sectarianism across the country. The anti-Shia campaign centered on labelling the Shias as *Kafirs* (infidels). The first such messages of ‘Shia *Kafir*’ were found scrawled on the walls of Quetta in 1981. Not much attention was paid to this, since at that time Pakistan was still a relatively pluralist society.

The second phase of violence against the Hazaras began on October 5, 1999, when two gunmen on foot shot Sardar Nisar Ali Hazara, Balochistan’s Education Minister, at point-blank range just as he was leaving his office at the Quetta Secretariat. His driver and bodyguard were killed immediately, while the

51 South Asia Terrorism Portal, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/Shias_killed_Pakistan.htm (accessed May 20, 2018).

52 Farahnaz Isphani, op cit, p.224.

minister lay bleeding, mistakenly left for dead by the attackers. The almost two decade-long anti-Shia propaganda of the LeJ in Quetta had finally erupted into physical violence. Deterioration was rapid thereafter.⁵³

Between 1999 and 2003, 17 high-profile members of the Hazara community were assassinated in broad daylight in Quetta. Hazara professionals such as doctors, engineers, lawyers, businessmen, bureaucrats and students were the key targets of the attacks.⁵⁴ In what was to become a pattern, not a single perpetrator was brought to justice. What the killings demonstrated was the ease and the freedom with which LeJ terrorists operated in Quetta. The *modus operandi* was simple: the terrorists waited in crowded commercial areas near the workplace of the victims, opened fire when they came out and then disappeared into the crowd.⁵⁵

The third or current phase of violence is characterized by a continuation of high-profile assassinations together with an increasing number of mass-killings of the Hazaras. The first such mass-killing happened on June 8, 2003, when 12 Hazara police cadets were gunned down while they were going to the police training academy. Two LeJ terrorists on motorcycle intercepted their van at a traffic circle, opened fire on the vehicle with high-powered weapons, killing 12 and injuring 9.

This first attack set off a torrent. Less than a month later, on July 4, 2003, three LeJ terrorists entered an Imam-Bargah during Friday prayers and opened fire with AK-47s and hurled grenades on the more than 500 worshippers gathered there. The attack led to the death of 47 Hazara men and boys and injured more than 65.⁵⁶ The LeJ claimed responsibility for the attack.

53 *The Shia Hazaras of Pakistan*, op cit.

54 Raza Rumi, op cit.

55 *The Shia Hazaras of Pakistan*, op cit.

56 'Attack on Quetta imambargah leaves 44 dead', *Dawn*, July 5, 2003, <http://archives.dawn.com/2003/07/05/top1.htm> (accessed May 15, 2018).

Eight months later, on March 24, 2004, the LeJ slaughtered 36 Hazara men and boys, including a 5 year old, as their procession was going through Liaquat Bazar, near the Balochistan Governor's house. In what has become their trademark, LeJ terrorists opened indiscriminate fire with AK-47s and hurled grenades from four separate rooftop locations surrounding the street, in a well-planned and coordinated attack. The terrorists continued firing for about 20 minutes, while the police guarding the procession scrambled for cover. In the ensuing chaos, police fired on the crowd itself, killing five Hazara men. There were massive protest demonstrations in Quetta in the days that followed.

These three attacks signaled that the LeJ campaign of sectarian killings targeting Shias elsewhere in Pakistan would henceforth be focused on the Hazaras as the primary target. After each attack, the LeJ has claimed responsibility and vowed to continue their program of "purifying Pakistan", until all Shia Hazaras were eliminated from Quetta.

The deadliest attacks, resulting in the highest death tolls recorded in sectarian violence in Pakistan occurred in January and February 2013, when bomb attacks in Quetta killed at least 180 Hazaras.

On January 10, 2013 there was a suicide bombing in a snooker club frequented by Hazaras. It killed 96 and injured at least 150. Many of those killed and injured were the victims of a car bomb near the club that exploded 10 minutes after the first, striking those who had gone to the aid of the wounded. According to HRW, initial government indifference and apathy was met by the Hazara community's refusal to bury the dead in protest. They sat on the road for several nights in freezing temperatures, with the bodies of their dead kin, awaiting justice. This sparked countrywide demonstrations in solidarity with people from all walks of life joining in and sitting on the

roads, till the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) government caved, suspended the provincial government and declared governor's rule in Balochistan.⁵⁷

A month later, on February 17, 2013, at least 84 Hazaras were killed and more than 160 were injured when a bomb exploded in a vegetable market in Hazara Town. Hundreds of kilograms of explosives that had been rigged to a water tanker were remotely detonated when the market was packed with shoppers.⁵⁸

Despite the change of governments in both the centre and the province after the 2013 general elections, the woes of the community continued. In January 2014, 28 Hazaras were killed in a suicide bomb attack in Mastung on a bus carrying pilgrims returning from Iran. This led the Hazaras to once again take to the streets with dead bodies of the victims. The government responded by temporarily suspending the bus service to prevent further attacks.

Statistics of the number of Hazaras killed vary. According to Hazara Human Rights Org, HOPE (@hopeHazara), to date there have been over 209 attacks on the community, killing over 1500, wounding over 3500, and forcing migration of 30 to 50 per cent of the entire Hazara population from Pakistan. According to the Pakistan National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) some 509 Hazara have been killed in Quetta from January 2012 to December 2017 during 46 incidents of target killing and bomb blasts, while 734 were injured.⁵⁹

57 Human Rights Watch, op cit.

58 Mohammad Zafar, 'Horrific attack: Terror revisits Quetta', *The Express Tribune*, February 17, 2013, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/508527/horrific-attack-terror-revisits-quetta/> (accessed May 17, 2018).

59 'Hazara Trader Gunned Down in Quetta', *The Daily Times*, April 19, 2018 <https://dailytimes.com.pk/229867/hazara-trader-gunned-down-in-quetta/> (accessed May 15, 2018).

According to other figures, up to 2,000 Hazaras have been killed in the last 15 years in different incidents of targeted killings and suicide bombings.⁶⁰ In May 2018, the Quetta Deputy Inspector General (DIG) submitted a report on Hazara killings to the Supreme Court, according to which 399 Shias, 36 Sunnis and 29 settlers from the Hazara community had been killed in targeted attacks during the preceding six years.⁶¹

An analysis of the Hazaras killed between October 1999 and October 2011 shows that the maximum killings till then had taken place in 2011 (24 per cent of all killings in this period) followed by 2005 (10 per cent), 2010 (9 per cent) and 2009 (8 Per cent). During the same period, the bulk of the killings took place on Liaquat Bazar-Prince Road-Mizan Chowk area (35 per cent), Saryab Road (14 per cent), Kirani Road (6 per cent) and Akhtar Road (5 per cent).⁶² Since the terrorist-prone areas are known, it is surprising that attacks continue to take place in the same locations.

The frequent attacks and killing of at least 30 Hazaras in the first four months of 2018, including six Hazara men shot dead and one injured in four separate attacks in April 2018, provoked the community to again take their protests to the streets at the end of April. Leading the women protesters, Advocate Jalila Haider said that they would not end their fast until the Army Chief Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa visited the hunger strike camp and detailed concrete steps to bring the killers to justice and to protect them. She added that the killing

60 'This has to stop. Standing with the Hazara', *The Daily Times*, April 7, 2018. <https://dailylimes.com.pk/224726/standing-with-the-hazara/>; Nasir Iqbal, 'Commission sought to probe Hazara killings', *Dawn*, January 8, 2018, www.dawn.com/news/1381724/commission-sought-to-probehazara-killings (accessed May 17, 2018).

61 Syed Ali Shah, 'Hazara killings tantamount to wiping out an entire generation, says chief justice', *Dawn*, May 11, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1407011> (accessed May 17, 2018).

62 The Shia Hazara of Pakistan, op cit.

of Hazara people had become a matter of routine. Perhaps nobody was bothered, as no one involved in the ‘genocide of Hazara community’ had been arrested so far by the security agencies.⁶³ This demand struck a chord, since it was based not merely on the ineffectiveness of the civil government, but also because, in Balochistan, it is the Army that has been calling the shots for decades.

Not surprisingly, despite the Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo and Home Minister Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti holding talks with the protesters and assuring them of ‘all-out efforts’ to protect citizens, the protestors were not convinced.⁶⁴ Likewise, they refused to call off their protests when the Federal Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal met them. This reflected the loss of faith in the government’s ability to bring the attackers to justice. It was only after a meeting with the Army Chief Gen. Bajwa on May 1, 2018, that the leaders of the Hazara community agreed to call off the protest. To his credit, following the assurances he gave the protestors, the security forces were galvanized into action. On May 17, 2018 they gunned down Salman Badeni, the provincial commander of the LeJ, and two operatives in a firefight in which an Army Colonel also lost his life.⁶⁵

Several elements of the targeted killing of the Hazaras are worth noting. First, these attacks have continued and the roots

63 ‘Hazaras on hunger strike in Quetta want assurance of security, justice from Gen Bajwa’ *Dawn*, May 1, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1404828/hazaras-on-hunger-strike-in-quetta-want-assurance-of-security-justice-from-gen-bajwa> (accessed May 17, 2018).

64 Saleem Shahid , ‘Govt talks with Hazara protesters inconclusive’, *Dawn*, May 1, 2018 <https://www.dawn.com/news/1404857/govt-talks-with-hazara-protesters-inconclusive> (accessed May 17, 2018).

65 ‘Col martyred, Pak army kills LeJ commander involved in killing over 100 Hazara people’, *The News*, May 17, 2018, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/317542-army-officer-martyred-lej-commander-among-three-terrorists-killed-in-bstan-op> (accessed May 20, 2018).

of terrorism targeting the community have not been traced despite the deployment of a large number of security personnel and all shades of intelligence agencies in Quetta. All this raises questions about the failure and inability of the state to protect half a million people in a single urban concentration.⁶⁶ Second, the attacks themselves are well-planned and coordinated and are not random. This would indicate availability of sufficient advance information. Third, almost every family in the community has lost a relative in these attacks and there does not appear to be an end to the targeting. As the *Dawn* put it, “Clearly either the state is complicit or its security policies are flawed.”⁶⁷

THE MASTUNG MASSACRE

The massacre of a group of Hazara pilgrims in September 2011 is especially noteworthy because it exhibits many dimensions of what is happening to the Hazaras repeatedly.

On September 20, 2011, a group of 37 Hazara men, women, and children of Quetta boarded a bus headed for Taftan on the Pakistan-Iran border. From there they would proceed to various Shia holy sites in Iran. Thousands of Hazaras make visits to the tombs of Shia Imams in Iran and Iraq. For them, these pilgrimages hold nearly as much reverence as the Haj.⁶⁸

After traveling for about two hours, the bus was intercepted near Mastung by heavily armed men in three vehicles in broad daylight on a major highway, N25, linking Quetta to Taftan.⁶⁹ Wielding AK-47’s and rocket propelled grenade launchers

66 Mushtaq Rajpar, op cit.

67 ‘Hazara killings’, *Dawn*, September 12, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1357041/hazara-killings> (accessed May 17, 2018).

68 Sayed Askar Mousavi, op cit. p.148.

69 According to Khaled Ahmed, op cit. (2016) the Mastung Road approach to Quetta is a death trap despite the fact that the district contains a cadet college supplying manpower to the army, p.264.

the unmasked attackers boarded the bus; they let the Sunni passengers go and thereafter ordered the Hazara passengers to disembark. The attackers forced them to sit facing the bus, and began shooting them at point blank range, killing 26 and wounding 6. Then as they had arrived, the assassins drove back down the highway toward Quetta.

Later in the evening, three Hazara men travelling by car to the scene to search for missing relatives were waylaid by the same attackers on the outskirts of Quetta. The attackers sprayed their car with automatic weapons, killing two of the three Hazaras, and drove off.

The Balochistan High Court held four proceedings on the massacre on September 26, October 4, November 16, and December 13, 2011. The investigators were unable (or unwilling) to present any physical evidence or testimony in the case. They admitted to having interviewed only the bus driver and presented a two-page transcript of the interview conducted with him at the scene of the attack. There was, however, no gathering of forensic or crime scene evidence; no attempt to interview any of the 11 surviving witnesses; no attempt to trace the three vehicles used by the attackers; no attempt to contact the security force personnel at the six check-posts through which the vehicles would have passed. Even a map showing all the locations relevant to the case could not be produced. Ironically, the terrorists themselves provided the evidence: a grainy video depicting the entire massacre from start to finish, which they posted on YouTube and Jihadist websites in mid-November 2011.⁷⁰

A few key conclusions about the Mastung massacre are noteworthy as they are applicable to nearly all incidents of sectarian terrorism that have taken place/are taking place.

70 The Shia Hazaras of Pakistan, op cit.

Firstly, the blame game about why no preventative measures were taken to ensure the safety and security of the pilgrims. The Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police publicly blamed the Baloch-owned Shalimar Transport Ltd. company for failing to notify the police and obtain permission for their proposed travel route. The company, in turn, claimed it did notify the local police commander but received no response.

Second, about 20 minutes after leaving the station, the bus was stopped at the final police check-post located on the outskirts of Quetta city. The driver provided an itinerary and passenger manifest to the commander of the check-post. He either chose to take no further action or, as many Hazaras now suspect, played a role in notifying the attackers of the bus's timing and whereabouts. The bus then continued on its journey passing through one Frontier Corps (FC) check-post and two Balochistan 'Levies' (tribal militias) check-posts, the last of which was located about 200 yards from the site of the massacre.⁷¹

Third, the police response immediately following the massacre was tardy and deeply flawed. It took them and rescue workers an hour to arrive at the scene. Even thereafter, the crime scene remained unsecure and chaotic. No attempts were made to gather evidence or conduct forensic investigation.

Fourth, the Mastung shooting marked the first time—though it would not be the last—that the LeJ perpetrated a mass killing of Hazaras after first segregating them from the Sunnis.⁷²

IMPACT ON HAZARAS

The *Dawn* perhaps best summed up the impact of the targeted killing on the community when with it wrote editorially:

71 Ibid.

72 Human Rights Watch, op cit.

What the Hazaras have had to endure over the last several years in Balochistan is nothing less than a blot on this nation... They have been driven into enforced ghettoisation for the sake of safety, rendering their children's education disrupted and thriving businesses abandoned. Tens of thousands have chosen to risk the perils of illegal migration to Australia over their restricted existence and the dangers that lurk on the streets of the province's heavily securitised capital.

It also noted with regret the diminishing outrage, attention and solidarity in the rest of the country with regard to the Hazaras. "The slow yet steady decimation of the Hazara community has been relegated to a footnote, even as we congratulate ourselves for having triumphed over violent extremism."⁷³

According to HRW, quoting survivors and victims' family members, the ongoing attacks have caused profound harm to the social, cultural, and economic life of the Hazara community.⁷⁴ Increasingly, members of the community have been compelled to live a fearful existence of restricted movement and activities limited to the Hazara-dominated neighborhoods of Marriabad and Hazara Town. This has caused economic hardship and curtailed access to education. The oppressive situation has prompted large numbers of Hazaras to flee Pakistan for refuge in other countries.⁷⁵ Some Hazaras feel that the attacks were meant not only to kill them but to worsen their precarious economic situation by forcing Hazara-owned businesses to move from other parts of the city into Hazara-dominated neighborhoods or even leave the country for the sake of their safety. Some families have become destitute after the sole

73 'Hazara protests', *Dawn*, May 2, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1405138/hazaraprotests> (accessed May 16, 2018).

74 Human Rights Watch.

75 *Ibid.*

bread earner was killed and have become dependent on doles from neighbours. Some have described their plight as akin to being taken hostage. There is a widespread belief that the law enforcers were on the side of the killers. Community leaders say they see little interest from the government in bringing an end to the killings.

As a result, the one industry that has started booming in Quetta is that of human trafficking. Thousands of Hazaras have sought refuge in Australia convinced that the government and military cannot or will not protect them from violent extremists. Declan Walsh describes the dangers that they face on the journey. The illegal journey — across Southeast Asia by air, land and sea at the mercy of unscrupulous human traffickers — is long and perilous. Several hundred Hazaras have died on that route in recent years, especially when rickety boats have sunk at sea between Indonesia and Christmas Island. The latter is a small Australian territory about 240 miles off the Indonesian coast, where they apply for political asylum. There are some people whose entire families have drowned *en route* to Australia.⁷⁶

Between late 2001 and June 2012, 964 asylum seekers and crew members from various countries are known to have lost their lives on this passage. In the first week of April 2013, according to official figures, the Australian Navy intercepted 10 boats carrying 760 people, most bound for Christmas Island. The majority of cases from Afghanistan and Pakistan were ethnic Hazaras, whose numbers have grown to about 25,000 in Australia, officials say.⁷⁷

76 Mobeen Azhar, 'Hell on Earth': Inside Quetta's Hazara community', *BBC World Service*, May 1, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-22248500> (accessed May 15, 2018).

77 Declan Walsh, 'Fleeing Pakistan Violence, Hazaras Brave Uncertain Journey' *The New York Times*, April 27, 2013, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/28/world/asia/fleeing-violence-in-pakistan-hazaras-brave-uncertain-journey.html> (accessed May 16, 2018).

However, for the Hazaras, the journey was worth the risk. As one of them told Walsh, “I’d rather die in the boat than in a bomb blast. At least this way, I get to choose.” He went on to say that the next bomb was only a matter of time and that, “We can live without the basics of life — gas, electricity and so on — but we can’t live with the fear.”⁷⁸ Or as a university student said, he could not live “looking behind my shoulders” for the rest of his life, and decided to migrate.

Estimates vary about the number of people who have so migrated. According to one estimate, about 60,000 people have left Quetta since 2013. Citing HRCP, advocate Jalila Haider puts the number to be about 90,000, including those who have either migrated internally and those who could afford it, who have fled to Europe, the US or Australia.⁷⁹

Not surprisingly, the Hazara community feels under siege. Its leaders told a HRCP delegation in 2009 that “security agencies and the government bore ethnic and sectarian biases against them and were protecting and patronizing the perpetrators of the crimes against them.” HRCP’s conclusion was that the community had lost trust in the provincial government’s ability to book the perpetrators.⁸⁰

Sectarian considerations apart, HRCP further noted the relative prosperity of Hazara community due to the substantial remittances received through expatriates. This also accounted for the increasing crimes against the community. “It seemed a campaign had been launched to terrorize the community so

78 Ibid.

79 Zofeen T. Ebrahim, ‘Killing them slowly’, *The News*, May 2018 <http://tns.thenews.com.pk/killing-slowly/#.WvfxCyC-nIU> (accessed May 20, 2018).

80 Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), 2009, *Pushed to the Wall*, Report of the HRCP Fact-Finding Mission to Balochistan, October 2009 <http://hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/wp-content/pdf/ff/14.pdf> (accessed May 16, 2018).

that they left Quetta by selling their businesses and property at throwaway prices. Pamphlets had been left at their homes telling them to sell their houses and leave.’⁸¹

An HRCP mission that met the representatives of the Hazara community in June 2011 found that there was no change in their targeting. Despite meeting everyone in the hierarchy from police officers to the President and Prime Minister, nothing had changed. The political parties just joined the community for *fateha* (the first verse of the Qu’ran, in this case, read in the memory of the recently killed) and left. The inescapable conclusion was that the state was getting them killed since they were being killed in front of check-posts.⁸²

One other consequence of the killings is the impact it has had on the education of the next generation of the Hazaras. Some years earlier, there were around 250 Hazara students in Balochistan University in Quetta. By 2013 there were only two or three left. The majority of the Hazara students in the university used to be girls because boys were usually sent to big cities outside Balochistan for education. By 2013, there were no Hazara girls in Balochistan University. Of the 11 Hazara faculty members at the University, none remained.⁸³

LAKSHKAR-E-JHANGVI⁸⁴

The anti-Shia and anti-Iran hard-line Deobandi sectarian terrorist outfit Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) has claimed responsibility for most of the attacks and killings of the Hazaras.

81 Ibid.

82 Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), *Hopes, Fears and Alienation in Balochistan*, Report of an HRCP Fact-finding Mission, Lahore, May 2012 <http://hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/wp-content/pdf/ff/12.pdf>, p-10 (accessed May 16, 2018).

83 Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), June 2013, op cit, p-28-29.

84 For details of the origins of the LeJ, see <http://www.satp.org/terrorist-profile/pakistan/lashkar-e--jhangvi-lej>.

The LeJ, founded in Punjab in 1996, was an offshoot of the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP). The main support base of the SSP was Punjab's Sunni urban upper-middle class business owners and merchants. Its main agenda was and is to convert Pakistan into a Sunni state and declare the Shias *kafirs*, worthy of death. In its early years SSP's operations were limited to targeting the Shias in Punjab. The Hazaras were not yet on their radar. An unstated objective was "to create a counter-weight to the economic hegemony and pro-democracy political influence of the feudal landowners of central Punjab, the majority of whom were Shias."⁸⁵ Little wonder then that the SSP received strong support from General Zia.

A section of SSP broke away over leadership issues to form the LeJ, which soon established itself as the most violent sectarian organization in Pakistan, claiming nearly all incidents of sectarian terrorism in the country. Its founder Riaz Basra was killed in an 'encounter' in 2002 and was succeeded by Akram Lahori and Malik Ishaq. Both these terrorists were imprisoned on and off for years, despite which they carried on directing LeJ operations.

LeJ has had a close working relationship with the Taliban and the Haqqani network. Its targeting of the Hazaras started initially in Afghanistan when almost its entire leadership, with the prompting of the Pakistan Army fought alongside the Taliban against the Northern Alliance in the 1990s. In 1998 it aided the Taliban in the massacre of hundreds of Hazaras living in Mazar-e-Sharif, leading to the flood of Hazara refugees into Balochistan.⁸⁶ There was a spike in Hazara killings in Pakistan,

85 The Shia Hazaras of Pakistan, op cit.

86 Human Rights Watch, 2018 'UN Urged to Prevent More Killings as Taliban Offensive Continues', news release, September 15, 1998, <http://www.hrw.org/news/1998/09/13/un-urged-prevent-more-killings-taliban-offensive-continues> (accessed May 16, 2018).

after 9/11 when the Taliban were ejected from Afghanistan and a large number moved into Quetta.

Malik Ishaq succeeded Riaz Basra in 2002. He was officially charged with seventy murders and forty-four other cases of terrorism, including the March 2009 attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore. In October 1997, Ishaq admitted in an interview with an Urdu daily that he was involved in the killing of 102 people.⁸⁷ On 14 July 2011, the Supreme Court of Pakistan ordered Ishaq's release because of insufficient evidence produced by the prosecution. Coinciding with Ishaq's release, the LeJ promptly issued a written threat against the Shia population. The letter, written in Urdu and widely circulated in Quetta and beyond, stated:

All Shi'ites are worthy of killing. We will rid Pakistan of unclean people. Pakistan means land of the pure and the Shi'ites have no right to live in this country. We have the edict and signatures of revered scholars, declaring Shi'ites infidels. Just as our fighters have waged a successful jihad against the Shi'ite Hazaras in Afghanistan, our mission in Pakistan is the abolition of this impure sect and its followers from every city, every village, and every nook and corner of Pakistan.

As in the past, our successful *jihad* against the Hazaras in Pakistan and, in particular, in Quetta, is ongoing and will continue in the future. We will make Pakistan the graveyard of the Shi'ite Hazaras and their houses will be destroyed by bombs and suicide bombers. We will only rest when we will be able to fly the flag of true

87 The release of Malik Ishaq," *The Express Tribune*, July 15, 2011, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/210440/the-release-of-malik-ishaq/> (accessed May 17, 2018).

Islam on this land of the pure. *Jihad* against the Shi'ite Hazaras has now become our duty.⁸⁸

Immediately after the circulation of the latter there was a spike in terrorist incidents: at least 16 incidents of assassination and mass-murder in which 53 Hazara men, women and children were killed and at least 75 were injured. No efforts were made by the law enforcement agencies to investigate the incidents, apprehend known suspects or bring them to justice.

The Supreme Court again released Ishaq on bail in December 2014 after his acquittal in sixty-four murder cases due to lack of evidence or withdrawn witness testimonies. During his twelve years in confinement, seventy-two judges and prosecution lawyers expressed their inability to hear or pursue cases against him and his sons, most of them either going on leave or refusing to continue hearing them 'on personal grounds.'⁸⁹ According to HRW, the failure to bring Ishaq to justice underscored serious failings in Pakistan's criminal justice system and the impunity that thrived as a result of this failure.⁹⁰ Ultimately, on May 28, 2015, Malik Ishaq, like Riaz Basra before him, was extra-judicially executed in an 'encounter' in the Muzaffargarh District of Punjab. The US had declared him a "Specially Designated Global Terrorist" on February 6, 2014.

Though the military denies any links, formal or informal, the reality is that the LeJ has long enjoyed a close relationship with it. In the 1990s, the military encouraged LeJ to forge strong links with armed Islamist groups fighting in Kashmir and Afghanistan. In October 2009, Malik Ishaq was flown from Lahore to Rawalpindi on a military plane to negotiate with Al-Qaeda and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terrorists

88 Amir Mir, "Blood flows freely in Pakistan," *Asia Times*, October 5, 2011, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/MJ05Df01.html (accessed May 17, 2018).

89 Khaled Ahmed, op cit. (2016) pp. 407-08.

90 Human Rights Watch, op cit.

linked with the LeJ for the release of several high-ranking military officers taken hostage in an attack on the Pakistan Army's General Headquarters.⁹¹ While Ishaq's intervention at the behest of the Pakistani military was widely reported but never officially acknowledged by the authorities, a military official speaking on condition of anonymity confirmed the reported facts to Human Rights Watch.⁹²

The earlier relationship between the military and LeJ has become more complicated over the last decade. LeJ joined the TTP network that has been involved in high profile attacks on the Pakistani military, government officials and civilians. LeJ has emerged as the TTP's principal partner in Balochistan and, crucially, in Pakistan's heartland – Punjab – where it has its origins. HRW quoted a now-retired Pakistani intelligence official saying that the Pakistani government did not consider LeJ's presence in Balochistan a "cause for concern" until the July 4, 2003, attack on the Hazaras in Quetta. Until then, the official said, "we saw the LeJ guys as allies, if not friends. Their activities were manageable. But these attacks on the Hazaras did change the perception and then many of us stopped thinking of them as allies. But, importantly, many of us did not." Another official added, "While these people are hostiles and often attack us, it is important to maintain some level of goodwill with them as they can be useful."⁹³

STATE RESPONSE

The callousness of the state is best exemplified by the response of the then chief minister of Balochistan Aslam Raisani to a question on how he intended to "stem the tears" of the Hazara community after the September 2011 Mastung

91 'The release of Malik Ishaq', op cit.

92 Human Rights Watch, op cit.

93 Human Rights Watch, op cit.

attack. He responded “of the millions who live in Balochistan, 40 dead in Mastung is not a big deal. I will send a truckload of tissue papers to the bereaved families. I’d send tobacco if I weren’t a politician.”⁹⁴

The federal government has done little better. President Mamnoon Hussain in April 2018 trotted out the usual line about how “a handful of vested interests and enemies” were trying to stop the Baloch people from enjoying the fruits of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Or when he referred to the local citizenry as “true Pakistanis” who “would not let anyone threaten the unity of this country.”⁹⁵ Minister for Interior Ahsan Iqbal echoed similar sentiments when he declared that, since banned outfits were not organised in the country, foreign-funded targeted activities against the Hazara community in Quetta were a conspiracy to create chaos and sabotage the CPEC project.⁹⁶

The sectarian massacres have taken place under successive governments since a time prior to Pakistan’s return to democratic governance in 2008 and have continued unabated thereafter. According to HRW, “To many Hazaras, the persistent failure of the authorities at both the provincial and national levels to apprehend attackers or prosecute the militant groups claiming responsibility for the attacks suggests that the authorities are incompetent, indifferent, or possibly complicit in the attacks.”⁹⁷

There are several elements in the response of the state that need to be highlighted.

94 Ibid.

95 ‘Standing with the Hazara’ *The Daily Times*, April 7, 2018, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/224726/standing-with-the-hazara/> (accessed May 17, 2018).

96 ‘Attacks on Hazaras foreign-funded: Ahsan’. *The Nation*, May 6, 2018 <https://nation.com.pk/06-May-2018/attacks-on-hazaras-foreign-funded-ahsan> (accessed May 17, 2018).

97 Human Rights Watch, op cit.

First, the law enforcement agencies have done little to investigate the terrorist attacks or taken steps to prevent the next attack. Of late, even the desultory efforts to arrest, detain, or question known suspects has fallen into abeyance. More often than not, the crime scene is washed down soon after the incident without conducting any forensic or criminal investigation of any sort. Akbar Durrani, Balochistan's Home Secretary, told HRW that many terrorists had been arrested but they were unable to prosecute them due to lack of evidence. "We cannot proceed simply on the basis of suspicion. We need evidence, and sadly this is very hard to obtain."⁹⁸The fact that evidence was deliberately not sought was, of course, glossed over.

Second, the police were clearly ineffective in combating extremist violence and attacks by the LeJ. Factors responsible for this included the force itself being targeted by the LeJ and lack of resources. The police had human resources but did not have requisite weapons, equipment, or forensic facilities to successfully combat the terrorist violence.⁹⁹ Resultantly, while occasional attempts have been made to arrest and imprison LeJ terrorists, their vast majority remained at large and operated with complete impunity.

Third, as has become standard practice, the police round up several alleged suspects after an incident though few stand trial and are released due to lack of evidence. In the words of one local Hazara leader, the police in Quetta keep staging the same drama again and again. First, they afford safe passage to the real murderers while arresting innocent people in a public display of purportedly acting against the terrorists. Next, they release those who were arrested on the grounds that there is no

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.

solid evidence linking them to the attack. The complacency shown by police officials in the face of sectarian killings lends credence to such claims.¹⁰⁰

Fourth, the federal and the provincial governments have mostly responded to the sectarian violence with mere condemnation and condolences, reiterating their resolve to take stern action against the culprits and to bring them to justice. However, there is little or no follow up action in terms of catching and charging terrorists. If anything, they have suggested that the Hazaras accept open-ended ghettoization, ever increasing curbs on movement and religious observance, and ongoing economic, cultural, and social discrimination as the price for staying alive. Yet the LeJ still finds ways to attack and kill them.¹⁰¹

Fifth, the media and civil society denounce the terrorist incidents as anti-Islamic. Once the hype subsides, however, the incident is forgotten until the next one takes place. Moreover, for the civil society, neither violence against the Hazaras nor the Baloch is mainstream news, except when there is a really horrendous incident. All the national media houses are based in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad with very little coverage of news from Balochistan. As Matthew Green of Reuters wrote in 2012: “The grip Lashkar-e-Jhangvi exerts on Quetta is difficult to appreciate from the drawing rooms of Islamabad, where brief reports of bombings or assassinations carried on the inside pages of newspapers fail to capture the scale of the persecution now faced by the city’s 500,000 Hazaras.”¹⁰²

100 Mumtaz Sajidi, ‘Fate of the Hazara: the community caged within its own city’, *The Daily Times*, April 26, 2018, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/232769/fate-of-the-hazara-the-community-caged-within-its-own-city/> (accessed May 17, 2018).

101 Ibid.

102 Khaled Ahmed, op cit. (2016) p. 266.

The Hazaras also suffer from the lack of international attention. A report by the Human Rights Watch (“We are the Walking Dead”) and the BBC (“Hell on Earth”), as well as Hazara Diaspora staging protests in international capitals has not so far attracted ‘eyeballs’ internationally.

Sixth, the situation is compounded by elements within Pakistan’s security agencies who view the Hazaras with suspicion. Speaking on condition of anonymity, retired members of the Frontier Corps, described the Hazaras to HRW as ‘agents of Iran’ and ‘untrustworthy.’ One former official even suggested, without evidence, that the Hazaras “exaggerated” their plight in order to seek asylum abroad and ‘gain financial and political support from Iran to wage its agenda in Pakistan.’¹⁰³ Recent revelations have even linked the police with LeJ. On May 25, 2013, a senior Quetta police official informed the media about the arrest of Assistant Sub-Inspector Yahya Sumbal who was in telephonic contact with LeJ men.¹⁰⁴

There could also be a much darker aspect to the state’s apathy and could well be due to Pakistan’s national security policies. As Farahnaz Isphani puts it, the Sunni extremists were seen as allies in the Army’s campaign against Baloch nationalists and in curbing the growing influence of Iran. Hence, rather than protect Hazaras from the terrorists, the security forces chose to look the other way in return for intelligence on Baloch separatists.¹⁰⁵

Finally, the judicial system has been unable to provide relief to the Hazaras. So far none of the attacks on Hazaras

103 Human Rights Watch, op cit.

104 Syed Arfeen, ‘Shocking details of links between policemen and LeJ emerge’, *The News*, May 25, 2013, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-23089-Shocking-details-of-links-between-policemen-and-LeJemergeBy-Syed-Arfeen> (accessed May 16, 2018).

105 Farahnaz Isphani, op cit, p.224.

have been accounted for, very few sectarian terrorists have ever been convicted and even when convicted, they have managed to inexplicably escape. The classic example was when Usman Saifullah Kurd, LeJ's then Balochistan operational commander, his second-in-command, Dawood Badini and another operative Shafiq Rehman Rind escaped from an Anti-Terrorism Force jail in Quetta's highly guarded Army Cantonment on January 18, 2008, under mysterious and unexplained circumstances.¹⁰⁶ Four Hazara officers assigned to guarding Kurd and Badini had been inexplicably erased from the duty roster earlier in the week. No other guards were ever questioned by the authorities. No investigation was carried out and the entire episode was quickly forgotten. All signs point to "orchestration from the upper most levels of the military establishment."¹⁰⁷ Given low conviction rates, it is hardly surprisingly that the courts are seen as being soft on terrorism cases.¹⁰⁸ It is also indicative of the weakening capacity of the criminal justice system during the past two decades.

The reality is that, for the Pakistani state, the Hazara community is not of much importance. Neither is the violence against them. They are a minority, both in terms of religion and ethnicity who do not have any anti-state agenda. What, in fact, the sectarian violence does, is to allow the state to undermine the secular Baloch nationalists who are fighting for independence.

The failure to prevent the LeJ from killing Hazaras led Balochistan Governor Zulfiqar Ali Magsi to retort: "It is evidence of our and our intelligence agencies' weakness that we cannot catch them [sectarian terrorists]...It is upsetting. There are two possibilities: one, you cannot track them at all;

106 Amir Mir, 'Usman Kurd, the man who caused fall of Raisani govt,' op cit.

107 The Shia Hazara of Pakistan, op cit.

108 Raza Rumi, op cit.

and two, everybody is scared because [the security forces] may think they will become targets themselves.’¹⁰⁹

CONCLUSION

The wanton and systematic killing of Hazaras in Quetta is perhaps the most acute example of the general problem of intolerance in Pakistan. It is symptomatic of how Pakistan has treated its minorities. It shows the failure of the National Action Plan (NAP), the failure of the law and order machinery and the abject failure of the leadership, both civil and military, to develop measures to tackle the sectarian menace. As Raza Rumi notes, “It is time for civil and military authorities to review where we are headed and take corrective measures before it is too late and violence gains further legitimacy and acceptance.”¹¹⁰

Despite the much-touted military operations against terror, the targeted killing of the community has not ended. This raises serious questions about the government’s claims that the terrorists have been defeated.¹¹¹ Likewise, despite repeated protests, there has been no respite for the community from the ongoing violence. For the Hazaras, every incident is yet another glaring example of the impunity and brazenness with which sectarian terrorists operate in Balochistan. What makes matters worse is that these recurrent attacks have been taking place in the face of significant presence of military, paramilitary, and civilian security forces and intelligence

109 Abubakar Siddique, ‘Pakistan’s Hazara Killings Bring Sunni Extremist Group Into Focus, *Radio Free Europe*, February 18, 2013, <https://www.rferl.org/a/pakistan-shiite-hazara-targeted/24905910.html> (accessed May 17, 2018).

110 Ibid.

111 Ailia Zehra, ‘Hazara killings and flawed security policies’, *The Daily Times*, April 9, 2018, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/225518/hazara-killings-and-flawed-security-policies/> (accessed May 17, 2018).

agencies in Balochistan. Additionally, the cases are not significantly investigated and go unpunished, while elements within the security establishment display discriminatory attitudes and hostility toward the Hazaras.

The Hazaras in Quetta called off their April 2018 protest on the intervention of the Army Chief Gen. Bajwa, but he needs to accept that there are glaring loopholes in the strategy against terrorism. Killing a few terrorists or hanging of some others has not rooted out terror. For that to happen, the Army will have to take across the board action against all shades and hues of terrorists and not only the ‘bad terrorists’ targeting Pakistan. If the ‘good terrorists’ (those who target India and Afghanistan) are allowed to prosper, terrorism will continue to prosper in Pakistan as well.

The fact of the matter is that terrorist and sectarian infrastructure has grown in Pakistan thanks to the active facilitation of the security agencies. This fact has now been testified to by no less than the three-time former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.¹¹² However, Sharif’s admission cannot absolve him of part of the blame since sectarian hatred and its infrastructure has its roots in Punjab, the bastion of Nawaz’s party. For the sake of electoral advantage Nawaz and his brother, the Chief Minister of Punjab, have winked at the activities of such groups for years.

As a result of such complicity by both the Army and the civil government, sectarian violence in Pakistan continues with impunity. It is a sad reality that such perpetrators of sectarian violence do not face any threat of legal action or punishment. Rather they are emboldened due to the complicity of the state

112 Cyril Almeida, ‘For Nawaz, it’s not over till it’s over’ *Dawn*, May 12, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1407192/for-nawaz-its-not-over-till-its-over> (accessed May 15, 2018).

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and the inability or unwillingness of the police, law enforcement agencies, and judiciary to effectively intervene. The terrorists are confident that those responsible for investigating and prosecuting acts of sectarian violence will fail to act. The result is that the killing of the Hazaras has reached genocidal levels. As *The News* puts it, “What is missing is the will to take the fight to every militant group and to finally stick our necks out for a community that has been discriminated against for decades.”¹¹³

113 ‘Hazara killing’s’, *The News*, May 2, 2018, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/311408-hazara-killings> (accessed May 16, 2018).