



TERROR TRACKER

Newsletter by Counter Terrorism Centre



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



NEW WAVE OF **TERROR** HITS AFGHANISTAN

Taliban-ally Haqqani Network Forms New Unit with Al-Qaeda

PAKISTAN REMAINS ON FATF'S **GREY LIST**

Islamabad failed to address 'strategic deficiencies', says Paris-based body

5 BANGLA RADICALS **SENTENCED TO DEATH**

Islamists had hacked secular blogger Avijit Roy in 2015

+ MORE NEWS & ANALYSES

NEW WAVE OF TERROR RIPS OPEN AFGHANISTAN PEACE PROCESS

Taliban-ally Haqqani Network Forms New Unit with Al-Qaeda



REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE

On 28 February 2021, The Taliban warned that the US and its foreign military allies should leave Afghanistan by 1st of May 2021, in line with the Doha agreement or be ready for “[never seen before](#)” war. Currently, the new US administration under Joe Biden is reviewing the agreement made during the Trump presidency last year.

According to the [New York Times](#), at least 257 pro-government soldiers and 66 civilians have been killed in several terrorist attacks in Afghanistan in February 2021. Civilian casualties have spiked dramatically in the country after peace talks between the government and the Taliban began in September last year. According to figures published by the UN on Tuesday, 707 people died in targeted attacks last year - [nearly half](#) of those in the last three months.

“People are dying, bombs are exploding, and no one is taking responsibility,” says Habib Khan of the monitoring group Afghan Peace Watch. Killers target the country's judges, journalists and activists, using motorcycles for their drive-by shootings and by installing magnetic “sticky bombs” under vehicles.

Meanwhile, the US treasury department has reportedly [informed](#) the Pentagon in a document that “senior Haqqani Network figures have discussed forming a new joint unit of armed fighters in cooperation with and funded by al-Qaeda.” The Haqqani network is a close ally of Taliban, which in its Doha deal with the US has agreed to cut ties with foreign jihadist groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS. It has also been reported by the Afghan TV channel TOLO that the former vice president of Afghanistan Marshal Abdul Rashid [Dostum has claimed](#) that Nasruddin, the grandson of Osama bin Laden and Saifudeen Haqqani (son of the Sirajuddin Haqqani, leader of Haqqani network are currently hiding in the Ghormach and Bala Murghab districts in northern Afghanistan. – *The New York Times*, BBC, *Daily Sabah*, *The Hindustan Times*, TOLO News

‘NEXT TIME
THERE WILL
NOT BE ANY
MISTAKE’
SAYS MALALA
SHOOTER



Nobel Laureate Malala Yousafzai was shot and badly wounded nine years ago by a Taliban militant in Pakistan. Malala overcame the life threatening incident to become promoter of education for girls worldwide.

However, almost a decade later in February 2021, the same Taliban militant, Ehsanullah Ehsan threatened a second attempt on her life on Twitter, by urging Malala to “come back home because we have a score to settle with you and your father.” He added “this time there will be no mistake.”

Malala soon took to Twitter and called out Pakistan military and Prime Minister Imran Khan to explain how her alleged shooter, had escaped from government custody back in 2020. The militant has had more than one Twitter account, all of which have been suspended. - AP, *The Indian Express*



NO REPRIEVE: PAKISTAN REMAINS STUCK ON ‘GREY LIST’ OF FATF

Islamabad failed to address ‘strategic deficiencies’, says Paris-based body

FIVE REASONS PAKISTAN REMAINS ON WATCHDOG’S ‘GREY LIST’

1.

FATF still finds ‘serious deficiencies’ in Pakistan’s tackling of terror financing.

2.

Failure to take strong action against terror masterminds Masood Azhar, Hafiz Saeed and Zakiur Rahman Lakhvi.

3.

European opposition, particularly French, over Pakistan’s radical policies & statements.

4.

Pak court’s acquittal of Daniel Pearl’s murderers.

5.

To keep alive the threat of putting Pakistan on the ‘black list’, which could have dire impact on its economy.

[The Eurasian Times](#)



Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan

- ❖ Financial Action Task Force (FATF) tells Islamabad to demonstrate effective implementation of targeted financial sanctions against all 1267 and 1373 designated terrorists.
- ❖ Pakistan premier Imran Khan says Paris-based body should not be used as ‘pressure tool’

On 27 February 2021, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) — the global watchdog of terror financing — kept Pakistan on its ‘[grey list](#)’ until June 2021. It concluded that Islamabad failed to address its ‘strategic important deficiencies’ to meet the 27 point action plan the FATF has drawn for Pakistan.

“To date, Pakistan has made progress across all action plan items and has now largely addressed 24 of the 27 action items. As all action plan deadlines have expired, the FATF strongly urges Pakistan to swiftly complete its full action plan before June 2021,” FATF stressed at the outcome of its plenary in late February.

The three remaining items in its action plan that FATF wants Pakistan to address include “demonstrating effective implementation of targeted financial sanctions against all 1267 and 1373 designated terrorists, specifically those acting for or on their behalf.”

Being on the "grey" list means that Pakistan cannot get access to finances in the form of investments and aid from international organizations, such as International Monetary Fund (IMF). The latest decision will now further worsen its problems given its precarious financial situation.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has made an [indirect criticism](#) of the FATF. “International bodies dealing with tax matters, corruption, and illicit financing should be inclusive and representative. They should not be used as instruments of pressure and coercion against developing countries,” Imran Khan said at the launch of the final report of the High-Level Panel on International Financial Accountability, Transparency and Integrity for Achieving 2030 Development Agenda. — ANI, *The Eurasian Times*,

BANGLA ISLAMISTS GET DEATH VERDICT FOR KILLING WRITER

Avijit Roy was hacked to death by assailants in 2015



Bangladesh-born US citizen Avijit Roy

- ❖ On 16 February, special Court in Dhaka sentenced five members of banned outfit Ansar-Ullah Bangla Team to death and another to life sentence for murder of agnostic science writer Avijit Roy (left) in 2015.
- ❖ Earlier that week, the court had awarded death sentence to the killers of Faisal Dipan, owner of Jagriti Prokashoni that published Roy's books.

On 16 February 2021, five religious militants were sentenced to death in Bangladesh for the killing of a prominent blogger, who was critical of religious extremism. The Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal Judge Majibur Rahman [sentenced five members](#) of the militant group Ansar Ullah Bangla Team, while one man was given life in prison.

The case relates to the murder of Avijit Roy, a Bangladesh-born U.S. citizen, who was hacked to death by [machete-wielding attackers](#) in Dhaka when he and his wife were returning home from a book fair in February 2015. Roy's wife and fellow blogger, Rafida Ahmed, also suffered head injuries and lost a finger in the attack. She now lives in the United States.

Sacked army major Sayed Ziaul Haque Zia, said to be the leader of the group, along with one more member, and squad leader Hasan Shamim were tried by the court in absentia, as they are absconding. Judge Rahman said the prosecution proved the charges against all the other six defendants without any reasonable doubt.

The sentences were handed down in the same Dhaka court that had eight radical militants to death a week earlier for the 2015 murder of [Faisal Arefin Dipan](#), who used to publish Roy's books. Defense attorney Nazrul Islam said his clients would appeal the sentences.

A series of deadly attacks in the Muslim-majority country occurred between 2013 and 2016 against bloggers, religious minorities and secular activists. Islamic State or groups aligned with Al Qaeda claimed responsibility.

Bangladesh witnessed a string of deadly attacks between 2013 and 2016 that targeted writers and bloggers of secular orientation and from religious minorities, many having links with Al Qaeda-aligned groups. – Voice of America, India Today, DD News



SHAMIMA BEGUM

ISIS Bride with 'No Regrets' Loses Legal Bid to Return to UK

On 26 February 2021, UK Supreme Court ruled that Shamima Begum - who left her home in east London, joined ISIS in Syria in 2015 and got married to a militant – [shall not be allowed to return](#) to UK. She now lives in a Syrian refugee camp.

The ruling held that the Court of Appeal was wrong to rule that Shamima Begum be allowed to enter the UK to pursue her appeal against removal of her British citizenship.

While journalist [Piers Morgan](#) supported the decision, pointing to Shamima's statement she had 'no regrets' about her joining ISIS in 2015, columns in dailies such as in [The Guardian](#) did not support the revocation of her citizenship. – *The Guardian, Daily Express, The Daily Star*

TERRORISM IS CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY: JAISHANKAR

On 23 February 2021, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar addressed the 46th session of Human Rights Council (HRC) and said: “Terrorism continues to be the gravest threat to humankind. It is a crime against humanity and violates the most fundamental human right, namely the ‘Right to Life’ ... Terrorism can never be justified, nor its perpetrators ever equated to its victims”. He highlighted India’s experience as an inclusive and pluralistic society and vibrant democracy”.

The Minister’s comments came days after India’s angry response to the Special Rapporteur’s on Minority Issues and Freedom of Religion or Belief unfounded observation of supposed erosion of these rights in the country. The Ministry had termed the views as ‘deplorable’. In his address, the Minister called for a coordinated global response to the challenges confronting human rights agenda, including terrorism, global inequities and armed conflicts. — *The Hindu, The Hindustan Times*

US Warns Houthis after ‘Terror’ Delisting

On 7 February 2021, the new US administration under President Joe Biden warned Yemen’s Houthi rebels against continued attacks on civilians in Saudi Arabia and end new military operations in Yemen, days after the US had removed Houthis group from the designation of “foreign terrorist organization”. US State Department spokesman Ned Price said, “The United States is deeply troubled by continued Houthi attacks”. – Al Jazeera, *The Tribune*

Canada Names ‘Proud Boys’ Terrorist Group

On 3 February 2021, the Canadian government named the alleged White male supremacist group ‘Proud Boys’ to their official list of terrorist entities. The announcement called the group a neo-fascist organization that engages in political violence and espouses misogynistic, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant and white supremacist ideologies. Meanwhile, the US has also charged members of the group for role in January 6 Capitol riot. – NPR, *Business Standard*

Singapore Expels ISIS Suspect to Malaysia

Singapore has expelled a Malaysian supporter of the jihadist group ISIS whom it had arrested in July 2020 to Malaysia. Mohd Firdaus Kamal Intdzam, 33, got radicalized online by ISIS ideology in 2016. Firdaus planned to travel to with his wife to Syria to die as a martyr on the battlefield.

However, investigations did not indicate the suspect intended to commit any act of violence in Singapore. – The Star, Today Online

France to keep 5,100 anti-terror forces in Sahel

On 15 February 2021, French President Emmanuel Macron and leaders of five countries from the Sahel region of Africa (G5 Sahel) — Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger — held a two-day summit to discuss the grouping’s anti-terrorism operations. Connecting via videolink, Macron ruled out an immediate drawdown in France’s 5,100-strong forces battling armed groups in the Sahel region of West Africa, describing a rushed exit as a mistake. – France 24, Al Jazeera

10 Killed in Boko Haram Explosions

On 24 February 2021, 10 people were killed in explosions near Nigeria’s northeastern city of Maiduguri.

Although nobody has claimed responsibility, the city has been an epicenter of Boko Haram activities for years and local authorities seem certain the terror group as being behind the blasts. – Voice of America

Crypto Use in Terrorism on the Rise

US Treasury Secretary and former Chair of the Federal Reserve Janet Yellen has said that the use of cryptocurrencies for financing terrorism is on the rise and that existing regulatory frameworks, made in the 1970s, need to be updated.

Yellen’s remarks on 11 February 2021 come a week after the UN published a report saying cryptocurrencies have financed ISIS and Al-Qaeda. In September 2020, French police arrested 29 suspects for funding terrorists using cryptocurrency coupons. – Business Insider, Coindesk