

# South Asia Conflict Monitor

*monthly newsletter on terrorism, violence and armed conflict...*



## India: Islamic State intends to influence Kashmir jihad

Along with its military advances and jihadist consolidation within the Iraqi and Syrian hinterlands, the Islamic State (IS or DAESH) has stretched its physical as well as virtual footprints beyond its territory. Through robust propaganda management and recruitment campaigns, it has spread its jihadi ideals across the world and has successfully inspired many individuals and groups towards its cause, primarily in vulnerable places in South Asia. Unsurprisingly, the IS has begun its outreach efforts in India too with the aim to acquire support, resources and manpower. Several Muslim youths from India and neighbouring countries have reportedly travelled to fight under IS banner in the Iraqi and Syrian war theatres. The ever-volatile Kashmir region in India has not been able to escape this aggressive outreach effort

of the IS.

The IS leader Al Baghdadi in his July 2014 Ramadan address mentioned many conflict zones, including Kashmir, Palestine and Chechnya, where alleged atrocities have been taking place against the marginalised Muslims in the name of 'freedom, democracy, peace, etc.' During the same time, signs of Islamic State's influence surfaced for the first time in the Indian administered Kashmir (also known as Jammu and Kashmir or J&K) around June-July, 2014. Besides waiving of IS flags, some wall graffiti carrying IS symbols and messages were seen in Srinagar, the capital of J&K. Soon thereafter, the



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flagging of IS flags and banners became a regular feature at anti-India rallies and during Friday prayers at various mosques in Kashmir.

An intelligence survey earlier this year reported that most internet searches are primarily on IS activities in J&K and Assam in the Northeast India. Earlier in 2015, authorities identified 12 youths for waving IS flags during several occasions. Evidently, the regular pumping of propaganda literatures laden with violent ideals of the Caliphate with the objective to encircle the Muslim world has somehow inspired many youths in J&K. The authorities have even booked few IS sympathisers under Provisions of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (Kashmir Monitor, December 26, 2015). Investigations into the IS flag waving cases in Kashmir brought some interesting facts on how internet messaging platforms like WhatsApp is playing a key role in radicalising youths of the beleaguered state.

At least nine teenagers were suspected to be radicalised through the WhatsApp group named Al-Hayat. Even if these juveniles were not directly linked with any of the IS branches, they were certainly inspired by the IS and the Caliphate syndrome. A lone case of Adel Fayyaz Waida, a graduate student from Kashmir who reportedly joined IS in mid 2014, even though details of his motivation and how he travelled to Syria before joining hands with the IS remains sketchy. Before travelling to Syrian war theatre, he was in the second year of an MBA course at Queensland University in Brisbane. According to the Australia's intelligence services Adel Fayyaz was involved in Islamist-linked networks whose support is crucial to Islamic State's infrastructure.

In the recent issue of Dabiq magazine, the IS's propaganda periodical, emir Hafiz Saeed Khan claimed that the organisation's ambition is to expand extensively into the Kashmir region of India. What is most worrying for India is that the IS also intends to fight the majority 'Hindu' population (broadly followers of Hinduism) to re-conquer the land once ruled by the Muslims kings. The 13th issue of Dabiq carried Saeed Khan's interview in which he elaborated how Pakistani agencies (army and intelligence) are exploiting various "Islamic" organisations on the issue

of Kashmir for their despicable personal interests and are exploiting the zeal of the people of Kashmir for the sake of their own interests.

The word Kashmir is repeated in the interview few times before Saeed Khan claimed that IS has made specific arrangements for expansion in to the Kashmir region. This is part of the IS strategy to entice the disgruntled Muslim youths of the State (or the country at large which boasts of having 170 million strong Muslim population) to its fold. By terming the present Pakistani government as Taghut (one who doesn't worship or obey Allah) and its proxy militant groups broadly as 'apostates,' IS's Khurasan emir Saeed Khan tried to connect with the people of Kashmir by stating how they have been exploited so far and how Pakistan has "left the people of Kashmir in the middle of the road" for personal and material interests." He further claimed that people of Kashmir and many militants have already joined the IS's Wilāyat Khurāsān under him. Although the Indian government has no record to show that there has been actual migration (hijrah) to the Khurasan, or the Afghanistan and Pakistan region, it is plausible that many former militants from the Pakistan's Kashmir side might have joined the Wilayat Khurasan 'to establish the religion of Allah' there or to extend moral and physical support to the Levant based Islamic State.

Kashmir is not new to the repeated calls for implementation of sharia laws or establishment of the Caliphate. The State's foremost militant group Hizbul Mujhadeen (HM) too aims at establishing sharia based Caliphate, in other words it seeks the establishment of a unified Kashmir based on Islamic order and governance according to sharia (Islamic law). There are HM cadres who are openly calling for sharia based Caliphate in the State.

Through its latest propaganda materials, the IS is looking to discredit Pakistan's Kashmir centric Jihadi forces, including Pakistan intelligence agency ISI backed Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and others for having failed to achieve anything despite dominating the decades of armed jihad in the region. This would certainly attract attentions of hundreds of foot soldiers aligned with the existing Kashmir jihadi organisations or conglomerates like United Jihad

Council or LeT or HM, especially in the Kashmir region. It can also play a role in diverting the attention of many disillusioned Kashmiri youths towards the IS

cause thereby making the State a potential and fertile ground for aggressive recruitment.

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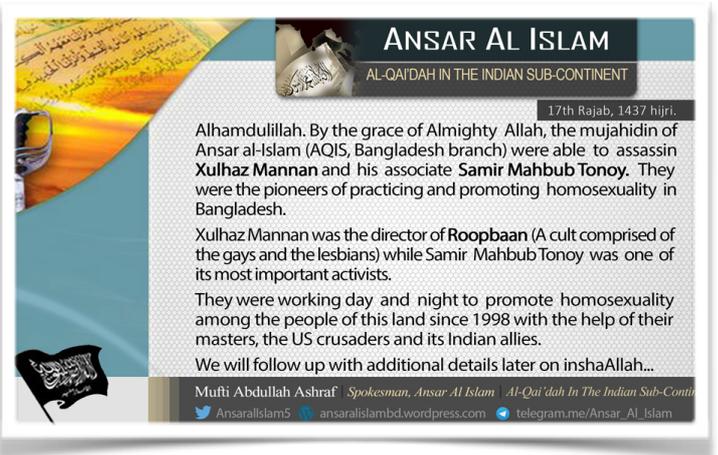
## Bangladesh: Al Qaeda's local franchise Ansar-al Islam strikes at will

The often chanted Islamic Takbeer 'Allahu Akbar' (god is great) has been hijacked by the jihadi elements and widely used as a war cry or catchphrase symbolising victory of mindless terrorism. In Bangladesh, this chant is becoming synonyms with violence perpetrated by the Al Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) affiliated Ansar al-Islam (Supporters of Islam). Every time these machete wielding and gun totting Islamist extremists accomplish their violent goals (targeted killings of secular and progressive intellectuals), they scream the Takbeer, which is becoming the rallying roar of the so-called 'lions of Ummah'.

### Ansar's Killing Spree

On April 25 (2016), Xulhaz Mannan, a gay right activist and editor of Roopbaan, a Bengali language magazine on the LGBT issues (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) and a co-activist friend Samir Mahbub Tonoy were killed by these 'Allahu Akbar' chanting extremists in the Kalabagan locality in the capital city of Dhaka. Ansar-al Islam group's spokesman Mufti Abduudlla Asharaf issued a statement claiming responsibilities of the gruesome double murder. The statement said that the deceased 'were the pioneers of practicing and promoting homosexuality in Bangladesh since 1998 [...] with the help of their masters, the US crusaders and its Indian allies.'

Early in April 2016 Ansar al Islam's machete-wielding extremists murdered a secular blogger Nazimuddin Samad in a similar fashion in the Sutrapur locality in Dhaka. Samad was an active campaigner of secular ideals and vocal critic of radical Islam



([BDNews24.com](http://BDNews24.com), April 7).

These are, however, not isolated attacks on progressive and secular minded individuals in Bangladesh. At least six secular blog writers and publishers were murdered in cold blood by Ansar al Islam extremists in 2015 for their linkages with either Gonojagaran Mancha, a secular social movement that is vocal about the extremist Islam or for their secularist and progressive ideals and writings. Notable among them were Avijit Roy, Washiqur Rehman Babu, Ananta Bijoy Das, Niloy Neel and Faisal Arefin Dipan. Investigations revealed that these Ansar militants monitor every movement of their targets prior to the actual strike. It was also revealed that these militants shift to the locality of the next target and stay there in rented accommodation prior to the killings.

It may be recalled that during the height of Shahbagh protest movement similar attacks were carried out by Ansar al Bangla Team (ABT), a hit squad under the Ansar al Islam group, and Islamic Chattra Shibir (ICS) extremists. They killed a leading pro-democracy blogger activist, Ahmed Rajib Haidar, in Mirpur area of Dhaka in mid February 2013, while another award winning blogger-activist Asif Mohiuddin survived an attack with severe injuries on one earlier incident.

## Al Qaeda's long shadow:

In all these strikes, a concerted jihadi campaign aimed at spreading fear and panic is visible and through this 'hit and claim' strategy, Ansar al Islam has been propagating Al-Qaeda's violent ideals in the country. The brutal killings of secular writers and intellectuals underscore the presence of Al Qaeda's rabid faith based terrorism in Bangladesh. In the press release that follow every attack, the actions are justified in the following terms: 'We will not tolerate insulting our Prophet Muhammad [...] we are targeting those who are insulting our Prophet in the name of atheism.' Once AQIS threatened the atheist blog writers by stating, "We don't forget and we will not forget others who insult our beloved Prophet Muhammad and Allah". In its propaganda periodical Resurgence, AQIS boldly announced in the following terms: "Let's spare no effort to excise the secularist cancer from the body of the Ummah!".

Indeed, Al Qaeda has a long history of engagement with Bangladesh based Islamist groups and enjoys considerable support from within the myriad radical and militant communities in Bangladesh since at least the late 1990s, especially among the Soviet-Afghan war returnees. Following the turbulent times of Shahbagh movement, Al Qaeda's leader Al Zawahiri came forward to urge the Bangladeshis to support a popular uprising (Intifada) against the incumbent Awami League government and against anti-Islamic forces by

directly supporting those Islamist zealots who have attacked the free speech secular blog writers. This mid January 2014 open message from Al Qaeda leadership urged Bangladeshi Muslims to "confront the crusader onslaught against Islam." The message released by As Sahab, the media arm of Al Qaeda, titled "Bangladesh: Massacre Behind a Wall of Silence" brought out many issues, including the ongoing secularist fervour, alleged atrocities committed by the security forces against pro-Islamic protesters and a call for Sharia based Caliphate in Bangladesh. While calling to have patience and keep fighting, he urged the Islamic scholars and clerics of Bangladesh to lead the protesters from the front and teach how to defend the religion and how to instil love for martyrdom. With these many words of 'guidance', Al Qaeda's two-pronged strategy of 'Dawa and Jihad' is in action in real terms in Bangladesh and the strategy has invigorated the local extremist elements of Ansar al Islam.

The security agencies have unearthed Ansar al Islam's several hideouts in the last few months and discovered the ABT's elaborate and well organised 'killing squad' in March this year. At least three out of eight such hideouts have been deactivated so far ([Dhaka Tribune](#), March 19, 2016). Constant refutation from the government notwithstanding, the security agencies are aware about the growing grassroots extremism and violence in the country and very much abreast with the reports of jihadi groups like AQIS and Islamic State making inroads into the country, which is stealthily destroying the secular fabric of Bangladesh.

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## **MILITANT MASTERMINDS OF SOUTH ASIA**



**Maulana Masood Azhar:** The most dreaded India centric militant ideologue of Pakistan Masood Azhar emerged back in the news when a diplomatic row erupted between India and China on April 1 at the UN. China, once again, blocked India's bid at the United Nations to ban Jaish-e-Mohammed emir Masood Azhar the mastermind of many terror strikes against India, including the Parliament attacks of December 2001 and the recent January 2016 Pathankot Air Base attacks. Following the Pathankot terror episode, India urged the UN for immediate

action to list Masood Azhar under the Al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee (UNSC 1267 committee). On several occasions in the past, China requested the UN committee that was considering a proscription on Masood Azhar to keep on hold the terror designation. This time also, China explained that it was a technical hold, not a veto, and India should discuss the matter with Pakistan.

Why does China come to his rescue every time India attempts to bring Azhar to justice? It can be implied that China, one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC), is acting at the behest of its all weather ally Pakistan.

Maulana Masood Azhar's name is synonymous with two biggest terror events in India's contemporary history: Indian Airlines 814 hijack (1999) and Parliament attack of December 2001. The hijack won Azhar his freedom from Indian prison along with two fellow militant leaders, Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh and Mushtaq Zargar. All three were pro-Kashmiri militant leaders associated with Sunni Deoband-Taliban linked Harkatul Mujhadeen terror group. Soon after his incarceration, Masood Azhar founded Jaish-e-Muhammad (Army of the Prophet Muhammad) on January 31, 2000 at Karachi's famed Binori mosque with the help and blessings of three renowned Islamists of his time: Nizamuddin Samzai, Rashid Ahmed and Sher Ali Shah.

Masood Azhar is considered to be a very influential Islamic cleric, preacher, writer and fund raiser for the cause of Kashmir and Afghan Jihad. Dhiren Barot (Esa al Hindi), a United Kingdom based militant, cited in his book titled *The Army of Madinah in Kashmir*, "Azhar is one of the few revivers of Jihad [...] who mirrors in the Indian sub-continent what Abdullah Azzam was to the Arab world." Famous for his anti-India and anti-West speeches and his knowledge of Jihad, Azhar is responsible for the neo Taliban movement in Pakistan.

Interpol had issued a red corner notice against Azhar (no A-1086-7-2004) in 2004 for conspiracy to wage war against India, murder, possessing explosives, arms and ammunition, and various offences relating to the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Azhar was listed in the

US Office of Foreign Assets Control's (OFAC) Special Designated Global terrorist list in November 2010.

The demolition of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya (India) in December 1992 and the nascent Kashmiri struggle encouraged Azhar to enter India. He infamously vowed at Ayodhya to take revenge against Hindu nationalists who demolished the 16th century Babri Masjid. However, he was arrested in February 1994 and remained in jail until his release in December 1999 under prisoner-hostage swap arrangement.

Born in 1968 in Bahawalpur town of Punjab province, Pakistan, Masood Azhar was exposed to Jihadi universe much earlier in his life. He graduated from Binori town's (Karachi) Jamia Uloom-ul-Islamia, an ultra religious University which boasts of producing a number of high profile radical Islamist leaders and Mujahideens, who participated in Afghan and Kashmiri jihads and considered to be the epicenter of Pakistan's madrasa-military nexus. In mid 1989 Harkat ul Mujahideen (HuM) chief Fazlur Rahman Khalil placed Azhar in charge of publishing an Urdu language monthly Sada-e-Mujahid (The voice of the Mujahideen), especially devoted for Afghan Mujahideens. He also edited one Arabic journal subsequently titled Sawat-e-Kashmir devoted towards Kashmir jihad. While working as a teacher in the Binori mosque, he was actively engaged in exhorting Muslim youths for HuM to join Afghan and Kashmir jihad through his writings and incendiary speeches. His regular trips to Afghanistan War Theater and other countries had given him enough exposure to write articles and books on Islam and Jihad. Azhar has penned around 30 books on the subjects; notable among them are Fazail-e-Jihad, Fath-ul-Jawwad, Jihad-Rahmat, Islam aur Jihad ke Tayyariyan and Ta'leem-ul-Jihad. One of his most circulated books is titled 'Virtues of Jihad' (translated version, published by Ahel Sunnah Wal Jammat), which is also available on the internet.

It can well be concluded that even though Jaish-e-Mohammed's strength is fast dwindling in Kashmir in recent years, Masood Azhar's clout on the region's new breed of militants remain undiminished.

## Mohammad Asif: Leading Al Qaeda in India?



It has been revealed that Mohammad Asif, a seemingly stoic man from nondescript Deepa Sarai of Sambhal district in Uttar Pradesh, was the India chief of the Al-Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent (AQIS). He was reportedly in charge of training and recruitment in India.

This revelation came in mid December last year when Delhi police's special cell apprehended Asif from Seelampur area in northeast Delhi. Further investigation into the case shed light on the journey of Asif to Islamic radicalism and anti-India terror web.

Delhi police was tracking his movements and phone calls since August 2015. It intercepted few calls between Asif and Abdul Rehman Khan and others (like Zafar Masood) before zeroing on them in December 2015. While Islamist cleric Abdul Rehman Khan was arrested from Odisha state, Zafar Masood was picked from Sambhal-Moradabad Road in Uttar Pradesh. Rehman Khan, who is an alumnus of Dar-ul-Uloom seminary, Deoband, holds doctorate degrees in Arabic and Islamic Studies. He ran a madrasa in the Tangi area of Cuttack district in Odisha.

According to his father, Asif is a fifth grade dropout and his family had no inkling about his Islamist orientations as such. However, interrogation reports suggest that he was in touch with Al Qaeda operatives through social media and eventually he met AQIS chief Maulana Aasim Umar in Pakistan in 2013. Asif's past journeys to Saudi Arabia and Pakistan and a secret meeting with Aasim Umar in Pakistan, possibly at

Miramshah (North Waziristan) or Karachi, formalised his induction into the Al Qaeda's jihadi space. According to sources in New Delhi, Asif along with two other Indians underwent ideological and militant training in Waziristan subsequently. According to Delhi police, Muhammed Asif underwent religious training in Waziristan and was highly influenced by resentment against the US led drone strikes and incidents like death of the then chief of Tehrik-e-Taliban, Hakimullah Mehsood, in November 2013.

Interestingly, Aasim Umar is an Indian origin Islamist identified as Sanaul Haq, a former resident of the Deepa Sarai of Sambhal and the real mastermind behind inducting fellow villagers into the AQIS fold.

Active in Facebook since 2012 while working at a local shop in Sambhal, Asif reportedly got in touch with one Saeed Akhtar, a fellow villager (of Deepa Sarai, Sambhal) who at that time was in Karachi working for the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan. Akhtar inspired Asif and another fellow identified as Sarjil and arranged money for their travel abroad. Even though there are some contradictory reports in media on the travel details of Asif, especially whether he travelled to Saudi Arabia first or reached Pakistan via Iran, the police interrogations confirmed that he took the Iran-Pakistan route. By September 2014, Asif was back in India and started scouting talents for AQIS' India branch.

Although the security agencies are still trying to understand the real magnitude of AQIS's expansion, the Al Qaeda's burgeoning India adventure faced a major roadblock with Asif's arrest along with his immediate network members. The arrests have certainly exposed Al Qaeda's grassroots network in India.

## SACM News Roundup: April 2016

### BANGLADESH



**April 06:** Nazimuddin Samad, an activist of Gonojagoron Mancha's Sylhet wing was killed by suspected Ansar al Islam militants in Sutrapur area of capital Dhaka. He was doing his post graduation degree at the Jagannath University (**Dhaka Tribune**, April 7).

**April 08:** Al Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent linked local jihadi formation Ansar al-Islam announced to target people who commit eight specific kinds of offences against Islam and their ideology. A purported Ansar al Islam statement signed by the spokesman Mufti Abdullah Ashraf has listed all these eight anti-Islam offences including 'statements against and belittling Allah, the Prophet (SM) and Islam; preventing the practice of Shariah and Islamic tenets'; and

people who are "implementing a western/Indian agenda" by presenting a "distorted view of Islam" with their speeches and writings. **Dhaka Tribune**, April 29, 2016.

**April 13:** The Islamic State (IS) in its latest edition of Dabiq propaganda magazine has claimed it has operations inside Bangladesh. The magazine (issue no. 14) carried out an eulogy of a slain Bangladeshi operative Abu Jundal al-Banghali (identified as (Ashequr Rahman) who was killed during a battle at Raqqah, Syria. Dabiq also revealed the IS's shadowy presence with an interview with the Emir of IS Bangladesh chapter Sheikh Abu Ibrahim al-Hanif and strongly corroborated the situations on the ground. Abu Ibrahim Al Hanif underscores that efforts to recruit 'soldiers of the Khilafah' in Bangladesh has gained "great momentum" with many Muslims joining its ranks. He also hinted that cadres of Jamaat-e-Islami are joining Khilafah's soldiers in Bengal. (**Dabiq-14; Dhaka Tribune**, April 16).

**April 14:** Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina urged people to exercise tolerance. She also warned that writing against religion won't be tolerated. According to her, this is unacceptable to write something hurting religious sentiments of others. "We perform our religious rituals. But, if anyone writes filthy words against our religion, why should we tolerate that?" On the revenge killing against such writings, she however, said Islam does not permit it and Almighty Allah does not bestow the duty of trial on them. "But, if anyone doesn't abide by the guidance of Almighty Allah and his prophet and thus kill people, it is 'Shirk'. I hope no one would indulge in such act" (**The Independent** , April 15).

**April 25:** Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina accused opposition blocks especially Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)-Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) of carrying out targeted killings in the country to destabilise the country (**News Next Bangladesh**, April 26).

**April 26:** Ansar al-Islam, an affiliate of AQIS claimed the credit of killing two Bangladeshi gay rights activists: Xulhaz Mannan, one of the editors of LGBT magazine Roopbaan, and his friend Samir Mahbub Tonoy. (**News Next Bangladesh**, April 27).

**April 30:** Bangladesh home affairs minister Asaduzzaman Khan has reiterated that "There is no presence of Islamic State in this country. The claim has no base." Speaking to media he said "In the name of IS, a vested quarter is trying to destabilise the country. He added that This kind of killings were committed by home grown militant outfits (**Daily Star**, April 30).

## INDIA



**April 04:** Two people have been killed and nearly twenty others sustained injuries in a grenade attack at Dudhnoi in Goalpara, Assam. The attack was targeted at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) election office at Dudhnoi Chariali. Police suspect it to be a handiwork of Paresh Baruah led Independent faction of United Liberation Front of Asom -Independent (ULFA-I) (**Sentinel Assam**, April 04).

**April 09:** Total 188 Communist Party of India-Maoist (CPI-Maoist) cadres and their sympathisers surrendered in Malkangiri District of Odisha. The Maoist operatives have surrendered before the security forces comprising of the 202 Cobra unit of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the State Police. Among the surrendered there were 25 Militia members of Naxals, 10 village committee members and 154 Maoist sympathisers (**Times**

**of India**, April 10).

**April 16:** Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh said the left wing extremism (Naxalism/Maoism) led by the Communist Party of India-Maoist (CPI-Maoist) is posing serious challenge to Indian democracy. He added that the Central government is committed to extend every possible help to affected states to wipe out the the menace (**NDTV**, April 17).

**April 19:** Indian government urged the Naga group, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM) to stop its extortion operation in different parts of Nagaland and Manipur states. In August 2015, the NSCN-IM has signed a 'framework agreement' with government of India for finding a final solution to the long standing Naga insurgency issue. (**India Today**, April 19).

**April 20:** Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has expressed concern over global nexus between terrorism and drug trafficking at the 30th Special Session of the UN General Assembly on World drug problem. He stressed on the growing nexus of drug trafficking and terrorist networks that endangers peace, security and stability across regions. He assured India's support in fighting these evils, adding that in coordination with UN Office on Drugs and Crime, a South Asia Regional Intelligence and Coordination Centre with India, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Maldives as founding members will come up soon to combat drug-related crimes in the region (**Indian Express**, April 20).

**April 25:** Ansar ut Tawhid founder and Islamic State's chief India recruiter Mohammad Safi Armar (Yousuf al Hindi), a resident of Bhatkal town in Karnataka, was reportedly killed in a drone strike in Syria (**The Hindu**, April 25).

**April 26:** Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Kiren Rijiju informed the Lower House of the Parliament (Lok Sabha) that the Maoists or Naxalites have links with Maoists organisations in the Philippines and Turkey. He also underscored that the Maoists group have received support from several Maoist fringe organisations located in Germany, France, Turkey and Italy. He also added that the CPI Maoist is also a member of the Coordination Committee of Maoist parties and organisations of South Asia (CCOMPOSA) (**Indian Express**, April 26).

**April 27:** Jammu and Kashmir State Home affairs department informed media that a total of 159 militants of different organisations and 1808 Over Ground Workers (OGWs) are still active in different parts of the State with maximum presence in Sopore, Awantipora, Handwara and Pulwama areas of the Kashmir valley. The situation is comparatively better in six districts of Jammu province, where at present there is no

presence of militants but their sympathisers are in large number. In 2015 a total of 103 militants were killed by the security forces in the State and 45 militants were arrested. Also last year there were 291 terrorist incidents took place in the State with 23 incidents of grenade attack (**Daily Excelsior**, April 27).

**April 27:** Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Haribhai Parathibhai Chaudhary clarified in the Upper House of the Parliament (Rajya Sabha) that there is no nexus between the Communist Party of India-Maoist (CPI-Maoist) and the Islamic State (IS). He added that the IS has influenced very few youth from India. and the National Investigation Agency and the State Police in some States have registered cases and arrested some active cadres affiliated to IS in the recent past (**NDTV/ Press Trust of India**, April 28).

## PAKISTAN



**April 03:** According to the Inter-Public Services Relations (ISPR), as many as 252 terrorists have been killed and over 160 injured in the last phase of on-going military offensive in Shawal, the main town in North Waziristan Agency. The ISPR statement said that since the launch of the last phase of Operation Zarb-e-Azb in February troops have cleared 640 square kilometre area of Shawal. Eight soldiers of Pakistan Army have been killed during the offensive while 39 others were injured (**The News**, April 03)

**April 12:** The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) Zohra Yusuf noted the surge in civilian casualties in Balochistan especially from the Johan area of Kalat District and the Isplingi area of Mastung District (**Dawn**, April 13).

**April 18:** Pakistan has warned the Taliban groups to call off their 'spring offensive' or face the consequences. Earlier in April, the Taliban announced the start of large-scale attacks against the government strongholds. Named after the late Taliban spiritual leader Mullah Omar, 'Operation Omari' is seen as a major setback to efforts seeking revival of the Afghan reconciliation process (**Express Tribune**, April 18).

**April 18:** CoAS General Raheel Sharif announced that militants have been driven out of their last bastion , the strategic Shawal Valley in North Waziristan Agency (NWA) of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). He announced the completion of the final phase of Zarb-e-Azb operation and at the same time Army has launched combing operations in areas other than FATA. The final phase of operation was launched in February 2016 in the deeply forested ravines of Shawal Valley and Datta Khel that had been used by terrorists for infiltration between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Sharif emphasised on consolidating the gains and resettling the TDPs (Temporary Displaced Persons) in their areas (**Express Tribune**, April 18).

**April 20:** At least seven Pakistani policemen, three of whom were guarding anti-polio vaccination workers, have been killed in Orangi Town of Karachi. In January, 15 people were killed in a bomb attack on a vaccination centre in the south-western city of Quetta. Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) splinter group Jamaat-ul Ahrar claimed responsibility for the attack (**Express Tribune**, April 20).

**April 21:** Legislators of Pakistan National Assembly urged for a full-fledged military operation in Punjab following the tragic incident of suicide blast in Gulshan-i-Iqbal Park, Lahore on March 27. They have said in unison that the Gulshan-i-Iqbal incident had proved the existence of terrorist groups in Punjab. They also called for political unity to counter terrorism in the country. (**Dawn**, April 22).

**April 22:** Sartaj Aziz, Adviser to the Prime Minister of Pakistan called for early and dignified repatriation of Afghan refugees to their homeland through mutual cooperation as well as engagement with the international community. He was discussing the matter with Sayed Hussain Alemi Balkhi, Afghan Minister of Refugees and Repatriation in Islamabad( [The Nation](#), April 22).

**April 26:** Secretary Home and Tribal Affairs Akbar Hussain Durrani has informed that a total of 1,025 militants have surrendered in Balochistan during past year under the political reconciliation scheme launched in the province( [Dawn](#), April 27).

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**The South Asia Conflict Monitor (SACM)** aims to provide in-depth analyses, country briefs, summary sketches of important players and a timeline of major events on issues relating to armed conflicts, insurgencies and terrorism. It also aims to cover the government's strategies on conflict resolution and related policies to tackle these risks and crises.

**The South Asia Conflict Monitor** is a monthly bulletin designed to provide quality information and actionable intelligence for the policy and research communities, the media, business houses, law enforcement agencies and the general reader by filtering relevant open source information and intelligence gathered from the ground contacts and sources.

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