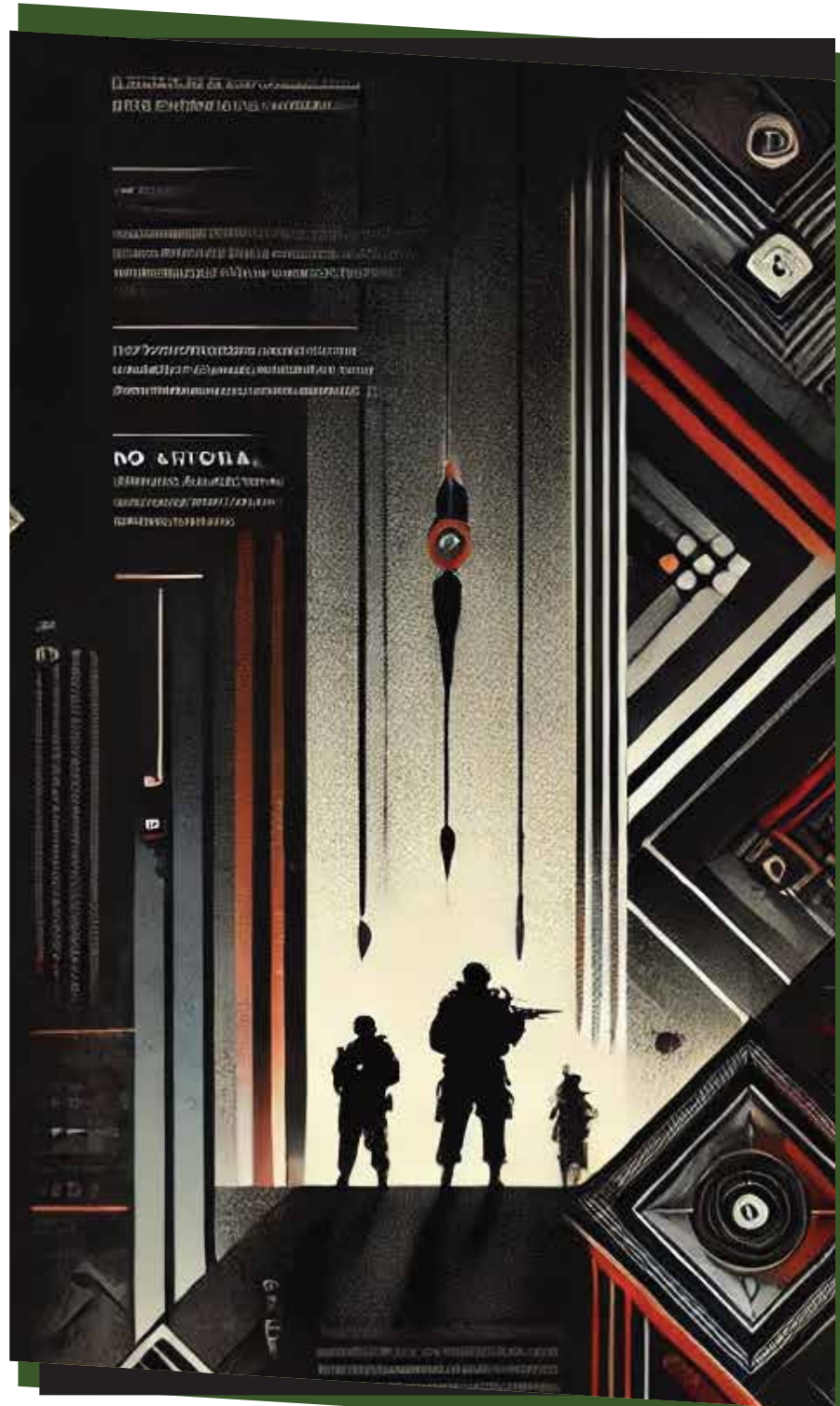


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Ulema's role

ALONG with robust action from the state, all elements within society are required to play their role to fend off the existential challenge posed to Pakistan by extremist forces. Considering the nature of the threat, ulema have a particular responsibility to ensure that faith is not misused and misinterpreted by regressive and violent elements. Members of the clergy have had a mixed record in this regard, with scholars of repute at times staying silent when their voices needed to be heard the most, while in other instances they have endorsed state-backed fatwas condemning militancy and extremism. Yet it was welcome to note that the Council of Islamic Ideology chairman recently addressed the problem of misuse of religious laws with frankness. In a media interaction last week, Dr Raghbir Naeemi said certain religious outfits were manipulating Islamic laws as per their liking, while condemning the ghastly trend of mob justice in cases of reported sacrilege. He also criticised the issuance of edicts authorising the killing of individuals suspected of committing blasphemy. In a telling revelation, Dr Naeemi said that “saner elements” within religious circles were afraid of extremists.

The search for a solution starts with agreeing to the fact that there is a problem. In this regard, more ulema of standing need to speak up against the violent extremist forces threatening to tear apart Pakistan. It will require immense courage to stand up to these dangerous elements, but if the country is to be saved from their zealotry, both the state and all of society need to display fortitude to achieve the goal of deradicalisation. The problem of radicalisation has, unfortunately, been affecting society for decades, and the state has itself aided this process both by omission and commission. Therefore, it will take time to remove these toxic narratives from society, but all stakeholders need to display resolve and stay the course. The state must not cave in to extremists, and no one can be allowed to misuse religious injunctions to forward their dark agenda. Those who hurl false accusations of sacrilege must themselves face the law, and clergymen need to work to defuse the situation when such accusations arise. The path to moderation begins with the state refusing to bow before regressive forces, and ulema playing a role to promote tolerance and harmony, rather than fragmentation.

Source: Dawn, September 2, 2024

Terrorist attacks surge to 59 in August from 38 in July

The country continues to experience increased terrorist attacks as a total of 59 terrorist attacks occurred across the country in August 2024 compared to 38 such attacks in the previous month.

These incidents included 29 attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 28 in Balochistan and two in Punjab, killing 84 people and 166 others injured, according to the digital database of security incidents managed by the Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), an Islamabad-based think-tank.

Balochistan experienced 28 terrorist incidents during August 2024, which resulted in 57 deaths and injuries to another 84 people. Most of these terrorism-related casualties in the province resulted from the banned BLA-orchestrated attacks on August 26 in over seven districts of the province targeting security forces, non-Baloch people (mainly Punjabis) and national infrastructure.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 29 terrorist attacks took place, claiming 25 lives and wounding 80 others. The banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Hafiz Gul Bahadur Group, Lashkar-i-Islam, Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) and a few local Taliban groups reportedly carried out these attacks.

Meanwhile, two reported attacks from Punjab injured two civilians; two of the attackers were also killed. Security forces and the counterterrorism departments (CTDs) of the police conducted 12 anti-militant operations in the country in August compared to 11 in the previous month.

In these operations, 88 militants were killed and 15 army soldiers and three policemen martyrdom. Eight out of the 12 reported operations took place in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, while four others took place in Balochistan.

Of the total 28 attacks recorded in Balochistan in August this year, 26 were carried out by the banned Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), including the group's extensive terrorist onslaught on August 26.

PIPS in its monthly security report said that the armed group has escalated its destructive activities, executing high-impact attacks and using female suicide bombers.

On August 26, the anniversary of Baloch chieftain Nawab Akbar Bugti's death, the group launched coordinated attacks across Balochistan.

The report underlines that the involvement of numerous militants and the use of sophisticated weaponry including vehicle-borne explosives, indicate the BLA's growing capabilities.

The group has adopted new tactics, such as targeting Punjabis on highways by checking identity cards – a development that may further strain relations between the province and the central government, which seems to be one of the banned entity’s objectives.

Positioning itself as a defender of Baloch interests, the BLA exploits grievances like enforced disappearances and resource exploitation.

As the Baloch people lose faith in the political process, the group may gain more support.

To counter this, the government must create political and social spaces for the Baloch people, the report said.

Additionally, there is an urgent need to investigate the BLA’s sources of training, weapons and funding. Pakistan should engage constructively with Afghanistan and Iran to develop a joint counterterrorism and border security strategy, the report advised.

SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 3, 2024

930 killed in terror attacks in 2023



The Pakistani government has intensified the crackdown on terrorist groups following the recent upsurge in terror attacks.

The Ministry of Interior on Monday presented alarming details regarding attacks on foreign nationals working on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in the National Assembly, shedding light on the escalating security challenges faced by foreign workers in the country.

During a session of the National Assembly chaired by Speaker Ayaz Sadiq, the interior minister disclosed details of attacks on Chinese and Japanese nationals from 2020 to 2024.

The report revealed that three terrorist attacks occurred in Sindh, resulting in the deaths of five individuals, including five foreign nationals.

In Balochistan, two attacks targeted Chinese nationals, leaving three injured. Meanwhile, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa witnessed two attacks on Chinese nationals, claiming the lives of 17 Chinese workers and two security personnel, while 19 local residents were also killed.

The ministry further reported that in the first quarter of 2024, a total of 2,208 intelligence-based operations were conducted, leading to the killing of 89 terrorists and the arrest of 328.

Measures are being taken to prevent the entry of militants from Afghanistan and the transfer of weapons and materials used by terrorist organisations, the NA was told.

Moreover, the ministry outlined ongoing efforts to fence the border and monitor deserted routes.

The draft of the National Policy on Countering Violent Extremism 2024 has been prepared and is awaiting approval from the cabinet.

Over 930 killed in 2023

The interior ministry also submitted a comprehensive report to the NA, detailing the devastating toll of terrorism across Pakistan in 2023, with 930 fatalities and thousands more injured.

According to the data provided by the Ministry of Interior, a total of 930 people were killed in terrorist incidents across the country from January to December 2023.

The report highlights that 1,992 civilians and law enforcement personnel were injured during this period.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa bore the greatest brunt of the violence, with 580 people killed and 1,447 injured in 558 incidents of terrorism.

Among the casualties, 402 were law enforcement personnel who lost their lives, while 1,054 were injured. The province also saw 178 civilians killed and 393 injured.

In Balochistan, 626 terrorist incidents resulted in the deaths of 315 individuals and injuries to 477 others.

Law enforcement agencies reported 148 personnel killed and 198 injured, while 167 civilians were killed and 279 injured.

Sindh experienced 19 terrorist incidents, resulting in 14 deaths and 31 injuries. Among the casualties were eight law enforcement personnel killed and 26 injured, with one civilian killed and two injured.

Punjab reported eight terrorist incidents, with 12 people killed and 11 injured. Eleven law enforcement personnel were killed and nine injured, while one civilian was killed and two injured.

The report also noted that no terrorist incidents occurred in Islamabad during 2023, while Gilgit-Baltistan experienced three incidents resulting in nine deaths and 26 injuries.

The ministry expressed concern over the deteriorating law and order situation in the country, stressing the need for urgent measures to combat the rising threat of terrorism.

SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, SEPTEMBER 3, 2024

Pakistan's human exports

RAFIA ZAKARIA

WHEREVER in the world you go, you are bound to come across Pakistanis in various states of despair.

These days, travel to any European capital — Athens, Rome or Paris, for example — and you will see groups of immigrants huddled together on the streets and in the alleys, bleary-eyed and haunted. If one walks by them slowly enough, it is possible to catch bits and pieces of Urdu and Punjabi. That's how you know they are from Pakistan. These are the 'lucky' ones — the ones who have made it to Europe alive. Many more like them never make it.

A new report on human smuggling in Pakistan, published by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan last week, outlines the journey of one such migrant from Hafizabad in Punjab. Like hundreds of thousands of others, he paid an agent to smuggle him out of the country. The report details how a person is passed from agent to agent until they manage to get to the EU or North America. It shouldn't come as a surprise, then, that Pakistani migrants have been discovered in such faraway places as the Darién Gap — the only land bridge between North and South America, through which a dangerous route runs between northern Colombia and southern Panama and ultimately leads to the United States border areas. From there, migrants often make a run for what they imagine will be a better life.

In Europe, Pakistani migrants can often be found languishing in places like the island of Lampedusa, off the coast of Italy. Many of them arrive there via Egypt or Libya, where smugglers put them on boats with a promise to get them to the Italian coast. It was smugglers like these who had lured the 20 Pakistanis that died last summer off the coast of Greece, when a migrant vessel holding hundreds of people was allowed to sink by the Greek coast guard. As an aside, it seems worth pointing out that the case is still languishing in Greek courts, and there is no indication of whether the surviving migrants or the heirs of those who died will ever be able to get any justice. That is how much a migrant's life is worth these days in the developed world. In a century that promises to herald unprecedented human displacement owing to global economic and climate-related crises, it seems a given that more and more Pakistanis will take to wandering the earth in the hope of finding sustenance and a chance at a better future, even if that means rebuilding their lives in a foreign land. However, when one sees Pakistani men huddled together on the streets of Europe, looking hungry and miserable, one wonders whether they still consider being in the EU as any kind of guarantee of a better life.

Most of these men are low-skilled workers who do not even know the languages of the countries to which they wish to migrate. This means that they are usually relegated to jobs such as washing dishes at the back of restaurants and other menial tasks that provide, at best, a difficult and

hardscrabble existence. The bulk of the money that they do make goes towards paying off the debts they took on to pay the smugglers who brought them there in the first place. The “better life”, they must soon realise, is just a fantasy they were promised by smugglers just so they could be lured into leaving Pakistan at an exorbitantly high personal and financial cost. Not all Pakistanis who land up in foreign lands through dubious means suffer equally. One industry in Pakistan that seems to be very organised and has been quite successful in ensuring that its recruits have plenty to do is the begging industry. It is such a successful venture that it has now decided to start exporting to, and expanding in, other countries.

Unlike the desperate, low-skilled workers toiling in the smoke and stench-filled backrooms of restaurants and shops in Europe, these beggars do not need human smugglers to get them into foreign lands. Instead, they prefer to utilise pilgrim visas to places like Saudi Arabia and Iran, etc. As many Pakistanis may have seen for themselves during Haj, these beggars set up shop outside the holy places in Makkah and Madinah, where they harass foreign pilgrims for money just as they do shoppers in markets across Pakistan. They are relentless, master manipulators who know how to pull at their victims’ guilt and get them to part with their money.

The beggar problem has become such a nuisance that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has taken it up officially with Pakistan. A new agreement was signed recently between the two countries under which Pakistan promised to try and curb the export of beggars to Saudi Arabia. The very fact that we had to do such a thing should be reason enough to feel embarrassment and shame at a national level. However, when our leaders themselves feel little shame in extorting money from this or that wealthy country, it is no wonder that our beggars, too, feel entitled to capitalise on the guilt of others to enrich themselves. Working hard and doing things the right way does not seem to be a strategy that has occurred to either leader or beggar in Pakistan. As many have pointed out, this bizarre picture of desperation on one hand, presented by low-skilled migrants, and entitlement on the other, as portrayed by pesky beggars, forms a miserable image of Pakistan and Pakistanis in the minds of people who live abroad.

The Pakistani government not only fails to curb human smuggling, it also does little to try and help those poor migrants who find themselves homeless through the Pakistani diplomatic missions abroad. The only reason Islamabad has been forced into taking action to curb the export of beggary is because both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have reportedly threatened to stop handing out visas to Pakistanis altogether. Meanwhile, the millions of Pakistanis who have no intention of paying human smugglers to get them out of the country and who could never consider resorting to beggary are stuck at home with their green passports. Because the actions of some wrongdoers have created the impression that Pakistanis cannot be trusted to tell the truth at all.

Hence, legitimate travellers, students and workers who apply for proper visas must suffer the extra scrutiny at foreign embassies and frequent denial of visas. The bad acts may be committed by a few, but their costs are inevitably borne by all.

SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 4, 2024

Two terrorists killed in DG Khan operation

The Punjab Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) killed two terrorists during an operation carried out in Dera Ghazi Khan, a statement issued in this regard said.

According to a CTD spokesman, the law enforcement agency carried out an operation on the district's Quetta Road on Thursday night upon receiving information related to the presence of terrorists.

During an exchange of gunfire with the CTD, "two terrorists were killed by the firing of their own accomplices, while the other two terrorists managed to escape from the scene taking advantage of the darkness," the statement said.

The CTD also recovered explosives, two rifles, bullets, and a hand grenade from the hideouts of the militants, the statement said, adding that they had devised a plan to target important installations and conduct terrorist activities on a large scale in the province.

It further said that the process of identifying the terrorists was under way, while further investigation continued and a search operation was launched for the arrest of the fleeing terrorists.

The spokesperson also said that CTD Punjab was "diligently pursuing its goal of a safe Punjab" and was "determined to root out the scourge of terrorism."

Earlier, CTD Punjab arrested 33 suspected terrorists in 475 intelligence-based operations (IBOs) conducted across the province in the past month.

Pakistan had experienced an increase in terrorist attacks as a total of 59 terrorist attacks occurred countrywide in August compared to 38 attacks in the previous month, according to a digital database maintained by the Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), an Islamabad-based think-tank.

CTD 'vanguard, capital force' to deal with terrorism: Naqvi

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi appreciated CTD Punjab for thwarting the terrorists' plan in Dera Ghazi Khan, a statement from his office said.

He congratulated the department for carrying out the operation successfully against the terrorists saying, "I congratulate the entire team of CTD Punjab for destroying the evil ambitions of the terrorists of Fitna al Khawarij".

In July, the government, through an official notification, designated the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as Fitna al Khawarij as reported by The Express Tribune.

The government also mandated all institutions to use the term Khariji (outcast) when referring to the perpetrators of terrorist attacks on Pakistan.

CTD Punjab carried out a timely, successful operation and neutralised two terrorists of Fitna al Khawarij, said Naqvi, adding that they stopped the terrorist activities in DG Khan in a very professional manner.

“CTD Punjab has always thwarted the nefarious ambitions of the terrorists”, he said, adding that the department was the “vanguard and our capital force” in dealing with terrorism.

SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 13, 2024

Two security men martyred in Mastung, Kalat attacks

Two personnel of Levies Force were martyred and three others, including a senior officer, were injured when a group of tribesmen opened fire near a Levies station in Daringarh area of Mastung district.

In a separate incident, a roadside explosion left eight security personnel injured in Kalat on Friday.

Officials said that a group of tribesmen opened fire on the personnel of Levies Force. The cause of the incident was the arrest of the brother of a tribal elder who, along with other people, had blocked the Quetta-Noshki Highway to protest against the arrest.

“Two Levies personnel lost their lives while three others, including the Station House Officer (SHO) of Levies Station, were injured,” Mastung Deputy Commissioner said, adding that the bodies and injured were immediately taken to the Nawab Ghous Bakhsh Raisani Memorial Hospital in the area.

The injured were later shifted to Quetta Civil Hospital.

The deceased were identified as Mumtaz Babu and Mazar Ahmed Khan and injured as SHO Haji Ayaz, Muhammad Naeem and Habibullah.

Kalat bomb blast

Eight security personnel were injured in a roadside explosion in Takhat area of Kalat district on Friday.

Kalat Deputy Commissioner Bilal Shabbir said that unknown miscreants had planted an improvised explosive device (IED) at the roadside and detonated it with a remote control as the vehicle passed through the area.

“Eight FC personnel were injured in the blast,” said Mr Shabbir, adding that the vehicle was also damaged in the explosion.

All the injured were taken to Kalat district hospital.

Security forces cordoned off the area after the explosion and launched a search operation to arrest the attackers.

SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 14, 2024

Grim example

THE struggle to eliminate extremism from society and create a more tolerant nation cannot succeed without the state's firm commitment to achieving this goal. But when representatives of the state themselves are found to be involved in extremist acts, the road to deradicalisation is that much longer.

The murder of a man accused of committing blasphemy in a Quetta police lock-up – by a policeman no less – on Thursday is one example of the considerable challenges facing Pakistan on this count.

According to reports, the suspect had been taken into custody after a video in which he had allegedly made sacrilegious remarks went viral. Following the man's detention, a mob led by religious parties besieged the police station where he was being held and attacked it with grenades. The law enforcers later shifted the suspect to another police station, where an officer opened fire on him.

While acts of sacrilege obviously cannot be condoned, there exist laws to address this serious issue. But when ordinary citizens or state functionaries take the law into their own hands, the gates to mob rule and anarchy are flung wide open. The Quetta incident is a grim reminder of Punjab governor Salmaan Taseer's murder in 2011 by his own police guard.

More recently, a mob in Swat stormed a police station in June where a man accused of committing blasphemy was being held. The suspect was set on fire. Arguably, in no other Muslim country is such violence tolerated. These shocking incidents all point to the need to urgently deradicalise society.

The state, as well as the ulema, must reiterate the fact that no one can be allowed to play executioner in blasphemy cases, and that the law must take its course. In far too many of such incidents, the law is misused to settle personal scores. Therefore, strict action is required against those who exploit the sensitive issue of blasphemy.

SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 14, 2024

2 policemen martyred, 1 injured in bomb blast near Quetta



Police vehicle near which the “planted bomb” exploded.

Two policemen were martyred and another injured in a planted bomb blast targeting officials in Kuchlak town near Quetta, police said.

Speaking to the media, Quetta’s Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Azhar Rashid said that the explosives were planted at the site of the incident beforehand, and they exploded as soon as the police vehicle arrived.

“Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Zainuddin and gunman Mohammad Tahir embraced martyrdom whereas the driver got injured and was moved to Mufti Mehmood Memorial Hospital”, DSP Rashid said.

After receiving medical aid, the driver was shifted to a trauma centre in Quetta, the DSP added.

Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfaraz Bugti condemned the explosion and paid tribute to the martyred officials, expressing heartfelt sympathies and condolences to the family.

“The eternal sacrifices of Balochistan Police, levies and security forces against terrorism cannot be neglected,” Bugti said in a press release, adding that the government will only rest once terrorists and their facilitators have been eliminated.

“The entire country is standing alongside the brave forces in the war against terrorism,” he said.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi also paid tribute to the two martyred officers and expressed heartfelt sympathies and condolences for the family of the deceased.

He prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured driver and saluted the sacrifice.

“Balochistan Police has made eternal sacrifices in the war against terrorism,” Naqvi said, according to a statement from his office.

He added that the unwavering determination to fight terrorism could not be defeated.

“This war is the entire country’s war and, with the support of the people, will continue until the end of the last terrorist and facilitator,” Naqvi said.

Rise in terror attacks

Pakistan experienced an increase in terrorist attacks in August as a total of 59 terrorist attacks occurred countrywide compared to 38 attacks in the previous month, according to a digital database maintained by the Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), an Islamabad-based think-tank.

In the latest flare-up of violence, dozens of militants affiliated with the banned Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) – a separatist outfit – launched numerous attacks on midnight of August 25 across Balochistan, targeting security personnel as well as civilians.

At least 50 people, including 14 security men, lost their lives as militants went on a rampage across the province, storming police stations, blowing up railway tracks, and setting fire to almost three dozen vehicles. In response, security forces neutralised 21 militants.

Among those killed were 23 people in Musakhail, mostly labourers from Punjab, who were offloaded from trucks and vans and shot dead after an identity check.

Following the incident, Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir vowed that the war against terrorism would “continue until the elimination of all terrorists”.

“To fight for the cause of Pakistan, the security forces, along with the law enforcement agencies, and the brave people of Pakistan – especially the brave people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan – have made unprecedented sacrifices,” he said.

SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 14, 2024

3 terrorists killed in Nankana Sahib shootout

Three terrorists were killed and two escaped during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Nankana Sahib, CTD spokesperson said.

The terrorists had opened fire on the CTD team, the spokesman said, adding: "In the exchange of fire, three terrorists were killed by the firing of their [own] comrades, while two [others] escaped."

The CTD said it recovered three grenades, three detonators, safety fuse wire, two rifles, bullets and explosives from the terrorists.

"A search operation to arrest the escaped terrorists is underway," said the spokesperson, adding that CTD teams had set up a picket near Motorway Nankana Interchange A and the process of identifying the slain terrorists was underway.

The spokesperson said that the terrorists were planning to launch a major attack on Lahore.

Pakistan has experienced an increase in terrorist attacks as a total of 59 such incidents occurred countrywide in August compared to 38 attacks in the previous month, according to a digital database maintained by the Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), an Islamabad-based think-tank.

Last week, CTD Punjab arrested nine terrorists following 71 IBOs across the province.

Meanwhile, two terrorists were killed on Friday during an operation carried out in Dera Ghazi Khan.

SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 18, 2024

Six soldiers martyred, 12 terrorists killed during operations in Waziristan

Six soldiers embraced martyrdom while 12 terrorists were killed during two encounters in North and South Waziristan districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement.

According to the military's media wing, security forces on Thursday detected the movement of seven terrorists trying to infiltrate the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in North Waziristan's Spinwam area, the statement said.

"The infiltrators were surrounded, effectively engaged and after an intense fire exchange, all seven khawarij were sent to hell," the ISPR said, adding that a large quantity of weapons, ammunition, and explosives was also recovered from the slain terrorists.

In July, the government, through an official notification, designated the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as Fitna al Khawarij, while mandating all institutions to use the term khariji (outcast) when referring to the perpetrators of terrorist attacks on Pakistan.

In a separate incident, a group of terrorists attacked a security forces checkpoint in South Waziristan's Ladha area, the statement added.

"Own troops fought bravely, foiling the attempts of intrusion, and killed five khawarij," the statement said.

"However, during an intense exchange of fire, six brave sons of the soil, having fought gallantly, paid the ultimate sacrifice and embraced shahadat." The statement said that sanitisation operations were being conducted to eliminate any other khariji present in the area as security forces were determined to eliminate the "menace of terrorism" from the country. "Such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve," the ISPR said.

The country has lately witnessed a sharp uptick in the number of attacks targeting security forces, other law enforcement agencies, and security checkpoints, particularly in Balochistan and KP.

Attacks escalated after the TTP broke a fragile ceasefire agreement with the government in 2022 and vowed to target security forces.

On September 6, four terrorists were killed when they tried to attack the Frontier Corps headquarters in KP's Mohmand district. In August, three soldiers were martyred and five terrorists were killed after security forces foiled an infiltration attempt at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in the province's Bajaur district.

SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 20, 2024

8 terrorists killed during IBO in North Waziristan



Eight terrorists were killed after security forces conducted an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in the North Waziristan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the military's media affairs wing said.

According to a press release issued by Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the operation was conducted last night on the "reported presence of terrorists in the area".

The press release said that an intense exchange of fire took place between the security forces and Khawarij during the operation and, as a result, eight terrorists were "sent to hell".

While it wasn't mentioned in the statement which terrorist group was involved in the attack, in July, the government, through an official notification, designated the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as Fitna al Khawarij, while mandating all institutions to use the term khariji (outcast) when referring to the perpetrators of terrorist attacks on Pakistan.

Director General ISPR Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry had confirmed the same a month later.

“Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the deceased terrorist, who remained actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces and targeted innocent civilians as well, the ISPR statement said in its press release today.

“Sanitisation of the area is being carried out to eliminate any other Kharji found in the area as security forces are determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country,” it added.

Meanwhile, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi paid tribute to the security forces for killing terrorists.

According to a post on the interior ministry’s X account, Naqvi said that the security forces took timely action to eliminate the terrorists.

“Salute to the brave soldiers of the security force,” he said.

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In August, three soldiers were martyred and five terrorists were killed after security forces foiled an infiltration attempt at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in the province’s Bajaur district.

On September 6, four terrorists were killed when they tried to attack the Frontier Corps headquarters in KP’s Mohmand district.

On September 20, six soldiers were martyred while 12 terrorists were killed during two encounters in North and South Waziristan districts.

SOURCE: SEPTEMBER 26, 2024

National wound

PAKISTAN has been plagued with the ulcer of missing persons for decades now, leaving countless families in anguish and undermining trust in the state's ability to protect its citizens. The Islamabad High Court's recent dissatisfaction with the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances is not surprising. Such bodies have persistently failed to provide even basic answers to the families of the missing, let alone ensure justice. In the latest hearing on the matter, the court was informed by the counsel for missing persons that since August alone, 187 persons have gone missing. The state's response, through committees, commissions, and financial compensation, has been grossly insufficient, more a case of lip service than genuine resolve.

Families of the disappeared do not want compensation; they want their loved ones back, or at the very least, truthful information about their fates. Committees that fail to achieve these goals should be disbanded. If such bodies are only symbolic, they are not only ineffective but insulting to the families of the missing. As highlighted by Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani, the state is obligated to provide clear information, regardless of whether these individuals are held in Pakistan or elsewhere. Instead, successive governments have hidden behind complex bureaucratic processes or framed the issue as politically charged. The government needs to take tangible steps, to address this grave human rights violation at its core. This includes holding those responsible – often state actors – accountable. The issue further demands enacting proper legislation against enforced disappearances – given the irony that the relevant bill itself went missing – bringing state functionaries under clear legal frameworks, and ratifying international treaties such as the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. A transparent 'truth and reconciliation commission' involving the families of the missing could also be a step toward healing and justice. This state must move beyond superficial efforts. This national wound must heal.

SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 28, 2024

Fake encounters

THE scourge of phony encounters is amongst the major obstacles standing in the way of professional policing in Pakistan, and the delivery of genuine justice to the people.

Police personnel indulge in this blatantly illegal activity to show how ‘active’ they are in controlling crime, and to secure rewards and adulation from their bosses. But far too often, innocent people are killed or injured in staged shoot-outs, while actual criminals are free to terrorise the public. One innocent life lost in a recent staged encounter was that of Shah Nawaz Kunbhar, a doctor from Umerkot, Sindh, who was killed in a bogus shoot-out on Sept 19. The victim was accused of committing blasphemy and in police custody when – as a report issued by the Sindh government confirmed on Thursday – he was killed in a “managed encounter” by Mirpurkhas police.

As the inquiry report notes, those involved in the staged shoot-out were feted as heroes. This particular fake encounter has been confirmed by the authorities because of the hue and cry raised by civil society over Kunbhar’s murder. But the grim fact is that many such people are gunned down by law enforcers across Pakistan every year in similarly dubious circumstances.

According to HRCP, there were nearly 3,300 encounters reported in Sindh alone in 2023. The Sindh Police say 289 suspects were killed in these operations. Figures from other provinces are far lower, but this may be a case of possible underreporting.

The fact is that LEAs resort to dodgy encounters because the law enforcement and criminal justice systems are failing. If prosecutors were building strong cases against suspects, and courts were punishing individuals based on solid evidence, there would be no ‘need’ for fake shoot-outs. Encounters are in fact a ‘shortcut’ law enforcers apply to cover up their own failures and lack of ability. But these dubious methods fly in the face of justice, and violate the fundamental rights of the victims.

Police forces in all provinces must take a strong stand against the culture of encounters, and ensure that LEAs’ personnel operate by the book. Instead of being lionised, those personnel involved in staging encounters need to be penalised and prosecuted. Instead of making society safer, encounters encourage a culture of impunity and lawlessness, and do little to deter the actual criminals.

SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 28, 2024