



TERROR TRACKER

Newsletter by Counter Terrorism Centre



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



SRI LANKA PLANS TO **BAN BURQA**, SHUTS 1,000 MADRASSAS

Government introduces new counter-terrorism measures

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Suspect with no terror-group linkages held with arms cache

THREAT OF **DOMESTIC TERROR** RISING IN US, SAYS FBI

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SRI LANKA PLANS TO BAN BURQA SHUTS OVER 1,000 MADRASSAS

RADICAL SUSPECTS MAY BE HELD FOR 2 YEARS FOR DERADICALIZATION

Government introduces new measures and mulls revising existing counter-terrorism legislation, the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 1978 (PTA).

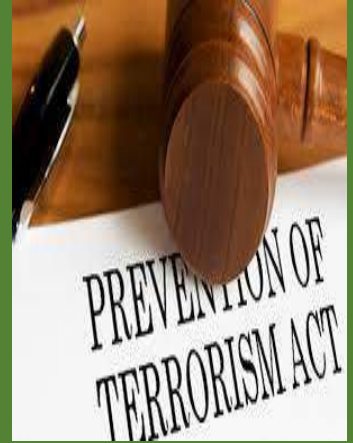


REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE

Sri Lanka's Public Security Minister Sarath Weerasekara has announced that the government would soon ban the burqa and would proceed to shut down at least a thousand madrassas (schools for Islamic instruction) on a nationwide scale. In addition, government has allowed detainment of suspected radicals for upto two years for the purpose of 'deradicalization'. He cited reasons stemming from "national security concerns" for the introduction of these measures and for the enactment of a refurbished counter-terrorism legislation, the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 1978 (PTA). A number of terrorist incidents have plagued Sri Lanka, particularly during periods of internal strife. However, the nation was about to commemorate a decade without any such occurrence when, on April 21, 2019 three churches, three luxury hotels as well as residential areas were attacked in a coordinated Islamist terrorist attack which claimed 269 civilian lives and eight bombers and injured around 500 people.

The attacks, termed the 2019 Easter Bombings, is largely responsible for the recent resurgence in Sri Lanka's counter-terrorism efforts as well as its particular focus on prevention of Islamist terrorism. In March 2020, government enforced a policy of cremating people who died of COVID-19 for fear that such burials could contaminate groundwater. However in February 2021, widespread opposition of the move prompted Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksha to declare an end to forced cremation. But then in March 2021, government introduced new regulation which allows authorities to detain and rehabilitate anyone who "by words either spoken or intended to be read or by signs or visible representations" causes violence or "religious, racial or communal disharmony or feelings of ill will or hostilities between different communities or racial or religious groups". — [ANI News](#), [The Diplomat](#), [The Hindu](#)

PREVENTION
OF TERRORISM
ACT OF 1978
DOES IT NEED
REVISION?



The Prevention of Terrorism Act was originally enacted as an emergency wartime measure during 1978 in Sri Lanka. It was later made permanent in 1982.

The Act provides the police with powers to search, arrest and detain suspects. Under the PTA, the police can detain someone for an upwards of 18 months the Minister has reason to suspect that the individual is either committing or is affiliated with some unlawful activity. Unlawful activity also includes offences such as graffiti and is punishable by death.

There have been domestic as well as international appeals to replace the law with something less stringent but given the recent policy commitments made by the government, the PTA seems rather appropriate to use. — *Agencies, Human Rights Watch.*



WHAT ARE 'LONE WOLF' TERRORISTS?

Lone wolf terrorism refers to an act of terrorism perpetrated by a 'lone actor' – who prepares and commits violent acts alone, without a formal command structure and without material assistance from any group. Such individuals may be influenced and motivated by the ideology of an external group and may choose to act to support the goals of that particular group.

As a result, lone wolf attacks in which extremists translate their convictions into violent actions without formal instruction are extremely difficult to prevent and combat.

Furthermore, while lone actors do not depend upon any group for their actions, they are nevertheless capable of inculcating the ideologies, methodologies and motivations of external groups and acting upon them independently. Pakistan may fake 'lone wolf' attacks to give the impression that terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir is indigenous and not perpetrated by its forces or terror groups. - *Agencies*

FROM GROUPS TO LONE WOLVES: 'A SHIFT IN PAK TERROR TACTICS'

Kashmiri 'lone wolf' with no terror-group linkages held with arms cache



On 12 March 2021, security agencies arrested a journalism student named Firdous Ahmed Natnoo and found a huge cache of arms and ammunition in his possession. The suspected terrorist was allegedly planning to execute political killings in Jammu and Kashmir, when in a joint operation the army, police and paramilitary forces arrested Natnoo from his native Bekhriyan village in Doda. Three Chinese pistols, along with five magazines, 15 rounds and a silencer were recovered from him.

The security agencies were surprised by the fact that despite being heavily armed, Natnoo was not affiliated with any known terrorist outfit. The arrest is reported to have led security agencies to investigate whether Pakistan and Pakistan-based terrorist groups have switched to a new strategy of conducting lone-wolf attacks in Jammu and Kashmir.

Following reliable leads, security agencies learnt that Natnoo was "planning to execute sensational political killings in Doda district to declare terror revitalisation as well as to grab headlines thus, he and his associates were being tracked by security forces for the last two months," Jammu-based Army PRO officer is reported to have said. He said that Natnoo was involved in the revival of terror footprints in the district which had been declared terrorist-free after the neutralisation of dangerous Hizbul Mujahideen terrorist Tahir Ahmed Bhatt alias Uqhab in May 2020. "He (Natnoo) was involved in recruitment, procurement of arms and ammunition and fund raising," the army officer said.

To avoid being blamed for abetting terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and to show the global community that terrorism in the Valley is an indigenous movement, Pakistan is said to have propped up new terror outfits such as The Resistant Front and Lashkar-e- Mustafa recently. However, these groups were soon exposed to be front organizations of Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad. Therefore, Pakistan is suspected of propping up fake 'lone wolves' to avoid FATF's blacklisting and to keep up the façade of committing to present Indo-Pak ceasefire. – [Republic TV](#), [Economic News](#), [News18](#)

CAPITOL HILL RIOTERS COULD FACE SEDITION CHARGES

FBI Follows Trails on Social Media, 300 of the 800 Rioters Arrested, Many at Large



Pro-Trump rioters at Capitol Hill on 6 January 2021

The events of the January 6, 2021 Capitol Hill insurrection and its aftershocks have continued to impact the socio-political atmosphere of the United States as well as the Biden Administration's domestic policies particularly when it comes to security concerns. During his [Inaugural Address](#), President Biden warned of "a rise of political extremism, white supremacy, domestic terrorism," which, he vowed, "we must confront and defeat."

A new [intelligence report](#) sent through to Congress by the Biden Administration conveys the rising threat of militias and white supremacists, emphasizing the need for additional resources as well as sustainable bilateral cooperation amongst intelligence and law-enforcement organizations as well as lawmakers to fight the growing epidemic of homegrown terrorism in the nation.

Alejandro N. Mayorkas, the Homeland Security secretary told a House committee that domestic terror, "poses the most lethal and persistent terrorism-related threat to the homeland today." Furthermore, the FBI in a statement declared that, "threat is persistent and evolving."

According to *US Today* report in March, agents from FBI's 55 field offices have arrested almost 300 people in the case, but as many as 500 remain at large of the 800 believed to have entered the Capitol. The riot claimed five lives and cost millions in damage and cleanup in the historic building. Arrests are expected to continue and it is reported that US intelligence agencies have received more than 230,000 digital tips.

Most people are facing charges that could put them in prison for anywhere from one to 20 years, but their trials could take months as the federal court system is badly affected by the coronavirus pandemic. – [USA Today](#), [Indian Express](#)

DOMESTIC TERROR THREAT IS RISING: FBI



FBI Director Christopher Wray

On 2 March 2021, the director of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation told a Senate panel that the Jan. 6 riot at the US Capitol building aimed at preventing the certification of Joe Biden's presidential victory over Donald Trump was domestic terrorism.

"That siege was criminal behaviour ... that we, the FBI, view as domestic terrorism," FBI Director Christopher Wray said in his opening statement before the Senate Judiciary Committee.

He said that the "January 6 was not an isolated event. The problem of domestic terrorism has been metastasising across the country for a long time now". – [Voice of America](#), [AP](#)

India, Bangladesh Should Be Vigilant, United Against Terrorism: PM Modi

On 26 March 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that India and Bangladesh should be vigilant and united to counter threats like terrorism as well as ideas and powers behind ‘inhuman acts’. He was speaking at Dhaka’s national parade square to mark the celebrations of the golden jubilee of Bangladesh’s independence and the birth centenary of the father of the nation of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The Prime Minister said that in both countries, the journey of the next 25 years is crucial and that both faced threats like terrorism: “The ideology and forces that carried out such inhuman incidents are still active. We must be careful with them and be organized to fight them.”

Meanwhile in the port city of Chittagong, at least four people were killed after members of Islamist groups Hefazat-e-Islam attacked a police station and a police station. The radical group had organized a protest against the visit of the Indian Prime Minister. — *The Hindu, Deccan Herald, The Wire*

Nigerian troops kill 57 Boko Haram terrorists

On 23 March 2021, Nigerian special forces eliminated 57 Boko Haram terrorists in the northern eastern state of Borno. The Nigerian military conducted operations against the terror group in the localities of Damboa and Gwoza according to anonymous sources. Several members of the group were wounded and managed to escape. Boko Haram has been responsible for more than 30,000 casualties and the displacement of over 3 million people since its activation in 2009. — [CGTN](#), [Anadolu Agency](#)

France detains 10 suspected PKK members

At least 10 suspected PKK terrorists have been detained by French authorities in south western France on 23 March, 2021. Police teams raided several houses simultaneously. According to judicial sources, the operation against the PKK was carried out under the orders of the Paris anti-terrorism judge. The suspects, were detained on charges of “creating and financing a terrorist organization.” — [France 24](#), [Anadolu Agency](#)

4 terrorists killed in Shopian encounter

On 22 March, security forces shot down 4 terrorists in a gun battle in South Kashmir’s Shopian district, according to police officials. The firing began in the Manihal area and lasted for a few hours resulting in one Army personnel being injured and four terrorists being killed. Two terrorists were killed in the Rawalpura district in Shopian on March 16, the encounter lasting for 3 days. — [The Hindustan Times](#), [India](#)

137 killed in Niger terror attack

On 21 March, 2021, over a hundred people were killed in a brutal attack by some armed men in several villages in south west Niger located near the border with Mali. The attackers, who rode motorcycles raided the villages of Intazayene, Bakorat and Wistane. While initial reports declared the number of casualties to be around 57, as per the Nigerian government; the total count is up to 137. — [Daily Sabah](#)

India, Austria discuss issue of terrorism

On 18 March, India and Austria covered a host of key issues during their foreign office consultations, including terrorism and the state of the Indo-Pacific, according to the Ministry of External Affairs. The dialogue was conducted with the intention to strengthen the bilateral linkages between the nations and foster cooperation for future challenges with regard to terrorism and security as well as other concerns. — [PTI](#), [ZeeNews](#)

India, Pakistan, China in SCO anti-terror exercise

India, Pakistan and China along with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), will hold a joint anti-terrorism exercise this year named, “Pabbi-Antiterror-2021”. Decisions have been made to improve cooperation between the competent authorities of the SCO member states in identifying and suppressing channels that finance terrorist activities,” the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) of the SCO statement said. — [The Hindu](#)