

ISIS against Sufi: More than 80 people died in a Pakistan terror attack - where exactly is the hashtag and the solidarity?

Sunday 19 February 2017, by [DEARDEN Lizzie](#), [FAROOQ Muhammad](#), [JAWAD Adil](#), [SHAH Murtaza Ali](#) (Date first published: 17 February 2017).

More than 80 people died in a Pakistan terror attack last night - where exactly is the hashtag and the solidarity? The lack of political attention and media reporting of recent events shows how hypocritically we ignore terror victims in the Middle East.

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Last night, a suicide attack on a shrine in Pakistan [see below] killed at least 88 people and injured a further 250 at last count. This comes just two days after a suicide bomber attacked a rally in Lahore [1], the cultural heart of Pakistan, and killed over a dozen people. Isis has claimed responsibility for the deaths, causing terror and distress across the country.

While the Western press have published the odd article about the attacks, the coverage goes no further: no big front-page reporting, special emergency episodes of political podcasts, trending hashtags or Snapchat filters.

The Western media is so obsessed with what Donald Trump does and doesn't say about potential security threats that they're ignoring the actual terror attacks going on.

Nationality, religion and race are clearly deciding factors in the media's reporting of lives lost - this isn't new. But to so blatantly ignore these tragic attacks sheds new light on the levels of hypocrisy and discrimination.

Western media and governments seem to have adopted a standard policy that terrorism isn't worth mentioning unless it affects their own people and countries.

Heavens would have fallen, and rightly so, if there were the same number of terrorism victims in a similar attack in any Western country. Media and politicians would surely have responded quickly and loudly.

The message is clear: Western lives matter but brown, black and non-Christian lives aren't worthy of a story. The fact that these publications are simultaneously denouncing Trump for his racist policies, or waxing lyrical about the value of the Black Lives Matter movement, just adds to the irony of the situation.

Pakistan's terrorism problem can't be ignored - it must be shared by all those countries which used Pakistan for their regional and political games. More than 80,000 Pakistanis have lost their lives

since the 9/11 terror attacks [2] and a total of four million Muslims have been killed in the “war against terror” [3].

Yet Pakistan is routinely criticised for “not doing enough” and admonitions are issued from the cosy decision-making rooms of Washington and London.

The West has to shoulder some responsibility for the wave of terror attacks flooding Pakistan, which have only increased since the US, UK and their allies entered into Afghanistan to “liberate” it, leaving its neighbouring region more vulnerable than ever.

Western media and governments want the whole world to consider the Western terrorism problem as their own, demanding solidarity and action, yet they won’t extend the same courtesy when the victims of Isis are in a majority-Muslim country. Until we realise that all lives deserve the same respect, regardless of race, wealth or creed, we’ll never be able to eradicate the threat of extremism which hangs over us all.

Murtaza Ali Shah

* The Independent. Friday 17 February 2017 14:30 GMT:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/isis-terrorism-pakistan-donald-trump-media-press-a7585461.html>

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Pakistani forces kill dozens of terror suspects after Isis shrine bombing in Sehwan

Reprisals after deadliest attack in country’s recent history kills 75 Sufi worshippers

Pakistani forces have killed and arrested dozens of terror suspects in sweeping overnight raids after a suicide bombing by the Isis group killed 75 worshippers at a famed Sufi shrine in the country’s south.

The terror attack - Pakistan’s deadliest in years - stunned the nation and raised questions about the authorities’ ability to rein in militant groups despite several military offensives targeting militant hideouts.

The raids targeted militant hideouts and led to shoot-outs with insurgents which left at least 39 militants dead across Pakistan, according to three security officials.

Most of the operations were carried out by the paramilitary Rangers.

In one raid, the troops killed 11 suspects at a militant hideout in the port city of Karachi. In another, the Rangers came under fire as they were returning from Sehwan, a town in southern Sindh province where the shrine bombing took place, and killed seven of the attackers.

Other raids took place in north-western Pakistan and also in the eastern province of Punjab. The

officials said a total of 47 suspects were arrested in the raids.

In Thursday's attack, a suicide bomber walked into the main hall at the Lal Shahbaz Qalandar shrine in Sehwan, and detonated his explosives among a crowd of worshippers, killing 75. At least 20 women and nine children were among the dead and dozens of other people were injured in the explosion.

IS claimed the attack in a statement circulated by its Amaq news agency, saying it had targeted a "Shiite gathering".

The Sunni extremist group views Shiites as apostates and has targeted Pakistan's Shiite minority in the past. It views Sufi shrines like the one targeted on Thursday as a form of idolatry.

Raja Somro, who witnessed the attack, told a local TV network that hundreds of people were performing a spiritual dance known as the "dhamal" when the bomber struck.

"I saw bodies everywhere. I saw bodies of women and children," he said.

Local TV showed graphic footage of the aftermath of the blast, with wounded worshippers crying out for help and the floors covered with shoes, blood and body parts. Women cried and beat their chests in grief.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif vowed that security forces would track down the perpetrators of the attack, according to Pakistani state TV.

"Each drop of the nation's blood shall be avenged, and avenged immediately," Pakistan's army chief, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, said in a statement. "No more restraint for anyone."

The US State Department condemned the attack and offered its support to Pakistan in bringing the perpetrators to justice.

Thursday's attack was the deadliest in Pakistan following an assault on an army-run school in Peshawar on December 16 2014 that killed 154 people, mostly schoolchildren.

Pakistan has been at war with the Taliban and other extremist groups for more than a decade. In recent years it has launched major offensives against militant strongholds in the tribal regions along the border with Afghanistan, but insurgents have continued to carry out attacks elsewhere in the country.

IS has been expanding its presence in Pakistan in recent years and has claimed a number of deadly attacks, including a suicide bombing at another Sufi shrine in November 2016 in which more than 50 people were killed. A Taliban-linked group, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, claimed responsibility for that attack.

The government has played down the Isis affiliate, insisting that only a small number of militants have pledged allegiance to the group.

Afghanistan and Pakistan have long accused each other of failing to crack down on militants who operate along the porous border. Shortly after Thursday's attack, Pakistan closed the main Torkham border crossing with Afghanistan.

On Friday, Pakistan's military handed over to Kabul a list of 76 suspected "terrorists" allegedly hiding in Afghanistan, demanding they be captured and extradited to Islamabad.

A statement said the list was given to Afghan officials at the Pakistani army's sprawling headquarters in the garrison city of Rawalpindi.

The military did not specify who was on the list, but it has long claimed that the head of Pakistani Taliban, Mullah Fazlullah, and other militants are hiding on Afghan soil with the purpose of fomenting violence inside Pakistan.

Meanwhile, mourners gathered at the Sehwan shrine for a small rally to demand justice for the victims as some of the funerals got under way.

Relatives consoled the wailing mother of Zeeshan Ali, a 13-year-old who died in the blast and who was buried on Friday.

Zeeshan's uncle, Shoukat Ali, said he was devoted to his nephew and raised him since he had no children of his own.

"I raised him like my own child... and they took him from me," he said.

Muhammad Farooq, Adil Jawad

* The Independent. Friday 17 February 2017 09:51 GMT:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/pakistan-isis-sehwan-shrine-attack-bombing-forces-kill-terror-suspects-a7584951.html>

Sehwan shrine bombing: Isis claims responsibility for suicide attack killing at least 72 at Sufi Muslim site

Blast comes after Taliban's Jamaat-ur-Ahrar faction launches new wave of violence in Pakistan.

At least 72 people have been killed by a bombing at a shrine in Pakistan in the latest terror attack launched in a week of bloodshed sweeping the country.

More than 250 others were injured when a suicide bomber launched a grenade before blowing himself up at the shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sehwan on Thursday evening.

Isis claimed responsibility for the massacre via its Amaq news agency, saying a "martyr of the Islamic State" detonated his vest at what the group described as a "Shia gathering".

The blast hit as Sufi Muslims were gathering to perform the dhamaal ritual. The sect is regarded as heretical by Salafist jihadi groups including Isis, the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

A state of emergency was declared at the region's hospitals as they dealt with casualties and the army is deploying troops to help relief efforts.

Thursday's bombing came after Pakistani counter-terrorism police raided a militant hideout and killed six suspected members of a Taliban faction responsible for a new wave of terror attacks.

Nawaz Sharif, the Pakistani Prime Minister immediately condemned the shrine bombing alongside celebrities and politicians including the former cricketer and MP Imran Khan.

"The past few days have been hard, and my heart is with the victims," Mr Sharif said.

"But we can't let these events divide us, or scare us. We must stand united in this struggle for the Pakistani identity, and universal humanity."

Since Monday, several bomb attacks across the country have shattered a period of improving security, with both Isis and the Taliban claiming recent atrocities.

Counter-terror authorities in Punjab province said officers launched an operation at a hideout of the Pakistani Taliban's Jamaat-ur-Ahrar faction in the city of Multan late on Wednesday night.

"The terrorists started firing at the raiding party and threw explosives," a spokesperson said.

Six militants were killed and at least three others escaped under the cover of darkness, leaving behind two hand grenades, two automatic rifles and two pistols.

Jamaat-ur-Ahrar, which has formally re-joined the Pakistani Taliban after previously splitting and expressing support for Isis, claimed responsibility for killing 13 people in Lahore on Monday.

Militants said the attack was the beginning of a new campaign of violence against the government, security forces, the judiciary and secular political parties.

Since then, jihadis have killed two bomb disposal officers in the western city of Quetta and murdered five other victims in a suicide bombing outside a government officer near Peshawar on Wednesday.

On the same day, a suicide bomber on a motor bike attacked a group of judges in a van in the city, killing their driver.

A roadside bomb hit an army convoy on Thursday, killing three soldiers in the south-western province of Baluchistan, but no group immediately claimed responsibility for that attack.

An army offensive launched in 2014 aimed to push militants out of their strongholds near the Afghan border but terrorist groups are now competing with each other after Isis launched the "Khorasan Province" in Pakistan and Afghanistan in 2015.

The Sufi Muslim minority were previously targeted in November, when a blast killed more than 50 people at the shrine of Shah Norani in Balochistan.

The wave of violence has raised tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan, with Islamabad summoning an Afghan diplomat to voice concern about Jamaat-ur-Ahrar "sanctuaries" over the border.

Pakistani authorities claim militants launch attacks from Afghanistan, where the government and international troops are fighting to oust al-Qaeda and the Taliban in the continuing war.

Afghanistan and the United States have in turn accused Pakistan of harbouring Afghan Taliban leaders fighting to topple the Western-backed government in Kabul, which it denies.

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Additional reporting by agencies

* The Independent. Friday 17 February 2017 00:01 GMT:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/sehwan-shrine-bombing-latest-suicide-attack-pakistan-sufi-muslim-worshippers-lal-shahbaz-qalandar-a7583986.html>

Footnotes

[1] <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/lahore-bombing-explosion-attack-pakistan-terrorism-latest-a7577876.html>

[2] <https://tribune.com.pk/story/860790/80000-pakistanis-killed-in-us-war-on-terror-report/>

[3] <http://www.globalresearch.ca/global-war-on-terror-has-killed-4-million-muslims-or-more-do-the-math/5467349>