

Harkat-ul-Jihadi al-Islami

AT A GLANCE

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HOW TO CITE

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SUMMARY

Formed: 1979.¹

Disbanded: HuJI’s original branch in Pakistan appears inactive. HuJI-B and HuJI-A are active.

First Attack: 1980-1989: HuJI fought with other Jihadists groups against Soviet forces in Afghanistan.²

Last Attack: September 7, 2011: Bombs exploded at the Delhi High Court (15 killed, 90 wounded).³

OVERVIEW

Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (HuJI) is a Deobandi militant group with branches in Pakistan and Bangladesh. HuJI demands Islamic rule in India and Bangladesh and supports Rohingya insurgents in the Rakhine province of Myanmar. The main Pakistani branch was founded in 1979 at the start of the Soviet-Afghan war and was led by Qari Saifullah Akhtar until his death in 2017. HuJI has been responsible for bombings and assassinations in India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. The group has historical ties to the Taliban, Al Qaeda, and other South Asian militant organizations.

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (HuJI) is a Pakistan-based Deobandi militant group with affiliate branches in Bangladesh and Myanmar. Its name translates to the Islamic Jihad Movement or Movement of Islamic Holy War. The group’s original goal was secession of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) from India and the region’s eventual incorporation into Pakistan.⁴ HuJI also calls for

Islamic rule in India and Bangladesh and supports Rohingya insurgents in the Rakhine province of Myanmar.⁵

HuJI was founded in 1979 by Maulana Irshad Ahmed. In 1980, Ahmed led the first delegation of Pakistani religious scholars to war against the Soviets in Afghanistan alongside other founding HuJI members, Maulana Abdus Samad Sial and Qari Saifullah Akhtar.⁶ HuJI was part of a broad circle of overlapping Islamist organizations that both cooperated and competed to resist Soviet occupation.⁷

In June 1985, HuJI founder Maulana Irshad Ahmed was killed in battle at Sharana, Afghanistan, and Qari Saifullah Akhtar was selected as the new Central Ameer.⁸ Akhtar's ascension to power was not accepted by all HuJI members and in 1985, HuJI member Fazlur Rahman Khalil broke away from Akhtar's group to form another militant organization, Harkat-ul-Mujahedeen (HuM).⁹

When the Soviet Afghan war ended in 1989, HuJI reoriented its focus from combatting Soviet forces to fighting for the cause of Muslims in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).¹⁰ HuJI operations in J&K began in 1991, led by Muhammad Ilyas Kashmiri.¹¹ HuJI's branch in J&K was called HuJI Brigade 111. It operated from Pakistan-administered Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), with a central base in Kotli and another camp in Muzaffarabad.¹² In 1993, under pressure from ISI and Deobandi clerics, HuJI combined forces with HuM and formed Harkat-ul-Ansar (HuA).¹³ Following the U.S. designation of HuA as a terrorist organization in 1997, HuM and HuJI split and have since operated independently in order to evade authorities.¹⁴ HuJI activity in J&K has noticeably declined since 2001.

HuJI received financial and logistical support from the Pakistani government and its intelligence agency, Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), to promote instability in J&K. HuJI also frequently operated alongside other Deobandi groups. Two of these groups, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), are believed to have ties to HuJI founder Qari Saifullah Akhtar.¹⁵ HuJI has been known to provide manpower for JeM operations. In 2008, JeM compensated the families of HuJI members killed on JeM missions.¹⁶ This overlapping cluster of Deobandi organizations (HuJI, HuM, HuA, LeT, and JeM) is described more generally as the Pakistani Harakat movement.¹⁷

In addition to their activities in J&K, HuJI militants were also active in Uzbekistan and Chechnya in the 1990s. However, these branches operated under separate management from the central HuJI organization and received extensive guidance from local insurgents.¹⁸

HuJI also has a history of cooperating with the Afghan Taliban and Al Qaeda. Qari Saifullah Akhtar's close relationship with Taliban leader Mullah Omar allowed HuJI to flourish after the Taliban's rise in Afghanistan. At least 25 HuJI members served at the ministerial level in the Taliban government, and Mullah Omar authorized six HuJI camps for joint training of HuJI, Taliban police, and Taliban army recruits.¹⁹ From a base in Kandahar, Qari Saifullah Akhtar served as a link between the Taliban and Al Qaeda, including bringing Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden together for meetings.²⁰ Osama Bin Laden used HuJI as part of his support network inside Pakistan, specifically to convey messages, instructions, and funds. In 2012, HuJI commander Jalaluddin testified that ransom from a July 2001 HuJI kidnapping was used to fund 9/11 and was funneled to hijacker Mohammad Atta. This testimony further verifies the relationship between Al Qaeda and HuJI.²¹ Evidence also indicates HuJI operatives may have been involved in hiding or transporting Bin Laden inside Pakistan.²² At the start of U.S. military operations in 2001, HuJI was forced to flee its activity base in Southern Afghanistan. Many of

leaders, including Qari Saifullah Akhtar, took refuge in South Waziristan, Pakistan. Other HuJI members relocated to Central Asia to evade U.S. forces.²³

Though HuJI activating in J&K and Afghanistan has declined in J&K and Afghanistan, the group has retained its transnational scope. In 2005, HuJI claimed to have a presence in 24 countries including Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Iran, Malaysia, the United Kingdom, the United States, the Philippines, and South Africa. The extent of coordination among these units, if any, is unknown.²⁴

Part of HuJI's international presence derives from its affiliated branches in Bangladesh and Myanmar. The first of the two branches, HuJI Arakan (HuJI-A), was formed in Karachi in 1988 by Maulana Abdul Quddus, a Pakistani national of Rohingya origin.²⁵ The group's leadership was based in Pakistan while the group's main base and the majority of its activities were carried in the border region between Bangladesh and Myanmar.²⁶ HuJI-A's stated goal was to provide military training to young men from Arakan, undertake guerilla activities in the Rakhine province of Myanmar, and provide aid to Rohingya migrants and refugees in Bangladesh and Pakistan.²⁷

In 1989, a second affiliated branch known as HuJI Bangladesh (HuJI-B) formed with the goal of turning Bangladesh into an Islamic state.²⁸ On February 11, 1989 towards the end of the war in Afghanistan, Osama Bin Laden met with Bangladeshi guerilla fighters and encouraged them to form their own branch of HuJI to turn Bangladesh into a land of Islam.²⁹ HuJI Bangladesh (HuJI-B) was formally created in April 1992 when they publicly declared their goal to turn Bangladesh into Afghanistan.³⁰ HuJI-B was associated with Osama bin Laden's World Islamic Front for Jihad and operated through the Jihad Movement in Bangladesh led by Fazlur Rahman. Fazlur Rahman was also one of the signatories on Osama Bin Laden's 1998 Fatwa authorizing violence against the West.³¹

Though HuJI, HuJI-B, and HuJI-A are ideologically and historically linked, they have operated independently and have separate leadership.³²

Throughout the early 2000s, HuJI-B executed increasing numbers of attacks in Bangladeshi, Pakistani, and Indian cities.³³ These attacks were planned from Bangladesh's capital, Dhaka, and were allegedly directed by the ISI.³⁴ At the peak of HuJI-B's operations in 2004, the group claimed that up to 15,000 members had been recruited from madrassas in Bangladesh and Pakistan. However, this number has never been properly verified.³⁵

After HuJI-B was banned in Bangladesh in 2005, the main branch of HuJI began carrying out small scale attacks and bombings in Bangladesh and India. HuJI's efforts in India were supported by the Student Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) in the form of recruits, lodging, and logistical assistance.³⁶ HuJI also maintained links with other militant groups operating in India's northeast, including the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) and the People's United Liberation Front (PULF). As of 2011, HuJI has reportedly run some of ULFA's camps situated in Northeast India and Bangladesh.³⁷ HuJI's last major claimed attack was a bombing at the Indian High Court in Delhi in September 2011, though this is disputed by the Indian Mujahedeen (IM) who also claim responsibility for the attack.³⁸

Since this last attack in September 2011, the strength of HuJI's central branch has declined. Increased government opposition from India, Bangladesh, and the United States and the lack of overt funding from the ISI has taken a toll on HuJI. These external pressures have forced the group to transform from an armed insurgency in Afghanistan and J&K to a more traditional terrorist organization reliant on small scale attacks. The imprisonment and death of HuJI leaders and its designation as a terrorist organization by the US in 2010 further decreased the group's

strength. Moreover, there has still been no announcement of new leadership after the death of HuJI leader Qari Saifullah Akhtar in 2017. Based on this evidence of organizational decline, it is likely that the original branch of HuJI has become inactive.

HuJI-B has also been damaged by the imprisonment and killing of key leaders and persecution by the Bangladeshi government. However, as of 2019, HuJI-B still reportedly operates sleeper cells throughout Bangladesh and in the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan.³⁹ The group has not carried out a major attack since 2005, but, in July 2011, there were reports of HuJI-B militants abducting youth in West Bengal and indoctrinating them as fighters.⁴⁰ During separate raids of HuJI-B safe houses in March 2013 and December 2016, Bangladesh police confiscated explosive devices, weapons, and counterfeit currency. This suggests that HuJI-B was still active between 2013 and 2016.⁴¹ In March 2019, a Bangladeshi newspaper reported that HuJI-B militants were reorganizing and raising funds through armed robberies to support the families of imprisoned or dead HuJI men. The report also mentioned a 2019 police safe house raid that confiscated firearms and explosives.⁴²

In recent years, HuJI-A has assimilated into a broader network of Rohingya insurgent groups by providing training and financial support. However, it has not been militarily active as an independent organization. Around 2016, Hafiz Tohar, a militant from HuJI-A, formed a breakaway organization, Aqa Mul Mujahedeen (AMM). In 2017, AMM was involved in small scale bombings and skirmishes along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border.⁴³

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

A. LEADERSHIP

Maulana Irshad Ahmed (1979-1985): Maulana Irshad Ahmed founded HuJI in 1979 and led the first group of Pakistani jihadists to fight in Afghanistan in 1980.⁴⁴ Along with other HuJI leaders, Ahmed was educated at Jamia Uloom-ul-Islamia Madrasa in Binori Town Karachi.⁴⁵ He was instrumental in recruiting members from Pakistani madrasas and led the organization until his death during a battle at Sharana, Afghanistan in June 1985.⁴⁶ Ahmed was succeeded by Qari Saifullah Akhtar.

Qari Saifullah Akhtar (1985 to 2017): Qari Saifullah Akhtar was a founding member and leader of HuJI from 1985 until his death in 2017.⁴⁷ Akhtar was from Waziristan and identified as Pashtun. He was educated in the Jamia Uloom-ul-Islamia Madrasa in Binori Town Karachi, a madrasa noted for allegedly producing several high profile terrorists. Following the end of the Cold War, Akhtar ran HuJI operations from a base in the Afghan province of Kandahar. He maintained a low profile until 1995, when he was implicated along with several senior Pakistani army officials in an attempt to overthrow Benazir Bhutto's Pakistani government. The charges against him were dropped after he testified against his co-conspirators. After U.S. military operations in Afghanistan commenced in 2001, he took refuge in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). He was implicated in every major terrorist attack in Pakistan and India, including the 2008 Marriott Islamabad bombing.⁴⁸ However, he was never sentenced for any of the charges and was last released from police custody in December 2010. On January 9, 2017 the National Directorate of Security (Afghanistan's intelligence service) killed Akhtar in a raid in the Paktika district near the border with Pakistan.⁴⁹

Muhammad Ilyas Kashmiri (1991-2011): Kashmiri served as the operational commander of HuJI. He ordered the October 2008 assassination of the former commander of the Pakistani Special Services Group, General Amir Faisal Alvi.⁵⁰ In 2009, Kashmiri oversaw a militant training center in Miram Shah, North Waziristan in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan. Kashmiri was killed in a U.S. Predator drone strike in South Waziristan on June 4, 2011.⁵¹

Shah Sahib (2011 to Unknown): Shah Sahib, a Taliban commander, was selected to replace Kashmiri as the operational commander of HuJI after Kashmiri's death. Sahib was also chief of the Al Qaeda-linked 313 Brigade at the time of his appointment.⁵² There is no publicly available information on Sahib's activities as operational commander since his ascension to the position, and his current whereabouts are unknown.

Mufti Abdul Hannan (1992-2017): Hannan was a leader of HuJI-B from the 1992 until his execution in 2017. Born in Kotalipara upazila in the Gopalganj district of Bangladesh, Hannan traveled to India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan and became involved in the militant activities of HuJI during the Soviet Afghan war.⁵³ After returning to Dhaka, Hannan became a leader of HuJI-B, orchestrating numerous attacks. These included the Shah Jalal Bombing on May 21, 2004 and the grenade attack against the Awami League on August 21, 2004.⁵⁴ Hannan was detained by the Bangladesh police in 2005 and was executed on April 13, 2017.⁵⁵

Maulana Abdul Quddus (1988-Present): Quddus is the founder and leader of HuJI-A. An ethnic Rohingya, Quddus left Myanmar in 1979 and traveled to Karachi, Pakistan where he became involved with HuJI and fought in the Soviet Afghan war from 1982-1988.⁵⁶ In 1988, Quddus returned to Karachi and formed a new branch of the organization, HuJI-A. As of July 2019, he continues to lead the group and has close ties with AMM and AQIS, which also support the Rohingya insurgency in Myanmar.⁵⁷

B. NAME CHANGES

- ☐ 1979: Harkat-ul-Jihadi al-Islami (HuJI) was formed by Maulana Irshad Ahmed.⁵⁸
- ☐ 1993: Harkat-ul-Ansar (HuA). Under pressure from ISI and Deobandi clerics, HuJI combined forces with Harkat-ul-Mujahedeen (HuM), a HuJI splinter group, and formed Harkat-ul-Ansar (HuA).⁵⁹
- ☐ 1997: Harkat-ul-Jihadi al-Islami (HuJI). In order to avoid the ramifications of the U.S designation of Harkat-ul-Ansar as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in 1997, the merged groups split, and HuJI resumed independent operations.⁶⁰

HuJI has two affiliated branches:

- ☐ 1988: HuJI Arakan (HuJI-A). This group was formed as a HuJI affiliate by Pakistani-based Rohingyas.⁶¹
- ☐ 1992: HuJI Bangladesh (HuJI-B). This group was established as a HuJI affiliate in Bangladesh.⁶²

C. SIZE ESTIMATES

- 2009: 500 – 700 (South Asian Terrorist Portal). This estimate is not corroborated by any additional source.⁶³
- 2004: 15,000 (Asia Times).⁶⁴ This number was repeatedly claimed by captured HuJI-B militants but is unverified.⁶⁵

D. RESOURCES

Harkat-ul-Jihadi al-Islami received patronage and much of its support from Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence. When the group was banned by Pakistan in January 2002, this support was lost. However, ISI allegedly continued to provide training and funding for HuJI-B into the 2000's.⁶⁶

HuJI has exchanged or combined resources with other militant organizations. For example, Al Qaeda and HuJI previously shared training camps.⁶⁷ HuJI has also provided militants for JeM operations as late as 2008. In exchange, JeM agreed to compensate the family members of any HuJI member killed in a JeM attack.⁶⁸ HuJI has also operationally coordinated its attacks with the cooperation of the Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI). SIMI cadres have provided shelter and logistical help to HuJI-Bangladesh (HuJI-B) prior to attacks, and some SIMI cadres have joined HuJI-B.⁶⁹ HuJI-B funding comes from a variety of sources, including international Islamic non-governmental organizations and the ISI.⁷⁰ As of 2019, HuJI-B also uses armed robberies to raise funds and support the families of imprisoned or killed HuJI men.⁷¹

HuJI has not perpetrated attacks in western countries, but it has recruited from these areas. In 2009, HuJI leader Qari Saifullah Ahktar convinced five Americans to join the jihad after they found recruitment videos on Youtube.⁷²

E. GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS

Disclaimer: This is a partial list of where the militant organization has bases and where it operates. This does not include information on where the group conducts major attacks or has external influences.

Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI) is a Pakistan-based militant group with units and cells across the world. Originally founded to fight Soviet troops in Afghanistan, HuJI was headquartered in Kandahar until U.S. military operations began in 2001. Most of HuJI's leaders took shelter in South Waziristan in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas.⁷³ Other members relocated to Central Asia and Chechnya to escape being captured by U.S. forces. In the early 2000s, HuJI comprised a significant portion of the foreign mercenary force in Chechnya.⁷⁴

HuJI has two affiliated branches that conduct operations outside of Pakistan. Its Bangladeshi affiliate, HuJI-B, has operated throughout Bangladesh and carries out attacks in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. HuJI-B's main training camps were historically located in South Eastern Bangladesh near Chittagong and the border with Myanmar.⁷⁵ HuJI's Arakanese affiliate, HuJI-A, was formed by Pakistani-based Rohingya militants, and it has carried out activities in the border region between Bangladesh and Myanmar. Both HuJI-B and HuJI-A were involved in training Muslim Rohingya insurgents from Myanmar in the 1990s, and HuJI-B shared training camps with the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO).⁷⁶

STRATEGY

A. IDEOLOGY & GOALS

HuJI was associated with Deobandi school of thought within Sunni Islam, a movement that originated in Uttar Pradesh, India, where HuJI had extensive operations. The group has described itself as the “second line of defense for every Muslim,” and it aimed to establish Islamic rule in Pakistan and India by waging attacks and promoting the Islamization of Pakistani society. During the Soviet-Afghan war, HuJI attracted more madrasa students than other Jihadi organizations because of their emphasis on conforming to Shariah law, their close relationship with the Taliban, and their emphasis on practical jihad.⁷⁷ Originally established to fight Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, HuJI reoriented itself to challenge Indian control of Jammu and Kashmir in 1989.⁷⁸

HuJI-B seeks to establish Islamic rule in Bangladesh and has been known to share Taliban ideology, evidenced by HuJI-B’s slogan, “Amra Sobai Hobo Taliban, Bangla Hobe Afghanistan” (“We will all become Taliban and we will turn Bangladesh into Afghanistan”).⁷⁹

HuJI-A’s ideology stems from the Deobandi Sunni philosophy of HuJI, but it is also rooted in Rohingya nationalism and resistance to the government of Myanmar.⁸⁰ The group’s stated goals are to provide military training to young Arakanese men, undertake guerilla operations to liberate the state of Rakhine from rule by Myanmar, and provide aid for the welfare of Rohingya migrants in Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Pakistan.⁸¹ HuJI-A is led by Pakistani-based Rohingyas whose linkages to AQIS and other global terrorist organizations continue to radicalize the ideology of Rohingya nationalists in Myanmar.⁸²

B. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

HuJI has been linked to the deceased Taliban leader Mullah Omar. 25 HuJI members were part of the Taliban cabinet and judiciary in Afghanistan before the regime’s overthrow in 2001.⁸³

HuJI-B has extensive political ties in Bangladesh. Tarique Raman, the current leader of the Bangladesh National Party (BNP), was sentenced to life in prison for his involvement in the HuJI-B-orchestrated 2004 Grenade Bombing in Dhaka.⁸⁴ 37 other HuJI militants were implicated for this attack, including members of the BNP and former members of several Bangladeshi police and intelligence services.⁸⁵ The leaders of the Bangladesh National Party (BNP), Islami Oitya Jote (IOJ), and Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI Bangladesh) publicly denied HuJI’s role in domestic terrorism until 2005 when the Bangladesh government formally designated the organization as terrorists.⁸⁶

C. TARGETS & TACTICS

The style and targets of HuJI’s militancy have changed throughout the organization’s history. Little is known about HuJI’s involvement in the Soviet-Afghan war, but one report describes Mullah Omar’s appreciation for HuJI fighters in a battle against the Northern Alliance in which 300 HuJI members were killed.⁸⁷ HuJI fighters engaged in similar guerilla warfare against the Indian government in J&K during the 1990’s and early 2000’s. The South Asian Terrorism Portal reported 650 HuJI deaths in a 2002 battle with the Indian army in Kashmir.⁸⁸

After the 9/11 attacks, HuJI’s militant activities in Northern India decreased, and HuJI transitioned to carrying out attacks on secular and progressive individuals including intellectuals, writers, politicians, and journalists in India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. In 2000, HuJI militants assassinated a senior Bangladeshi journalist for making a documentary on the plight of Hindus in

Bangladesh. HuJI was also the prime suspect in the 2000 assassination attempt on Bangladesh's then-Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who was also the leader of the secular, center-left Awami League.⁸⁹ HuJI's violent tactics have ranged from single assassinations to medium- and large-scale bombings, most recently at a Delhi courthouse in 2011.⁹⁰ The group operates in small, autonomous cells, each carrying out independent attacks.⁹¹ As of 2017, HuJI-A has carried out similar small-scale attacks against Myanmar's government along the border with Bangladesh.⁹²

MAJOR ATTACKS

Disclaimer: These are some selected major attacks in the militant organization's history. It is not a comprehensive listing but captures some of the most famous attacks or turning points during the campaign.

1980-1989: HuJI was the first Pakistani-based jihadist group to fight Soviet forces in Afghanistan.⁹³

April 14, 2001: A series of bombs were detonated at a cultural event celebrating the Bengali New Year at Ramna Batamul in Dhaka, Bangladesh. HuJI claimed responsibility for the attack, which killed a police officer and a HuJI militant (9 killed, 17 wounded).⁹⁴

January 22, 2002: HuJI was involved in the attack on American Center in Kolkata. The Asif Reza Commando Force (ARCF), which claimed responsibility for the attack, was affiliated to HuJI. Three HuJI militants were arrested. These militants told authorities the attack was carried out by a combination of Bangladeshi migrants and HuJI militants in India who were trained at ISI-backed training camps in Pakistan (5 killed, 20 wounded).⁹⁵

May 21, 2004: A bomb was detonated at the Shah Jalal Shrine in Sylhet, Bangladesh, killing three and wounding 100. The intended target was the British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury.⁹⁶ In 2008, three HuJI-B militants including leader Mufti Hannan were sentenced to death for the attack (3 killed, 100 wounded).⁹⁷

August 21, 2004: HuJI-B militants detonated grenades at an Awami league rally in Dhaka, killing 24 and wounding 400. Their primary target was politician Sheikh Hasina, the leader of the Awami League and political opponent of the BNP.⁹⁸ Members of her party formed a human shield around her, protecting her from the grenade. In 2018, 38 HuJI militants including numerous BNP political leaders were sentenced to death or life in prison for their involvement in the attack (24 killed, 400 wounded).⁹⁹

March 2, 2006: HuJI was responsible for the suicide bombing of the U.S. Consulate in Karachi, Pakistan, which killed U.S. diplomat David Foy (4 killed, 48 wounded).¹⁰⁰

March 7, 2006: HuJI was allegedly responsible for three synchronized bombings across the Hindu holy city of Varanasi. Two blasts occurred at Sankat Mochan, a temple where hundreds of pilgrims were visiting. The third blast occurred at the railway station in Varanasi. Six additional bombs were reportedly diffused throughout the city (28 killed, 101 wounded).¹⁰¹

September 7, 2011: A briefcase bomb exploded in the Indian high court reception hall. HuJI claimed responsibility for the attack, but this was not confirmed by India's National Investigation Agency. Another terrorist group, the Indian Mujahadeen (IM), also claimed responsibility. (15 killed, 90 wounded).¹⁰²

INTERACTIONS

A. DESIGNATED/LISTED

- ☐ India designated HuJI as a terrorist organization under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act: 2004 to Present¹⁰³
- ☐ Bangladesh banned HuJI-B: October 2005 to Present.¹⁰⁴
- ☐ The United States State Department designated both HuJI and HuJI-B as Foreign Terrorist Organizations.
 - HuJI: August 6, 2010 to Present
 - HuJI-B: March 5, 2008 to Present¹⁰⁵

B. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

HuJI's community relationships revolve around securing funding and recruiting members to support their operations.

HuJI's recruitment strategies have evolved throughout its existence. HuJI recruited members from the loosely organized pool of foreign nationals fighting Soviet forces in Afghanistan and from Pakistani madrasas in Punjab and NWFP.¹⁰⁶ Recruits were attracted to HuJI because of its commitment to upholding Shariah law, its close relationship with the Taliban, and its extensive network within Afghanistan that allowed fighters to quickly join battle.¹⁰⁷ These individuals joined a complex system of overlapping organizations which comprised the Pakistani Harakat movement.¹⁰⁸ After the war in Afghanistan ended, guerilla fighters returned to their home countries and eventually created two new organized branches, each of which adopted unique goals and recruitment strategies: HuJI-A (formed in 1988) and HuJI-B (formed in 1992).

The main HuJI branch based in Pakistan largely recruited individuals from Indian and Pakistani madrassas.¹⁰⁹ The HuJI-B branch mainly recruited from Bangladeshi madrassas and had extensive ties to Islamist political groups in the country including the Bangladeshi National Party (BNP) and the Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ).¹¹⁰ The HuJI-A branch was initially composed of ethnic Rohingyas based in Karachi, Pakistan, and it recruited dissatisfied young Rohingya men from Myanmar to carry out attacks along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. HuJI-A eventually set up camps in Southeast Bangladesh near Cox's Bazaar.¹¹¹

Unlike other militant groups operating in the region, the main branch of HuJI is not known to provide community services and little is known about the public opinion of HuJI in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and in J&K.¹¹² Public opinion of HuJI and HuJI-B in Bangladesh and India appears to be negative since the group has frequently targeted civilians. After the execution of HuJI-B leader Mufti Hannan in 2017, residents of Gopalganj (Hannan's hometown) refused to accord him burial rights in his ancestral village.¹¹³

HuJI-A has had a more symbiotic relationship with local communities than HuJI and HuJI-B. One of the stated goals of HuJI-A is to provide aid and improve the welfare of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar.¹¹⁴ The charitable ambitions of HuJI have made them less active as a militant organization and a large portion of their funding goes to migrants and religious schools in Rohingya refugee communities in Bangladesh and Pakistan.¹¹⁵

C. RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER GROUPS

HuJI has developed affiliates and merged with other organizations throughout its existence. In the early 1990s, HuJI member Fazlur Rehman Khalil broke away to form another militant organization, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM). In 1993, under pressure from ISI and Deobandi clerics, HuJI combined forces with HuM and formed Harkat-ul-Ansar (HuA) to begin operations in Jammu and Kashmir.¹¹⁶ Following the U.S. designation of HuA as a terrorist organization in 1997, the group terminated their union and reverted to operating independently in order to evade authorities.¹¹⁷

HuJI has a history of cooperating with the Afghan Taliban and Al Qaeda. At least 25 HuJI members served in the Taliban government in Afghanistan, and Taliban leader Mullah Omar provided joint training for HuJI, Taliban police, and Taliban army recruits.¹¹⁸ HuJI leader Qari Saifullah Akhtar served as a link between the Taliban and Al Qaeda, including arranging meetings between top leaders of the two groups.¹¹⁹ Al Qaeda and HuJI shared some training camps, and the relationship between the groups was strengthened by their mutual ties to the Taliban. Osama Bin Laden used HuJI as part of his support network inside Pakistan, specifically to convey messages, instructions, and funds. Additionally, evidence from a 2012 interview with HuJI commander Jalaluddin indicates HuJI provided funding for 9/11 by funneling ransom money from a kidnapping to hijacker Mohammad Atta.¹²⁰ Some evidence also indicates HuJI operatives may have been involved in hiding or transporting Bin Laden in Pakistan after 9/11.¹²¹

Additionally, HuJI has been connected with groups that share similar goals and ideologies, including Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM). HuJI provided militants for JeM operations as late as 2008. According to an accord between the two groups, JeM compensated the family members of any HuJI member killed in an attack.¹²² HuJI, HuM, HuA, LeT, and JeM have been more broadly categorized as the Pakistani Harakat Movement, a cluster of militant Deobandi organizations with overlapping members, goals, and activity.¹²³

HuJI-B, a branch of HuJI formed in Bangladesh in 1992, has had extensive relationships with groups operating in India, Pakistan, Myanmar, and Bangladesh. It was associated with Osama bin Laden's World Islamic Front for Jihad and operated through the Jihad Movement in Bangladesh led by Fazlur Rahman.¹²⁴ In 1998, HuJI-B member Shaikh Abdur Rahman founded Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), a group who focused on waging jihad against the government in Bangladesh.¹²⁵ In Myanmar, HuJI-B operatives supported the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) throughout the 1990s, jointly running training camps and sharing arms caches.¹²⁶ In India, HuJI-B has operationally coordinated its attacks with the cooperation of the Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI). SIMI cadres have provided shelter and logistical help to HuJI's Bangladesh unit (HuJI-B) prior to attacks and some SIMI cadres have joined HuJI-B.¹²⁷ Throughout the late 2000's the group has supported the growth of India Mujahideen (IM), an organization responsible for numerous large-scale terrorist attacks in India.¹²⁸ HuJI also maintains links with militant groups operating in India's northeast, including the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) and the People's United Liberation Front (PULF). HuJI reportedly ran ULFA's training camps in Bangladesh in the 2000's.¹²⁹

HuJI Arakan (HuJI-A) was formed in 1988 by Maulana Abdul Quddus, a Pakistani national of Rohingya origin. HuJI-A militant Hafiz Tohar was chosen by Quddus to receive special training in Pakistan. After returning to Myanmar, he created a new militant organization, Aqa Mul Mujahideen (AMM).¹³⁰ HuJI-A and AMM operate closely. As of 2017, AMM has been active in

launching small scale attacks against the Burmese government in the border region between Myanmar and Bangladesh.¹³¹

The imprisonment and death of HuJI leaders in Pakistan and Bangladesh and its designation as a terrorist organization have decreased the group's strength since 2011. Many of its cadres appear to have assimilated into other militant organizations, including AQIS. Many current leaders of AQIS in 2019 reportedly began their militant careers with HuJI.¹³²

D. STATE SPONSORS AND EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

HuJI's anti-India operations were historically planned by Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), mostly from the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka, however Pakistani government support decreased post-9/11 after HuJI was designated as a terrorist organization. Reports indicate that ISI also provided military training to HuJI-B recruits in camps in Bangladesh.¹³³

MAPS

- Global Al Qaeda
- Pakistan – All
- Pakistan

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