



## Jaish-e-Mohammad



Jaish-e-Mohammed is a Pakistan-based Deobandi jihadist group active in Kashmir. The group's primary motive is to separate Kashmir from India and merge it into Pakistan. It has carried out several attacks primarily in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. It also maintained close relations with Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and continues to be allied to them.

It has been banned in Pakistan since 2002. It has reportedly resurfaced under other names. It continues to openly operate several facilities in the country.

According to B. Raman, Jaish-e-Mohammed is viewed as the "deadliest" and "the principal terrorist organisation in Jammu and Kashmir". The group has been designated as a terrorist organisation by Pakistan, Australia, Canada, India, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States and the United Nations.

In 2016, Jaish was suspected of being responsible for an attack on the Pathankot airbase in India. The Indian government, and some other sources, accused Pakistan of assisting Jaish in conducting the attack. Pakistan denied assisting Jaish, and arrested several members of Jaish in connection with the attack, who were then released by the security establishment according to a report in Dawn. Pakistan called the report a "fabrication".

Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) is said to have created Jaish-e-Mohammed by working with several Deobandi terrorists associated with Harkat-ul-Mujahideen. By the late 1990s, states Ahmed Rashid, the Pakistani military justified jihad in Kashmir as a legitimate part of its

foreign policy. Harkat had been set up in mid-1990s with ISI support to carry out "spectacular acts of terrorism". The United States declared it a terrorist group in 1998 and bombed its training camps in Afghanistan.

In December 1999, Harkat terrorists hijacked the Indian Airlines Flight 814 scheduled to fly from Kathmandu to Delhi, and diverted it to Kandahar, where they were looked after by the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistani officials stationed at the airport. After they slit the throat of a passenger, the Indian government agreed to their demands and released Maulana Masood Azhar, Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh and Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar, three Harkat operatives previously imprisoned in India. The released prisoners were escorted to Pakistan by the ISI, and Masood Azhar was chosen to head the new group Jaish-e-Mohammed. The ISI is said to have paraded him on a victory tour through Pakistan to raise money for the new organisation. Some analysts argue that ISI built up the JeM to counter the growing power of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). Many analysts believed that around 1999, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) used JeM to fight in Kashmir and other places and continues to provide it backing.. Although it has been banned in Pakistan since 2002, it continues to openly operate several facilities in the country.

Azhar's leadership is said to be nominal. The group has a largely decentralised structure. JeM's membership, drawn from the former members of Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, was allied to the Taliban in Afghanistan and Al Qaeda. They shared their training camps in Afghanistan and carried loyalty to Al Qaeda. A majority of the members of Harkat are said to have followed Azhar into the newly founded group, leaving Harkat under-funded and under-supported.

## **Ideology**

The declared objective of the JeM is to liberate Kashmir and merge it with Pakistan. However, it projects Kashmir as a "gateway" to the entire India, whose Muslims are also deemed to be in need of liberation. After liberating Kashmir, it aims to carry its jihad to other parts of India, with an intent to drive Hindus and other non-Muslims from the Indian subcontinent

JeM also aims to drive the United States and Western forces from Afghanistan. The JeM leader Masood Azhar is reported to have said in a speech in Karachi:

Marry for jihad, give birth for jihad and earn money only for jihad till the cruelty of America and India ends.

In late 2002, Christians were targeted across Pakistan and the gunmen belonging to JeM were caught for the acts. Some members have attacked members of the Pakistani state and western targets inside Pakistan. The American journalist Daniel Pearl was abducted and murdered by Ahmed Omar Sheikh.

## 2000–2001

On 20 April 2000, JeM carried out the first suicide bombing in Kashmir, exploding a bomb in an Indian army barracks. Five Indian soldiers were killed.

Following the September 11 attacks in New York, the Musharraf government joined the United States in the War on Terror, assuming that the move would give it a free hand in supporting militancy in Kashmir. In October 2001, JeM carried out a bombing near the Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly, killing 38 people and claiming responsibility for it. In December 2001, JeM and LeT militants launched a fideyeeen attack on the Indian Parliament waging a battle with the security personnel. Eight security personnel and a gardener were killed, but the attack was foiled. JeM claimed responsibility for the attack, but removed the announcement a day later under pressure from the ISI. The Indian Government accused the LeT and JeM of being involved in the attack. Subsequently, four JeM members were caught by Indian authorities and put on trial. All four were found guilty of playing various roles in the incident. One of the accused, Afzal Guru, was sentenced to death.

Security specialist Bruce Riedel comments that even by the standards of modern terrorism, this was an extraordinary attack. If the Prime Minister or a senior party leader of India was killed in the attack, India would have been forced to retaliate militarily. In the event, India called the terror attack an "attack on democracy" and began large-scale troop mobilisation at the India-Pakistan border, launching the largest war games in fifteen years. Pakistan retaliated by launching its own war games, moving troops from the Afghan border to the Indian border. The United States, annoyed with the dilution of the War on Terror as well as the threat of an Indo-Pakistani war, delivered an ultimatum to Musharraf, asking him to make "a clear statement to the world that he intends to crack down on terror". Pushed to a corner, Musharraf announced on 12 January 2002 that no organisation would be allowed to indulge in terrorism in the name of Kashmir. He declared a ban on five extremist groups including the

JeM. Hundreds of militants were rounded up, states Ahmed Rashid, giving rise to severe hostility and derision from them. However, by March 2002, all the arrested militants were freed and curbs on them were quietly lifted. Financial and intelligence inputs to JeM were resumed. Masood Azhar was released under a court order.

### **Bans, revolts and split**

Earlier in 2001, when the group anticipated that the US State Department would declare it a foreign terrorist organisation, it renamed itself Tehrik-ul-Furqan and transferred its assets to low-profile supporters. JeM was declared a foreign terrorist organisation by the United Nations in October 2001 and by the US in December 2001.

In response to the January 2002 ban by Pakistan, JeM changed its name to Khuddam ul-Islam. Khuddam was also banned in 2003, after which it re-branded itself as a charity called Al-Rehmat Trust.

By this time, the JeM had split into two groups, due to conflicts among the members. Three JeM commanders, Abdul Jabbar, Maulana Umar Farooq and Abdullah Shah Mazhar, left the group and formed Jamaat ul-Furqan. The remaining group that stayed with Masood Azhar used the name Khuddam ul-Islam.

The rank and file of the JeM were angered by Musharraf's U-turn in joining the War on Terror. By staying loyal to the Pakistani state, Masood Azhar lost majority support in the JeM Supreme Council, who demanded his resignation. Particularly influential among the rebels was Maulana Abdul Jabbar, whose faction led a jihad against what they called the "slave" government of Pakistan and the US influence upon it. They were supported by Al Qaeda, and joined by members of Lashkar-e-Taiba, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Harkatul Mujahideen..

From March to September 2002, the rebels carried out suicide missions on Pakistani officials in cities like Islamabad, Karachi, Murree, Taxila and Bahawalpur. After the fall of the Taliban government, the JeM activists returning from Afghanistan attacked Christian temples, Shia mosques and diplomatic missions inside Pakistan. The ISI demanded Masood Azhar to rein in the rank-and-file. However he had lost control over them. He maintained that they were already expelled from the organisation and the state should arrest them. In fact, most of the factions remained

within the JeM and competed with the parent organisation for authority and resources. Some rebellious factions gathered around Abdul Jabbar who launched Jamaat-ul-Furqan in late 2002. The rebel factions were supported by "rogue" members of the ISI.

In November 2003, the Musharraf government banned the renamed Khuddam ul-Islam as well as Jamaat-ul-Furqan. Then the rebels carried out two assassination attempts on President Musharraf himself, on 14 December and 25 December 2003. There was evidence of Pakistan military members providing logistical support for the attempts. The explosives used in the bombings were traced to an Al Qaeda camp in South Waziristan. Masood Azhar too had publicly called for the assassination of Musharraf.

Eventually, the government cracked down on the rogue elements in the military and intelligence establishments. More than a hundred members were apprehended and dismissed, with some members being sentenced to death. However, the majority of the militant infrastructure was left intact. Azhar's group, which had fallen into relative obscurity by 2004, was allowed to rebuild itself after the problematic portions of the leadership were purged. The rebellious factions eventually realigned themselves with Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (Pakistani Taliban) in 2007.

## Revival

Masood Azhar stayed loyal to the Pakistani state after 2004. Pakistan in turn protected his group despite the official bans. The group continued to grow in Bahawalpur. In 2009, it was reported to have built a large 6.5 acre walled complex in Bahawalpur, along with a swimming pool and a stable for a dozen horses, which could be used for training militants. In the centre of the city, the group runs an "imposing" madrassa, attended by hundreds of children every year. In 2008, the organisation held a massive three-day rally in the city, with its own armed security guards posted at all the entrances to the city centre. The police were conspicuous by their absence.

Masood Azhar kept a low profile for several years until he resurfaced in 2014, giving fiery speeches calling for more attacks on India and the United States. He boasted of having 300 suicide attackers at his command and threatened to kill Narendra Modi if he were to become the Prime Minister.

Bruce Riedel connects the revival of JeM to the return to office of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who had long advocated a 'detente' with India. The developing links between him and the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, especially following the latter's visit to Lahore on the Christmas day in 2015, angered the group.

## 2016

A week after Narendra Modi's visit, in January 2016, the group launched an attack on the Pathankot air base in which seven security personnel were killed. This was immediately followed by an attack on the Indian consulate in Mazar-i-Sharif in Afghanistan. Both India and Pakistan condemned the attack and stayed on course with their peace process. Pakistan has also followed on the leads provided by India and carried out raids on the offices of JeM. It announced the formation of a joint investigation team with India to investigate the attack. It was also announced that Masood Azhar was taken into "protective custody". However, JeM issued a statement denying that anybody had been arrested.

In April 2016, the JeM chief Masood Azhar was said to be free but "within reach, if needed". According to Riaz Hussain Pirzada, the Member of National Assembly from Bahawalpur, the "breeding grounds" still remained and the madrassas were still being financed. According to an official, Nawaz Sharif ordered the Counterterrorism Department to crack down on the organisation but, in a high-level meeting, the army chief General Raheel Sharif pressured the Prime Minister to hand over the crackdown to the Army, after which "no one knows what happened". Dawn reported the Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif as saying that, whenever civilian authorities took action against certain groups, the security establishment worked behind the scenes to set them free. The government however denied the accuracy of the report.

Following the onset of the 2016 Kashmir unrest in Indian Jammu and Kashmir, all the jihadi groups in Pakistan held rallies in major cities like Lahore. The JeM was seen openly raising funds for jihad.

In September 2016, jihadi militants attacked the Indian brigade headquarters in Uri, close to the Line of Control in Indian-held Kashmir. The attack resulted in the death of 19 soldiers, described as the deadliest attack in over two decades. India suspected JeM for the attack. It also made its feelings felt with heavy rhetoric, the Indian Home Minister calling Pakistan a "terrorist state" and noting that the perpetrators were "highly trained, heavily armed, and specially equipped". Pakistan denied involvement. India then launched a diplomatic offensive, trying to isolate

Pakistan in the world community. On 28 September, it declared that it carried out "surgical strikes" on terrorist launchpads in Pakistani-held Kashmir. The claim was however denied by Pakistan.

### **Infrastructure**

JeM originally operated training camps in Afghanistan, jointly with the other militant groups. After the fall of the Taliban government, it relocated them to Balakot and Peshawar in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Muzaffarabad in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. By 2009, it developed a new headquarters in Bahawalpur in Pakistani Punjab, 420 miles south of Islamabad. These include a madrassa in the centre of the city and a 6.5 acre walled complex that serves as a training facility, including water training and horse back riding. Bahawalpur also serves as a rest and recuperation facility for jihadists fighting in Afghanistan, away from the areas of US drone attacks. It is also close to the bases of other militant groups with which JeM is believed to have operational ties: Lashkar-e-Taiba in Muridke, Sipah-e-Sahaba in Gojra, and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi also based in Punjab. There are at least 500–1000 other madrassas in Bahawalpur, most of which teach a violent version of Islam to children

### **Links to other organisations**

When JeM started, it had strong ties to the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, sharing their training camps in Afghanistan, and exchanging intelligence, training and coordination. Bruce Riedel suggests that the 2001 Indian Parliament attack was possibly a "payback" to Al-Qaeda for its earlier help in getting Masood Azhar released. With the Indian reaction to the attack, Pakistan was forced to move its forces from the Afghan border to the Indian border, relieving pressure on Al-Qaeda.

Most of the JeM members with loyalties to the Taliban left to join renegade groups in 2002. However, Masood Azhar's group was noticed recruiting fighters for the Afghan jihad in 2008. In 2010, Pakistan's Interior minister Rehman Malik stated that the JeM, along with Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, were allied to the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Within South Punjab, the JeM is closely allied to Lashkar-e-

Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Sahaba. Scholars Abou Zahab and Roy state that the three organisations appear to be "the same party" focusing on different sectors of activity.

JeM continues to have links to its ancestor, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen. In addition, the group has operational ties to Lashkar-e-Taiba, which it employed in launching the 2001 Indian Parliament attack. It joined the ISI-sponsored United Jihad Council, an umbrella organisation of 13–16 militant organisations that fight in Indian-administered Kashmir.

### Campaign of violence

- The group, in coordination with Lashkar-e-Taiba, has been implicated in the 2001 Indian Parliament attack in New Delhi.
- It has been suspected in the murder of American journalist Daniel Pearl in Karachi.
- An informant, posing as a member of Jaish-e-Mohammed, helped police to arrest four people allegedly plotting to bomb a New York City synagogue as well as to shoot Stinger missiles at military aircraft in the United States. The arrest of the four took place in May 2009. One of the four, by the name of James Cromitie, allegedly expressed the desire to join Jaish-e-Mohammed. This expression allegedly took place approximately a year prior to this arrest.
- In January 2016, members of the group were suspected of carrying out the Pathankot attack
- In September 2016, the group was accused of carrying out the Uri attack. Three groups of 4 members each are said to have infiltrated into Kashmir through the Line of Control, one attacked in Poonch sector and one at the Army brigade in Uri. Third group has been untraceable.

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