



Primer

2001 Indian Parliament Attack

Published December 13, 2025

Publication No. P0645-131225



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and Holistic Studies

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PRIMER

2001 INDIAN PARLIAMENT ATTACK

13 December 2001 is remembered as a turning point in Bharat's democratic history, when democracy was not merely challenged but violently attacked by Jaish-e-Mohammed, targeting not just lives, but the very sovereignty, constitutional stability and civic trust on which the nation stands.

Attack on the Indian Parliament on 13 December 2001 was not a single act of terrorism; rather, a protracted cross-border terrorism against Bharat's civilian security and democratic institutions. Using Pakistan's lenient laws and safe haven, Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), along with other terrorist groups and their changing fronts, have carried out numerous attacks, infiltrations and ambushes over more than two decades. This brief describes the origins, development, operational continuity and strategic policy implications of these networks.

On 13 December 2001, five Jaish-e-Mohammed suicide attackers (fidayeen) attempted to breach the Parliament House complex during a full house winter session, using a white Ambassador car with a red beacon and a forged Home Ministry sticker to gain entry. Their cover was blown when a vigilant staffer challenged them near the Vice President's motorcade, prompting the terrorists to ram the convoy while attempting to escape. Armed with AK-47 rifles, explosives and grenades, the suicide attackers sought to storm the temple of Bharat's democracy, Parliament complex, but were swiftly engaged and neutralised on the spot by our vigilant and decisive response of Indian security forces. Approximately 22 people were injured and nine martyred, including security personnel and a civilian during the attack. Coming just a year after the Kandahar IC-814 hijacking, one of Bharat's gravest aviation security crises and set against the global shockwaves unleashed by the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, the incident constituted a direct and unprecedented attack on India's constitutional core and democratic sovereignty.

CRPF constable Kamlesh Kumari, was the first victim followed by eight others viz., Om Prakash, Bijender Singh and Ghanshyam, Head Constables in the Delhi Police; Jagdish, Matbar, Nanak Chand and Rampal, Assistant Sub-Inspectors with the Delhi Police and Deshraj, a gardener with the Central Public Works Department (CPWD).

It was far more than an isolated act of terrorism. The assault represented a deliberate attempt to decapitate Bharat's national leadership and a calculated provocation by a Pakistan-aided and supported terrorist organisation, designed to escalate cross-border terrorism. By targeting the Parliament, the temple of democracy and the institutional nerve centre of the world's largest democracy—the attack sought to undermine India's constitutional authority, destabilise its political order, and strike at the very foundation of sovereign self-governance.



In the aftermath of the 2001 Parliament attack, India-Pakistan relations sharply deteriorated between 2001 and 2002, culminating in Operation Parakram, India's largest military mobilisation since the 1971 war, as New Delhi massed forces along the western border to deter and respond to Pakistan-backed terrorism.

Additionally, it solidified a pattern of cross-border terrorism that has been well-documented, was carried out by state-sponsored terrorist organisations located in Pakistan, exposing the strategic environment that allowed organisations like Jaish-e-Mohammed to launch attacks against Indian institutions.

Following the Parliament attack four Jaish-e-Mohammed associates were detained and charged under India's strict anti-terror and criminal laws, demonstrating the seriousness of the crime. Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA/POTO) was used to bring charges for conspiracy, terrorist activity facilitation and terrorist sheltering,



establishing the plot's organised and deliberate nature. The attack was simultaneously addressed as an act of war against the state itself under Indian Penal Code, specifically Section 121 for waging or attempting to wage war against the Government of India and Section 120B for criminal conspiracy, read in

conjunction with provisions pertaining to violent offences and murder. While Sections 201 and 212 dealt with attempts to hide evidence and provide shelter for the offenders, other sections that dealt with common intention and collective criminal conduct highlighted the attack's coordinated execution. When taken as a whole, these accusations presented the Parliament attack as a direct assault on India's constitutional order and sovereign power rather than as a single violent incident.

Following a thorough judicial and executive examination, Mohammed Afzal Guru was found guilty of conspiracy and murder in the judicial aftermath of the Parliament assault. His execution in 2013 highlighted the Indian state's dependence on due process, even in situations of extraordinary national anguish.

Timeline of attack by Jaish-e-Mohammed

- 11:30 AM: Winter session of the Indian Parliament in New Delhi was ongoing with ministers and MPs still in the building
- 11:35 AM: Five terrorists drove into the Parliament House Complex in a white Ambassador car with a forged Home Ministry sticker and red beacon. Their cover was exposed when a staffer challenged them near the Vice President's motorcade, prompting them to turn back and collide with motorcade.
- 11:40 AM: Terrorists jumped out and opened indiscriminate fire at security personnel at Gate No. 12, killing several. Delhi Police, CRPF and ITBP forces immediately retaliated. One attacker detonated himself at the main entrance to the chambers.
- 11:45 AM – Inside Parliament: MPs, ministers and staff inside the Parliament scrambled for safety. Lok Sabha Speaker was escorted to a secure location as tensions surged.
- 11:55 AM: After 25 minutes of intense gunfire, all terrorists were neutralised and their attempt to breach the Parliament and attack MPs and ministers was thwarted. Bravery of Indian security personnel averted a far greater tragedy.
- 12:00 PM – Attack left 9 martyrs, including security personnel and a Parliament staffer. In total, 14 people were killed, including the five terrorists and approximately 22 people were also injured.
- December 15, 2001: Four individuals, including Mohammad Afzal Guru, were arrested under POTA and IPC in connection with the attack.
- December 18, 2002: A trial court sentenced Afzal Guru to death. Another individual received a death sentence and a third received a five-year sentence.
- October 29, 2003: Delhi High Court upheld Afzal Guru's death penalty but acquitted one individual.
- August 4, 2005: Supreme Court confirmed Afzal Guru's death sentence and commuted another individual's sentence to 10 years.
- October 3, 2006: Afzal Guru's wife submitted a mercy petition to the President of India.
- February 3, 2013: President of India rejected the mercy petition.
- February 9, 2013: Afzal Guru was executed by hanging at Tihar Jail.



Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), founded and led by Masood Azhar after his release in 1999 as part of the hostage exchange following the hijacking of Indian Airlines flight IC-814, emerged as a key player of Pakistan-sponsored cross-border terrorism against India (Bharat), operating with continued financial and logistical backing. JeM has been directly involved in some of the most severe terror attacks on Indian soil, including planning and execution of Pathankot and Uri attacks in 2016 and the Pulwama suicide attack (fidayeen) in 2019.



Azhar Masood, Founder Jaish-e-Mohammed

Maulana Masood Azhar, Chief (Emir) within Jaish-e-Mohammed, directly overseeing key figures while Mohammad Hasan serves as the terror outfit's spokesperson. Other key individuals include

- Maulana Qari Masood Ahmed - Chief, Propaganda Wing
- Mufti Asghar - Chief Commander, Operations
- Ibrahim Rather - Chief, Milli Affairs
- Maulana Sajjad Usman - Finance Incharge (Formerly with Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HUM))
- Saifullah Shakir - Nazim RMC (Former in-charge of Al Rehmat Trust)
- Maulana Mufti Mohammad Asghar alias Saad Baba - Launch Commander (Former Harkat-ul-Mujahideen member)

Initially, Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) coordinated with other terrorist groups to operate its training facilities in Afghanistan. The group moved these facilities to Muzaffarabad in Pakistan-occupied Jammu & Kashmir and Balakot and Peshawar in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after the Taliban administration fell. By 2009, JeM had moved its operational headquarters to Bahawalpur, which is about 420 miles south of Islamabad in the Punjab province of Pakistan.

Bahawalpur network includes a madrassa in the heart of the city and a fortified 6.5 acres property used for terrorist training, complete with facilities for horseback riding and water-based activities. Additionally, the city serves as a rest and recovery center for terrorists operating in Afghanistan, purposefully located far from areas frequently targeted by American drone attacks. Bahawalpur's strategic significance is further enhanced by its close proximity to the bases of other terrorist groups, such as Lashkar-e-Taiba in Muridke, Sipah-e-Sahaba in Gojra and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, which are also active in Punjab. JeM maintains operational links with these groups. Between 500 and 1,000 madrassas exist in Bahawalpur, many of which impart a violent, radical version of Islam to children.



After Indian precision strikes under Operation Sindoor on May 7, 2025, which destroyed Jaish-e-Mohammed's core infrastructure, including its headquarters, Markaz Subhanallah and four significant training facilities (Markaz Bilal, Markaz Abbas, Mahmona Zoya and Sargal), JeM moved quickly to rebuild. According to Indian intelligence assessments, JeM launched a massive fundraising campaign of about PKR 3.91 billion with the goal of rebuilding the damaged facilities and creating a new network of "313" markaz centers. The anticipated cost of each new markaz was PKR 12.5 million, with digital wallet platforms being the main source of funding. According to intelligence assessments, Pakistani government had also declared plans to rebuild the damaged sites and donation requests associated with JeM were widely shared on social media.

Independent research and analytical assessments indicate that Jaish-e-Mohammed operates with sustained backing from Pakistan through recruitment pipelines, financial channels, training infrastructure and protection shelters. These support mechanisms are widely linked to Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and elements within its security establishment, which have historically cultivated and protected Islamist terror organisations as instruments of strategic competition against Bharat. Despite formal bans, JeM has continued its activities through rebranded entities and supporting networks, while maintaining operational linkages with other jihadist organisations. According to independent government and academic reporting, ISI's continued reliance on such groups remains a defining feature of the regional security landscape, enabling the persistence of cross-border terrorism targeting Bharat.

JeM has conducted many lethal terrorist attacks, including a suicide bombing (fidayeen) of the Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly building in the Kashmir, Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir in October 2001 that killed more than 30.

Jaish-e-Mohammed and many other terrorist groups, proscribed globally for more than 20 years, have nonetheless remained essentially unaltered, demonstrating a recurring pattern of state-enabled persistence. In order to avoid legal constraints and international scrutiny, these groups often reassemble through different front organisations or purportedly charity organisations, as evidenced by intelligence and security assessments that continually demonstrate their continued ties to networks in Pakistan. Through token arrests, nominal detentions or strategic disappearances, their senior leadership, Masood Azhar, Hafiz Saeed and Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, has been protected, guaranteeing the insulation of command structures.

Date Designated	Name
August 17, 2017	Hizbul Mujahideen (HM)
July 1, 2016	al-Qa'ida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS)
September 19, 2011	Indian Mujahedeen (IM)
September 1, 2010	Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP)
August 6, 2010	Harakat ul-Jihad-i-Islami (HUJI)
	Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Tehrik-e-Tahafuz Qibla Awwal, Tehrik-e-Hurmat-e-Rasool, and Al-Anfal Trust Amendments (June 26, 2014) – Al Muhammadiya Students Amendment (December 30, 2016)
December 26, 2001	

Date Designated	Name
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Tehreek-e-Azadi-e-Kashmir and Milli Muslim League Amendments (April 4, 2018) – The Resistance Front Amendment (July 18, 2025)
December 26, 2001	Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM)
October 8, 1999	al-Qa'ida (AQ)
	Harakat ul-Mujahidin (HUM)
October 8, 1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ansar ul-Ummah Amendment (August 8, 2014)

Jaish-e-Mohammed, Pakistan-Backed Terror Group & Its Front Entities

Group / Front	Current Status	Sanctuary Support Environment	/	Primary Capabilities	Threat Level
Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM)	Active under charity fronts (Al-Rahmat Trust)	Bahawalpur, PoJK corridors		Suicide IEDs, Suicide (fidayeen) attacks, cross-border leadership control	Critical

Jaish-e-Mohammed maintains its operations through financial network of Islamic charitable fronts and related businesses, which operates through entities like Al-Rehmat Trust and Al-Furqan Trust. These trusts serve as fundraising channels, gathering donations from participants at more than 300 Islamic institutions in Pakistan that JeM supports.

JeM has close relations and alliances with the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Hizbul Mujahideen, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen to name a few.

A broad cross section of international organisations, including the United Nations, the United States, United Kingdom, European Union, Russia, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Arab Emirates and India, have officially designated Jaish-e-Mohammed as a terrorist organisation. This represents a rare global agreement on the group's violent extremist nature and its threat to global peace and security.

Despite these restrictions, JeM continues to maintain recruiting pipelines, finance routes, training links and logistical infrastructure, according to several reports from Bharat, the US and UN monitoring agencies. As a result, terrorist attacks attributed to JeM and its affiliated cadres have continued over time, targeting both Indian security forces and civilians, especially in Jammu and Kashmir and along sensitive border

regions. This highlights the persistent threat posed by these networks and the structural flaws in attempts to dismantle them.

Notable Attacks by JeM:

2001	Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly car bombing
2016	Pathankot Attack
	Uri Attack
2019	Pulwama Attack

Jaish-e-Mohammed and its associated terrorist networks have simply reorganised under new aliases to continue cross-border terror campaigns despite several state prohibitions.

The Resistance Front (TRF), which has been widely regarded by Indian authorities and identified by Indian Government and the U.S. Department of State as a terrorist organisation and a stand-in for Lashkar-e-Taiba, is a notable example. TRF has claimed responsibility for several deadly attacks against civilians and security forces, including the Pahalgam strike on April 22, 2025, which claimed 26 lives and still recruits, infiltrates and engages in violence in Jammu and Kashmir.

Even though Pakistan, under global pressure, declares terrorist groups like JeM, TRF and LeT are prohibited, these restrictions have had little effect on their ability to operate because these terror outfits are able to adapt, rebrand and keep up their momentum thanks to the existence of de facto sanctuaries, logistical networks, training facilities and recruitment channels inside Pakistani territory. This trend highlights a more general tactical development in which banned organisations use front identities to avoid international inspection while maintaining strategic goals against Bharat.

Sanctuary & Support Environment

Category	Indicators	Pakistan Environment Assessment
Leadership Protection	Limited arrests, high mobility, selective detentions	High
Training Infrastructure	Rebranded camps, PoK sites, charity-linked facilities	High
Logistics & Recruitment	Madrasa-funding pipelines, cross-border facilitators	High

Category	Indicators	Pakistan Environment Assessment
Online/Propaganda Space	Undisturbed narratives, new digital fronts	High
Financial Crackdowns	FATF-era action inconsistent; fronts persist	Medium-High

In order to combat transnational terrorist networks, the international community must take persistent, coordinated action that strengthens both domestic resilience and international counterterrorism structures. States must strengthen designation regimes and firmly enforce sanctions against organisations like JeM and their front organisations in order to tighten their political, logistical and financial lifelines. They can do this by leveraging national instruments like the U.S. Department of State as well as multilateral organisations like the United Nations, Financial Action Task Force and the UN 1267 Sanctions Committee. To stop threats before they arise, parallel efforts in intelligence integration, forward intelligence gathering, fast interdiction capabilities and border security are crucial.

Also crucial is strengthening legal structures. This involves bridging gaps that allow Pakistan-backed terrorist groups to disguise as charities or civilian organisations and strengthening bilateral and multilateral legal cooperation to improve evidence exchange, prosecution and extradition. The international community must prioritise civil resilience in addition to hard-security measures by implementing scalable early-warning systems, technologically advanced urban security infrastructure and community-based vigilance programs to defend against kinetic attacks and parallel information operations that divide societies and undermine institutional trust.

Since 2001, Bharat has rebuilt its internal and external security with significant investments in a more integrated counter-terror architecture with improved inter-agency coordination, real-time intelligence sharing and upgraded national security protocols. Recently, Operation Sindoora and other preemptive, precision-driven strikes have shown a shift from a reactive framework to a forward-leaning defense policy that includes deterrence, terror ecosystem disruption and counter-proliferation measures beyond Bharat's borders.

Attack on the Parliament in 2001 was not an isolated incident; rather, it was a strategically important trigger that revealed the persistent nature of Pakistan sponsored terrorism directed on Bharat. By taking advantage of lax sanctuaries and changing operational forms, JeM and its variants have remained a significant danger for more than 20 years. Disrupting the long-term cross border terrorism paradigm requires a cogent, multi-domain strategy that incorporates military, diplomatic, legal and social resilience. Even though they go by different names, the same organisations, same leaders, same cross-border infrastructure and same ideological apparatus are still in operation today.

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