

The Similarities of Jihad in Israel and Kashmir

Introduction

On 7 Oct 2023, the Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya (Hamas), an Islamic resistance movement launched an attack on the Jewish State of Israel. As a result, 1200 civilians including women and children were declared dead and another 240 were captured as hostages. This forced Israel to launch a counterattack leading to massive amounts of loss of civilian life.

On one side of the conflict, there is a radical Islamist ideological organisation and on the other is a state which the former calls *Kafir* (non-believer). *Kafir* is a term which denotes inimical Islamic practices and beliefs and as such every *Jihadi* (a person who fights against the enemies of Islam) organisation makes it their goal to purge all such practices and beliefs from the area of their operation. Citing the infallibility and eternal nature of their religious book, Hamas has been on a mission to purge the region of all Jewish people. This goal of the Islamist organisation is even mentioned in their charter.^[1]

Closer home in Kashmir, there is not one but multiple radical Islamist organisations on one side and a state which is deemed *Kafir* (India) on the other, like the situation in Israel. Upon monitoring the conflict in the Jewish state, there are certain trends and similarities which come to light. This Strategic Perspective is written not to offer a view on the ongoing conflict in the Middle East but rather to offer insight into the congruence of the two conflicts. Furthermore, the past of the two conflicts stretches back centuries and is not in the ambit of this article. The historicity of the conflicts is not in question here. No claims are made regarding which side, in either conflict, is right or wrong are made in this publication. The focus of the article lies in the similarity of the two conflicts in relation to civilians and to the alleged human rights violations by the two Indian and Israeli states and the purported resistance movement led by the Islamist organisations.

India

In India, ever since the Pakistan-sponsored genocide of the Kashmiri Hindus in the late 90s in the Kashmir valley, the region has been under a boil. By certain standards the genocide and the subsequent exodus failed in its core objective of merging the Muslim majority half of Jammu and Kashmir into Pakistan failed, the efforts by Pakistan-funded Islamist organisations such as the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) continued to achieve the same objective.^[2] To accomplish the same, not possessing the wherewithal to fight the Indian Armed Forces, organisations such as the aforementioned JeM sought to create an atmosphere of disenfranchisement of the Kashmiri Muslim demography by using the spectre of alleged human rights violations. They have effectively conducted Grey-Zone warfare against India, a substantial time before it became a buzzword for the defence community.

There is a litany of instances where an accusation against the Indian Army is made for conducting human rights violations to suppress the Islamic population using mass rapes and murder as tools. Chief among the allegations is the Kanun Poshpora Mass Rape Incident. Where according to civil society members and families, on 23 Feb 1991, jawans of the 4 Rajputana Rifles raped more than two dozen women in Kupwara's Kunan and Poshpora villages.^[3] The alleged human rights violation reverberated not merely in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and all of India but in the US Congress, the House of Commons, the EU Parliament in Brussels, the UN

Human Rights Commission, the International Commission of Jurists, Amnesty, Human Rights Watch, etc., putting massive amounts of international pressure on India. As a result, the Verghese Commission was set up under the leadership of BG Verghese, noted Ramon Magsaysay Award-winning journalist. Verghese in his report called it a 'Sad Farce' and gave the battalion of the Rajputana Rifles an unequivocal clean chit.^[4] Further stating that Syed Mohammad Yasin, the then Deputy Commissioner of the Kupwara District, who claimed to have been personally offered monetary and promotional inducements by the military and civil authorities to hush up the 'Beastly Violence' he found when he visited the two villages, had done so under fear of militant reprisals that had become commonplace in Kashmir at that time.^[5]

There is a veritable smorgasbord of allegations of human rights violations by the Indian Army including disappearances, unlawful detentions, and fake encounters among others. However, according to a 2010 Economic Times report 1,514 FIRs had been registered against Army personnel for alleged human rights violations in the preceding 20 years of militancy. As many as 1,473 complaints — nearly 97% of the cases — were found false and baseless.^[6] According to the same report, 35 cases (2.3% of total cases) were found to be correct. For which 104 army personnel, including 48 officers, have been punished for human rights violations in J&K.^[7]

Israel

For the Middle Eastern nation, the situation remains like India's. The attack on Israel by the Hamas on the 7 Oct triggered a response by the Israelis which has consumed the lives of civilians by the score. As of March 2024, according to the United Nations, 12,300 children have been killed in the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip since Israel began its offensive inside Palestine. This number is more than that of the children killed in all conflict zones around the world in the period between 2019 and 2022 which stands at 12,193.^[8] As a result, Israel has come under international pressure to end the hostilities. The proposed ceasefire was first rejected by Israel^[9] and now, since the Rafah offensive began, has been rejected by Hamas as well.

For obvious reasons, questions are being raised against Israel for continuing the offensive. The refusal to end the belligerence has only served to increase the enthusiasm around calling Israel a genocidal state. However, the reality of the matter is that Hamas ensures that its civilians especially the old and infirm, women and children are in the line of fire of Israeli bombs to ensure the maximum casualty. The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) use what is known as the 'Roof Knocking' mechanism to minimise civilian casualties. Operationally, this mechanism uses non-lethal but extremely loud bombs to demarcate targets near weapons caches and targets to alert civilians of an impending air strike. However, Hamas encourages and ensures it civilians flock towards those targets to ensure the maximisation of civilian casualties. Hamas spokesperson, Sami Abu Zuri, has been on live television (the Hamas' official channel- Al-Aqsa TV) encouraging Gazans to flock to the 'Roof knocked' sites.^[10] Furthermore, the IDF also drops leaflets well in advance to alert the civilians. But for the reasons stated above, Hamas does not want its civilians not in the line of fire.

The Hamas' commitment to ensuring maximum civilian casualty is perhaps encapsulated by, according to multiple reports, having its headquarters under Gaza's biggest medical facility (the Al-Shifa hospital).^[11] The intent of both parties is clear. As Abhijit Iyer-Mitra, a geopolitical analyst, puts it, "The Israelis go to extraordinary lengths to 'Avoid' civilian casualties - because they know every civilian casualty is a Public Relations (PR) disaster for them. The Hamas & Hezbollah go to extraordinary lengths to 'Cause' maximum civilian deaths,

their own & Israeli, because they know every death is a PR triumph for them”.[12] The idea is simple; the higher the civilian casualty, the greater the outrage against the IDF and Israel and larger the amount of international pressure is put on the Jewish state.

Conclusion

In both the regions, the modus-operandi of the *Jihadi* organisations is the same, conduct a ‘War by Other Means’. Both Hamas and Pakistan lack the ability for a full-scale conflict against their respective adversary and, therefore, resort to the ‘Bleed by a Thousand Cuts’ style of warfare. The term attributed to former Pakistani President and Army Chief, General Zia-ul-Haq, though coined originally about warfare with India can be easily applied to the Hamas’ situation with Israel.

End Notes

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[12] Abhijit Iyer-Mitra, “The Israelis go to extraordinary lengths to AVOID civilian casualties - because they know every civilian casualty is a PR disaster for them

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