

INDIA'S EXTRAJUDICIAL AND EXTRATERRITORIAL KILLINGS IN PAKISTAN

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(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)



Introduction

On the evening of January 25, 2024, the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, Syrus Sajjad Qazi unveiled a comprehensive evidence package of India's extrajudicial and extraterritorial killings in Pakistan.¹ The Foreign Secretary stated: "We have credible evidence of links between Indian agents and the assassination of two Pakistani nationals on Pakistani soil." Elaborating on the nature of evidence, the Foreign Secretary informed, "we have documentary, financial and forensic evidence of the involvement of the two Indian agents, who masterminded these assassinations." After Canada and the United States, Pakistan is the third country to expose Indian state-sponsored transnational terrorism publicly within a span of four months, which sheds light on India's fast-paced and illegal global kill campaign.

Assassination Cases in Pakistan

Disclosing the specifics of India's sinister global kill campaign, the Foreign Secretary highlighted two cases of assassinations orchestrated by Indian agents. The first case was of Shahid Latif who was assassinated outside a mosque in Sialkot on October 11, 2023, by Muhammad Umair and five target

¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pakistan, "Remarks by the Foreign Secretary on India's Extra-Judicial and Extra-Territorial Killings in Pakistan" press release, January 25, 2024, <https://mofa.gov.pk/press-releases/remarks-by-the-foreign-secretary-on-indias-extra-judicial-and-extra-territorial-killings-in-pakistan>.

killers on Indian payroll. After investigations based on confessional statements, it was discovered that Muhammad Umair, a labourer in a third country, was recruited by the Indian agent Yogesh Kumar to facilitate connection and communication with Pakistani criminals to trace and assassinate Shahid Latif. After the failure of this plan, Muhammad Umair was himself asked to get the job done with the assistance of five target killers. Pakistan was able to secure evidence of transactions made in the process that also unveiled the chain of events and its perpetrators.

The second target was Muhammad Riaz who was assassinated on September 8, 2023, outside a mosque in Rawalakot as was Shahid Latif, and the Canadian citizen Hardeep Singh Nijjar who was assassinated outside a Sikh temple. It appears that Indian agents follow the pattern of killing their targets outside their place of worship, which in itself is a heinous crime. Another obvious pattern is employing middlemen hitmen as evident in the cases of Shahid Latif, Nijjar of Canada and Gurpatwant Singh Pannun of the U.S. Likewise, Muhammad Riaz was also targeted and assassinated using a middleman hitman named Muhammad Abdullah Ali, who was recruited and guided by Indian agents Ashok Kumar Anand and Yogesh Kumar, whose passport details were released by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan. Muhammad Abdullah Ali was paid for his job using another middleman based in a third country and was also provided with ammunition to carry out the attack. Pakistani law enforcement authorities apprehended Muhammad Abdullah Ali on September 15, 2023, while boarding a flight at Jinnah International Airport Karachi. His supporters and facilitators from various cities were also tracked and all of them are being tried in a court of law.

Assassinations in the Age of Social and Digital Media

Although assassinations and assassination attempts have been around for centuries, what is novel about them in this modern era is the unrestricted and unregulated use of social and digital media. In all the recently unveiled cases of extrajudicial killings by Indian agents, there appears to be a sophisticated reliance on social media and digital media. The Foreign Secretary of Pakistan also stated that the potential assassins were recruited using the social media application Telegram and fake Da'esh accounts. The use of social and digital media by Indian agents for communication in the assassination plot of Nijjar of the U.S. was prominent in the indictment released by the New York Court.² Additionally, electronic and social media were also used in the process of magnifying the killings accomplished by the Indian agents. According to the Foreign Secretary, 'Indian media and social media accounts immediately claimed and glorified these killings as successful retribution against

² U.S. Department of Justice, "Justice Department Announces Charges in Connection with Foiled Plot to Assassinate U.S. Citizen in New York City" press release, November 29, 2023, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-announces-charges-connection-foiled-plot-assassinate-us-citizen-new-york>

“enemies” of India and projected their capacity to carry out these illegal acts.’ This indicated that electronic and social media platforms have not only been used to recruit and communicate but also for showcasing Indian ‘accomplishments’ to the world, which in the end is leaving a trail of evidence.

Leading Indian media outlets such as the *Hindu*, *India Today*, *Hindustan Times*, *Indian Express*, even published the news of Shahid Latif being killed by unknown target killers on October 11, 2023, the same day of his death, which presented another evidence of Indian involvement in his case.³ Similarly, the news of Muhammad Riaz also appeared in India and Pakistan.⁴ In India, both were charged under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act as was Nijjar of Canada and Pannun of the U.S. and many others remain on India’s extensive ‘hit list.’ India’s purpose of carrying out these acts of state-sponsored terrorism is to eliminate the people who supposedly pose a threat to India. New Delhi has carved draconian laws to convict anyone who falls in the category of threat before putting them on the hit list. So far, this was limited to India and Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK); however, after Pakistan, now the hit list has people from around the globe. India seems confident and incautious in undertaking these extraterritorial, extra-judicial executions due to its close and growing ties with major powers, especially with the U.S. which is also one of the victims of India’s illegal acts. The assassination cases disclosed so far by the U.S., Canada and Pakistan have similar patterns. Pakistan claimed that there are more cases under scrutiny and are at various stages of investigation as did Canada. It remains highly plausible that India has an extensive list of targets and there could be more active cases in other countries with some cases even in close partners of India.

Indian Reaction

India conveniently played its outdated blame game by dubbing Pakistan as a ‘terrorist’ state to put a gloss over its own role in state-sponsored terrorism globally. The Indian Ministry of External Affairs

³ “Pathankot attack mastermind Shahid Latif killed in Pakistan mosque,” *The Hindu*, October 11, 2023, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/pathankot-attack-mastermind-shahid-latif-killed-in-pakistan-mosque/article67407247.ece>; Raj Shekhar, “2016 Pathankot attack handler Shahid Latif gunned down in Pakistan,” *Times of India*, October 12, 2023, http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/104333586.cms?from=mdr&utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst; Poulomi Ghosh, “Who was Shahid Latif, Pathankot attack conspirator, killed in Pakistan?,” *Hindustan Times*, October 11, 2023, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/shahid-latif-pathankot-attack-conspirator-killed-in-pakistan-report-101697011250855.html>; “Pathankot attack mastermind Shahid Latif killed in Pakistan mosque,” *Indian Express*, October 11, 2023, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/pathankot-attack-mastermind-shahid-latif-killed-pakistan-mosque-8978544/>

⁴ J&K Lashkar Terrorist Wanted By India Killed Inside PoK Mosque | Terror Groups Blame Indian Intel, *Hindustan Times*, September 10, 2023, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/videos/news/jk-lashkar-terrorist-wanted-by-india-killed-inside-pok-mosque-terror-groups-blame-indian-intel-101694329399922.html>; “‘Jud’ fighter gunned down in Rawalakot,” *Express Tribune*, September 8, 2023, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2434824/jud-fighter-gunned-down-in-rawalakot>

(MEA) dismissed Pakistan's claims, as it had done with Canadian claims. The MEA countered Pakistan's exposé as "Pakistan's latest attempt at peddling false and malicious anti-India propaganda."⁵ It typically added, "As the world knows, Pakistan has long been the epicenter of terrorism, organized crime, and illegal transnational activities." The undiplomatically worded statement also appeared to put Pakistan on notice when it stated "Pakistan will reap what it sows." In all the cases unveiled so far, India has blamed Pakistan, the U.S. and Canada for allegedly harbouring terrorists rather than addressing the matter at hand and cooperating with states showcasing their concerns to find solutions. After reputational damage, the consequences of Indian actions started to materialize when President Joe Biden declined the invitation to attend the Republic Day Parade (on January 26, 2024), which betrayed mistrust and suspiciousness between the close partners. India's audaciousness to recurrently violate the sovereignty of states near and far underscores that it is high time for the world to check on India's dangerous agendas behind developing global ties rather than falling for its apparent outlook.

Conclusion

India has been projecting a fallacious persona of the 'world's largest democracy' and an emerging economy, whereas in reality it has transformed into a predator state that feeds on ultranationalist Hindutva-led ideology and targets and suffocates 'others.' India has not only carried out brazen acts of state-sponsored transnational terrorism globally, but has also played the victim card to deceive the world repeatedly. The Indian extrajudicial and extraterritorial killing network has a global reach that depends on the sophisticated use of social and digital media to expand its network and carry out assassinations without the fear of consequences. It appears that India is willing to go to any extent to get people executed, even if it means violating the sovereignty of other nations including Pakistan, Canada and its close strategic and defence partner the U.S. Pakistan has remained a victim of Indian extrajudicial killings and violation of sovereignty for long time. The world has also witnessed these Indian acts, which demand that the international community hold India to account for its acts of violation of sovereignty, international law, and the UN Charter. All victim states must proceed with their cases legally to bring justice to victims and their families. India's recklessness and imprudence necessitates a reevaluation of its grandiose claims and aspirations for a larger global role.

⁵ Ministry of External Affairs India, "Official Spokesperson's response to media queries regarding remarks made by Pakistan Foreign Ministry" press release, January 25, 2024, https://www.mea.gov.in/response-to-queries.htm?dtl/37532/Official_Spokespersons_response_to_media_queries_regarding_remarks_made_by_Pakistan_Foreign_Ministry