



**Pakistan – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 13 June 2014**

**Who are the Wahabi Muslims extremists? Are they related and or protected with the authorities in Pakistan? Any reports of links between the Wahabi league the federal investigation agency of Pakistan, Pakistani embassies and Pakistani Police?**

An Australian Refugee Review Tribunal research response, in reply to the request “Please provide information on whether the Wahabi school of Islam is practiced in Pakistan and any practices associated with this school with regard to women”, states:

“The term ‘Wahabi’ is often employed in reporting on Pakistan as a means of referring to the Deobandi school of Sunni Islam which is associated with a number of Taliban styled militant networks and political parties in Pakistan. The Deobandi school is a South Asian revivalist interpretation of Sunni Islam which reportedly took inspiration from the Wahabi school, the latter being a revivalist movement which has come to preeminence across the central Arabian peninsular (present day Saudi Arabia) and whose adherents refer to themselves as Muwahhidun (unitarians). The two schools are not entirely univocal and have their own regional identities. There are also formal differences, with the Wahabi school following the Hanbali fiqh (school) of Islamic law (Shariah) while the Deobandi tradition follows a Hanafi interpretation. Nonetheless, and as is noted above, the Wahabi and Deobandi traditions are reported to be closely associated to the point of being synonymous in some reporting, along with the associated Salafist school which is sometimes also employed as a synonym for such beliefs. This is particularly the case in reporting on Taliban styled networks.” (Australian Refugee Review Tribunal (16 November 2009) *Country Advice Pakistan PAK35611 – Purdah – Women – Marriage – State protection – Punjabis and Mohajirs – Deobandi Islam*, p.19)

See also Australian Refugee Review Tribunal country advice document which states:

“Attacks on Shia communities throughout Pakistan by Deobandi extremist groups are part of a long-running campaign to create a Sunni Islamic state; extremist Deobandi doctrine classifies the various Shi’ite branches as un-Islamic. Other targets of these extremists groups include Ahmadis and non-Muslims. More recently, reports indicate that Deobandi extremists have begun attacking Sunni targets associated with Sufism and the Barelvi school of Islam. Despite being associated with the Deobandi school of Hanafi Islam, Pakistan’s Shi’ite news sites collectively refer to these groups as Nasabi-Wahabi.” (Australian Refugee Review Tribunal (Australian Refugee Review Tribunal (27 May 2011) *Country Advice Pakistan – PAK38764 – Hazaras – Shi’ites – Quetta – Targeted Harm – Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan – Jamaat Ahle*

*Sunnat – Lashkar-e-Jhangvi – Nasabi-Wahabi – Ahle Hadith – Police Impartiality – Judiciary – Law – State Protection – Relocation, p.1)*

A report published by Minority Rights Group International, in a section titled “History”, states:

“The roots of the militant attacks against Shi’a in Pakistan can be traced to the dictatorship of General Zia-ul-Haq, who held the presidency from 1978 following a military coup the previous year and remained in power until his death in 1988. After the Iranian revolution in 1979, many majority Sunni states including Pakistan began to fear the export of Shi’a Islam. In an attempt to counter this, Zia strengthened relations with Saudi Arabia and opened Pakistan’s doors to a brand of Sunni radical Islam known as Wahhabism. Saudi Wahhabi literature and religious preachers were welcomed into Pakistan, establishing madrasas and other learning centres where this ideology was widely disseminated. The main targets of these religious leaders were Shi’a Muslims and Sufis, who are followers of Islamic mysticism.” (Minority Rights Group International (12 June 2014) *‘Everything has shattered’ – rising levels of violence against Shi’a in Pakistan, p.2)*

An article from The Guardian states:

“All this changed in the 1980s when during the Afghan resistance against the Soviet invasion, elements in Saudi Arabia poured in money, arms and extremist ideology. Through a network of madrasas, Saudi-sponsored Wahhabi Islam indoctrinated young Muslims with fundamentalist Puritanism, denouncing Sufi music and poetry as decadent and immoral. At Attock, not far from Rahman Baba’s shrine on the Khyber Pass, stands the Haqqania madrasa, one of the most radical schools where the Taliban leader Mullah Omar was trained. Across the Pakistani border, the tolerant Sufi-minded Barelvi form of indigenous Islam has also been supplanted by the hardline Wahhabi creed. This madrasa-inspired and Saudi-financed Wahhabi Islam is destroying indigenous Islam in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Crucially, it is imposing a radical creed that represents a distortion and perversion of true Islam. Wahhabi followers beheaded a Polish geologist in February (as revenge for Polish troops in Afghanistan) and blew up a century-old shrine dedicated to Rahman Baba in the Pakistani town of Peshawar in March.” (The Guardian (20 August 2009) *Pakistan must confront Wahhabism*)

A Deutsche Welle article, in a section headed “The root of extremism”, states:

“Pakistan’s former law minister Iqbal Haider told DW that most jihadist and terrorist organizations operating in Pakistan were Wahabis. ‘Whether they are the Taliban or the Lashkar-e-Taiba, their ideology is Saudi-Wahabi without an iota of doubt,’ Haider said. ‘All these organizations get their backing from the Pakistani military and its security agencies.’ Haider, who served as law minister under former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (who was allegedly assassinated in 2007 by the Taliban) blamed the former military dictator General Zia-ul-Haq for making it a state policy to fund and arm Wahabi groups in the 1980s. He said that the General used these organizations against minority groups, including the Shiites, who, according to Haider had sympathies with Iran. He said there was no doubt that Saudi Arabia was supporting Wahabi groups through General Haq to kill Iran’s

support in Pakistan.” (Deutsche Welle (24 August 2012) *The 'Wahabi Republic' of Pakistan*)

An article published on the Iranian English-language website Lighthouse Viewer News states:

“To advance its political ends and foster Wahabsim, the Riyadh government financially supported many religious schools in Pakistan and sometimes paid for all of their expenses. They also helped to repair old mosques and construct new ones in the country. As the influence of the Persian language in the subcontinent could be a hurdle in the way of spreading Wahabism in Pakistan, the Saudi government put on its agenda to replace Persian with Arabic in the region. Also, the poor economic conditions in Pakistan and its huge workforce as well as the Arab countries’, especially Saudi Arabia’s, need for workforce caused widespread migration from Pakistan to Arab states and that contributed to the spread of Wahabism. There are many political groups and parties in Pakistan that advocate Wahabism. The Riyadh government has provided huge financial support for these groups to make them more dependent on Saudi Arabia and enhance their position in the Pakistani society.” (Lighthouse Viewer News (4 September 2013) *Wahabism in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia’s role*)

A report on the alleged massacre of Shia in Pakistan from the Iranian English-language TV channel Press TV states:

“All these massacres are being legitimated and orchestrated by a Wahhabi group known as Sepah Sahabeh who emerged in 1985 in the Punjab province of Pakistan as a reaction to the Islamic Revolution of Iran and the burgeoning Shia Muslims who had gradually entered the political and economical positions in the Pakistani government. The extremist group was considerably beefed up and enlarged under support of the then Pakistani president Zia ul-Haq with the ultimate goal of establishing an independent Wahhabi state in Pakistan and eliminating the Shia minority in the country. In fact, it is widely believed that the then Pakistani president Zia ul-Haq generously contributed to the emergence and development of such extremist groups and implicitly gave them carte blanche to engage in liquidating the Shia minority. The government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif which to a large extent relied on the Wahhabi extremists for political support went silently by this spate of violence. However, in January 2001, Sepah Sahabeh was branded as a terrorist group under the then Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf. A violent crackdown soon ensued as a result of which many members went into hiding but the group later re-emerged and branched out under different names such as Lashkar Jangawi and Jaish Muhammad. After all, Tahrik-e Taliban euphemistically called ‘Student Movement of Pakistan’ is an offshoot of the terrorist group. Apart from the mass killing of the Shia groups, many individuals also became the target of these terrorists backed by the Pakistani intelligence agencies, inter alia, ISI.” (Press TV (5 May 2012) *Invisible hands behind Shia massacre in Pakistan*)

A report from the Asian Human Rights Commission states:

“Among those blamed for the sectarian violence in the country are mainly Sunni militants such as Sipah-e-Sahaba and members of Shia militant groups such as Tehrik-e-Jafria and others. However, predominant Sunni terrorist

groups are often blamed for frequent attacks on minority Shiites and their religious gatherings resulting in reprisal attacks by them. Pakistan's ISI-backed Punjabi judiciary once again demonstrated its institutional hatred of Shia Muslims today by releasing the notorious leader of the Jihadi-sectarian organization Malik Ishaq, the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (also known as the Punjabi Taliban or Sipah-e-Sahaba). Punjabi judges, backed by Punjabi generals, released a Punjabi terrorist to enable further massacres of Shias, Ahmadis, Christians and other targeted communities. (Asian Human Rights Commission (8 February 2012) *Pakistan: Brutal sectarian violence against Shias continues unabated*)

See also Asian Human Rights Commission report which states:

“The LeJ are followers of Wahabi sect of Islam which is the dominating sect in Saudi Arabia and the organization was formed during the military regime of General Zia Ul Haq in the period of Jihad against Soviet Union's intervention in Afghanistan. This organization was banned by General Musharraf after 9/11 when the USA and UN declared it to be a terrorist organization. But, still the LeJ operates in all parts of Pakistan particularly in Punjab province where the provincial government has even provided them with office space.” (Asian Human Rights Commission (21 September 2011) *Pakistan: Members of Shia community were under attack while the military forces look on*)

An Agence France Presse report states:

“Lashkar-i-Jhangvi is regarded as the most extreme Sunni terror group in Pakistan, and is accused of killing hundreds of Shias since its emergence in the 1990s. It developed close ties to Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, which ruled in Afghanistan from 1996 until the 2001 US-led invasion. Pakistan formally banned the group in 2001, and there have been numerous crackdowns with arrests and killings of known Jhangvi operatives over the last 20 years.” (Agence France Presse (21 January 2014) *Bus bombing kills 24 Shiites in southwest Pakistan*)

A US Congressional Research Service report, in a section titled “Questions About Pakistan's Main Intelligence Agency”, refers to alleged links between the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and terrorist groups in Pakistan as follows:

“A 2002 statement by the then-British foreign secretary noted the British government's acceptance of ‘a clear link’ between the ISI and Pakistan-based terrorist groups including the LeT, JeM, and Harakat Mujahideen.” (US Congressional Research Service (1 June 2010) *Pakistan: Key Current Issues and Developments*, p.35)

A report published by the Center for Strategic & International Studies, in a section titled “The Uncertain Role of the ISI”, states:

“The ISI is best known for its links to militant groups, although there is considerable uncertainty as to the magnitude of these relationships.” (Center for Strategic & International Studies (7 June 2011) *Pakistan: Violence vs. Stability*, p.4)

An article published by the New York Times states:

“The Pakistani government, under President Pervez Musharraf and his intelligence chief, Lt. Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, was maintaining and protecting the Taliban, both to control the many groups of militants now lodged in the country and to use them as a proxy force to gain leverage over and eventually dominate Afghanistan. The dynamic has played out in ways that can be hard to grasp from the outside, but the strategy that has evolved in Pakistan has been to make a show of cooperation with the American fight against terrorism while covertly abetting and even coordinating Taliban, Kashmiri and foreign Qaeda-linked militants. The linchpin in this two-pronged and at times apparently oppositional strategy is the ISI. It’s through that agency that Pakistan’s true relationship to militant extremism can be discerned — a fact that the United States was slow to appreciate, and later refused to face directly, for fear of setting off a greater confrontation with a powerful Muslim nation.” (New York Times (19 March 2014) *What Pakistan Knew About Bin Laden*)

An Asian World article states:

“The LashkarJhangvi is the main protagonist of the Al-Qaeda ideology with links to the Taliban and the ISI intelligent services. Despite openly targeting Shia Muslims, they have often gone after key Sunni officials in the government and prominent figures in religious communities across the country to help stoke tensions between both Sunni and Shia. Operating with impunity, the Pakistan government has been slow to crack down upon them. Only at the behest of the American administration have they gone after them reluctantly because of the links the countries secret services have with the LashkarJhangvi. Carrying out their wet-work, the ISI has been known to supply the terrorist group with funding and weaponry.” (Asian World (12 September 2013) *Twin Bomb Attack Kills 57 in Pakistan*)

An article from The Guardian states:

“Pakistan's all-powerful military intelligence services have been on the receiving end of unusually harsh public criticism for being ‘scared to take action’ against militant groups in the wake of a bomb attack that killed 85 members of the Hazara ethnic minority. A senior politician and the country's highest-profile television journalist have lashed out at the military Inter-Services Intelligence spy agency (ISI) after Saturday's mass killings in the troubled city of Quetta, which sparked countrywide protests. Hamid Mir, who present's Pakistan's most popular news show, said the ISI had ignored a tide of sectarian bloodshed after deliberately creating ‘private death squads’ to fight a war against separatists in the country's troubled Baluchistan province.” (The Guardian (18 February 2013) *Pakistan military intelligence under fire for failing to prevent Quetta bombing*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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