

Target Killing, Mass Murder of Shia Minority in Pakistan

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With thousands of Shia Muslims killed over the past few years in Pakistan and over 400 murdered in recent months, the killings have practically amounted to genocide, raising more-than-sectarian alarm bells not only in Pakistan but also across the Muslim world.

In fact, there has been a marked escalation in mass murders and target killings of the Shia minority in Pakistan, increasing global fear and consternation over the brutal bloodbath. According to World Minority Rights Report (2011), Pakistan ranks as the 6th worst country in terms of violence against and persecution of the Shia Muslims and minorities.

That the Shia mass murders have continued over the years with no legal and judiciary source or law enforcement agencies having sought to put an end to these brutalities indicates that these acts are but to be considered as part of a systematic and organized plot prodigiously funded and ingeniously engineered by internal and external forces with the express intention of making the pillars of Pakistani society fall to smithereens, shattering the very fabric of the Shia community and distorting the image of Pakistan and depicting it as a religiously intolerant nation.

The targets which were basically focused on any ordinary person with Shia belief has now come to include those Shia Muslims who belong to the educated and elite class of the Pakistani society.

At least four people have been shot down in Karachi, the largest city of Pakistan since Tuesday morning. A recent incident occurred at Kashmir Road near Jail Chowrangi where Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Ali Mohsin, 42, was shot three times in the head by assassins. Two more people were also shot dead in Pirabad area of the city. In another assassination, Shia Doctor Syed Naimatullah s/o Syed Sarwar was killed in Quetta in broad daylight at his clinic at Kirni Road.

Doctor Syed Naimatullah is the 419th victim of targeted killings since January 2012.

In another instance of elite killings, unidentified gunmen shot dead a Shia Muslim judge Zulfiqar Naqvi along with his driver and police bodyguard on August 30 in Quetta, southwestern Pakistan.

Apart from the target killings, other cases of Shia killings have been committed in the most grisly forms. A gruesome video recently circulated online by the Wahhabi Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) shows the beheading of two Shia Muslims.

An offshoot of al-Qaeda, the terrorist group first posted the video titled “Revenge” on August 23 on the Wahhabi terrorist Seminary Jamia Hafsa Urdu forum and then distributed it on other Wahhabi-Nasabi jihadist forums.

Four masked men accompany the victims Haseeb Zaidi and Maulana Nooruddin with their hands tied behind their backs and decapitate them in cold blood. The extensively networked terrorist group is widely believed to be behind the Shia killings in the country.

The gruesome nature of the murders helps disclose the identity of the perpetrators. The act of beheading victims is typically characteristic of Taliban extremists who also carry out similar atrocities against Shia Muslims in Afghanistan.

The history of violence against the Shia community in Pakistan goes back to the time of military dictator Zia ul-Haq who made it a state policy to fund and arm Wahhabi groups in the 1980s. It was during those years when he technically institutionalized violence by unleashing Sipah-e Sahaba fundamentalists on Shia-populated regions, ushering in a new age of violence and mayhem.

In 1988, Zia ul-Haq dispatched a huge army of 80,000 extremists to Shia-populated Gilgit region to annihilate the Shias. Adjacent villages such as Jalalabad, Bonji, Darot, Jaglot, Pari, and Manawar were razed to the ground and over 700 Shia Muslims were massacred. According to a Herald report “In May 1988, low-intensity political rivalry and sectarian tension ignited into full-scale carnage as thousands of armed tribesmen from outside Gilgit district invaded Gilgit along the Karakoram Highway. Nobody stopped them. They destroyed crops and houses, lynched and burnt people to death in the villages around Gilgit town. The number of dead and injured was put in the hundreds. But numbers alone tell nothing of the savagery of the invading hordes and the chilling impact it has left on these peaceful valleys.”

Simultaneously, Zia ul-Haq tasked Pakistan intelligence agency ISI with monitoring the activities of Shia organizations all over the country lest the Shia Muslims would be empowered in the wake of the advent of the Iranian Revolution in 1979.

In order to avoid international blame for stoking sectarian violence in the country, Zia al-Haq decided to legitimize the anti-Shia activities of Wahhabi fundamentalists such as Sipah-e Sahaba to carry out this task for the government. Privy to the carnage of the Shia Muslims at the hands of the Wahhabi fundamentalists, the ISI refrained from stopping the genocide of the Shias. Worst of all, they even facilitated and financed the massacre on the secret orders of Zia ul-Haq.

What is now happening to the Shia Muslims in Pakistani regions such as Gilgit, Baltistan, Parachinar, Kurram agency, Quetta and other areas is indeed the continued legacy of violence initiated by Zia ul-Haq and financed by Saudi Wahhabis in an effort to limit the influence of the Shia Muslims in the country.

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