

## Scenario 145

### SECTARIAN UNREST IN KARACHI

#### DECADE OLD HISTORY:

First notable but alarming incident: the anti-Shia massacre of Gilgit in 1988 - one may recall that over 200 Shiites were gunned down, including 30 doctors of Karachi.

As a result of the policy of divide and rule followed in Karachi by the successive rulers, the people observed for the first time sectarian violence inside the Sunni community between the Sunnis of the *Deobandi* faith belonging to the *Sipah e Sahaba* [SSP] & *Lashkar e Jhangvi* [LeJ] and the Sunnis of the more tolerant Barelvi faith belonging to the *Sunni Tehrik* formed in early 1990s to counter the growing *Wahabi* influence on Islam in Pakistan and the *Almi Tanzeem Ahle Sunnat* formed in 1998 by Pir Afzal Qadri of Mararian Sharif in Gujrat, to counter the activities of the *Deobandi* sect of Islam.

This had led to frequent armed clashes between rival Sunni groups in Karachi, the most sensational of the incidents being the gunning down of Maulana Salim Qadri of the *Sunni Tehrik* and five of his followers in Karachi on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2001, by the *Sipah e Sahaba*, which led to a major break-down of law and order in certain areas of Karachi for some days.

Later, the famous victims of the sectarian wave in Sindh were Shaukat Mirza, the Managing Director of Pakistan State Oil, and Syed Zafar Hussain Zaidi, Director Research [Laboratories] of the Ministry of Defence located in Karachi, who were gunned down on 28<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup> July 2001 respectively. The *Lashkar e Jhangvi* [LeJ] had claimed responsibility for both these assassinations.

In post Nine Eleven 2001 years, to bring Karachi under control and to weaken the PPP, the MQM and the Sindhi nationalists, pointed towards new entrants in the Sindh province, particularly the city of Karachi, and raised alarms while naming it the *Talibanisation* of Sindh, a province known for its *sufi* traditions of religious tolerance; the phenomenon has been fully explained in the previous pages of this book.

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The US and UK governments, who had supported Gen Musharraf's rule for their own peculiar objectives, never urged the army rulers of Pakistan to implement time-tested principles of judicious governance as to how intelligence agencies should have functioned in a democratic society of the day.

On 7<sup>th</sup> April 2002; in the metropolitan city of Karachi, during the dark hours, two politicians named Mustafa Kamal Rizvi and Nishat Malik were gunned down while coming back from dinner at the nearby *Tandoori Hut* restaurant in Rizvi's black Toyota Corolla. Police found it parked, with the engine off, about five minutes away from the crime scene.

The *shawarma* sandwich Rizvi had promised to bring home to his 45 years old wife was still in the car. Apart from Rizvi's cell phone and a Rolex watch, nothing was stolen. Police took at least 15 minutes to reach the crime scene from the Gizri Police Station, just a minute's drive away, even though the heavy fire from two automatic pistols could be heard in far off housing blocks in the wealthy neighbourhood.

While Shiite activists were chasing these developing trends closely and making themselves ready to counter the SSP propaganda, a leader of *Tehreek Nafaz Fiqah Jafariya* [TNFJ], Arif Hussaini, was assassinated in August 1988, serving a severe blow to the sect. ISI was blamed for this murder but a serving army officer named Majid Raza Gillani knew the real culprits. Then it was Haq Nawaz Jhangvi's turn; he was murdered within a year of Hussaini's elimination.

Prospects of financial bonanza attracted many other religious extremists to jump into this theatre and they contended for rewards. In the ensuing competition among such 'humanity loving leaders', sectarian killings in Pakistan had sharply been increasing since the mid 1990s with varying intervals.

Meanwhile, Iranian funding to Shiite organizations in Pakistan also increased, making the country *a battleground for Saudi Arabia and Iran to settle their scores*. As the routs of these activities were controlled by the sponsors of religious teams, secretly funded by the enemy's intelligence network, whether Pakistani high ups of Army knew it or not, but no effective measures could be taken by the then ruling political governments to halt this slide into chaos.

Realizing that sectarian outfits were untouchable entities, professional criminals hastened to join these groups and benefited from this open charity of opportunities. For instance, when around 500 trained gunmen belonging to MQM were abandoned by their masters, they tentatively turned to the SSP in search of a 'job'. They found it to be a promising career; of course by pretending that they were more religious than many earlier ones.

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The new entrants had to do was growing beards and learn a few anti-Shiite lessons. The rest they were already accustomed to - butchering people. During the 1990s the SSP generated many splinter groups, *Lashkar e Jhangvi* [Army of Jhangvi], for example, being the most deadly and prominent one, also went more expanded, brutal and effective, whereas other small outfits were mainly 'personal mafias of influential feudal, led by local mullahs.'

On 28<sup>th</sup> December 2009; as many as 33 Shiites were killed and 63 injured in a confirmed suicide bombing in Karachi. The bomber attacked a Shia procession that was held to mark Ashura. See French news agency [AFP]'s report:

*[A suicide bomber targeted Pakistan's largest procession of Shiite Muslims on their holiest day, killing at least 33 people and wounding dozens more in defiance of a major security crackdown.*

*The blast sparked riots in Karachi, the financial capital, where angry mourners went on the rampage, throwing stones at ambulances, torching cars and shops and firing bullets into the air, sparking appeals for calm.*

*Though the Karachi admin had deployed tens of thousands of police and paramilitary forces, fearing militant attacks on Ashura processions, but the blast was so huge that the nearby people felt their hearing had gone; then they heard cries of injured people and saw pieces of human flesh and blood on the road.*

*Interior Minister Rehman Malik blamed Tehreek e Taliban against which the military had been waging a major operation on the Afghan border, and Lashkar e Jhangvi [LeJ]; Pakistan's most feared Islamic networks, practically the two in one group.*

*Faheem Siddiqui, a senior reporter of the GEO News TV, was among the injured. He was present at the procession with his six-year old son and 13-year-old niece who were killed in the blast. Siddiqui was rushed to JPMC and later shifted to Aga Khan University Hospital where he was operated.*

*Mohammad Ali Jinnah Road, where the attack happened, was ablaze with burning cars and motorcycles, and covered in debris from buildings attacked by rioters. Fire fighters battled helplessly to quench the flames engulfing buildings and shopkeepers stood crying outside their businesses going up in smoke. Karachi' Mayor*

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*Mustafa Kamal used his maximum resources to put out the fire which had engulfed the markets; but was seen helpless.*

*This was the deadliest massacre in Karachi since a suicide bomber had targeted the homecoming of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto —killing at least 153 people on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2007.*

*A spokesman for the paramilitary Rangers, Maj M Aurangzeb told AFP that:*

*“Our soldier Abdul Razzaq spotted the suicide bomber and jumped on him and both fell to the road after which the bomber exploded himself; he died as he pinned down the suicide bomber, otherwise the blast would have inflicted far more casualties.”]*

Since June 2010 in Karachi, SSP was involved in the target killing of seven innocent bystanders and intellectuals; all were from the Twelver Shiite Muslim community. Sectarian riots and the targeted killing of doctors in the provincial capital have drawn attention to the present democratic system.

The military regime of Gen Ziaul Haq [1977-88] had supported certain religious groups to strengthen its rule and Karachi underwent the worst situation after the sectarian riots. The Shia-Sunni clashes had started from Godra Colony in New Karachi, after a small incident, and subsequently the clashes gripped the entire city.

Over 500 members of the Shiite Community were killed in year 2012; of the total number, 136 were killed in Karachi alone.

[Overall; according to the data compiled by *Centre for Research and Security Studies* [CRSS], in Karachi almost 991 persons were dead in 791 violent attacks. Among these 917 were civilians and 74 security forces' men.]

**ASWJ's MAULANA FAROOQI ATTACKRD:**

On 25<sup>th</sup> December 2012; Information Secretary of the *Ahle Sunnat Wal-Jamaat* [ASWJ], Maulana Aurangzeb Farooqi, survived an armed attack in Karachi in which his driver, a private security guard and four policemen on duty died.

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Unidentified people riding four motorcycles sprayed the vehicle of Maulana Aurangzeb Farooqi with bullets from automatic weapons near Moti Mahal in Gulshan-e-Iqbal, injuring policemen Arshad, 25, Wakeel Khan, 30, Imran Khan, 35, Saleem, 46, and Ashraf Cheema, a private security guard, Obaid, 28, the driver of the car, Saleem Waheed, 20, and the Maulana himself. The firing had been so intense that it completely overwhelmed the cops, leaving them with no chance of any resistance.

After the driver had been shot, the car went out of control and swerved onto a footpath. The armed men managed to flee. The condition of Maulana Aurangzeb Farooqi was stable; later the bodies of the deceased were shifted to the JPMC for legal formalities. The MLO of JPMC told that the deceased had received more than five bullets each. The terrorists had used Kalashnikovs and 9mm pistols in the attack; police had seized over 70 empty shells from the spot.

In reaction to the attempt on Maulana Aurangzeb Farooqi's life, supporters of the ASWJ came out onto the roads in Malir City, Quaidabad, Neelam Colony, New Karachi, Godhra Camp, Shahrae Faisal, Rizvia Society and some other parts of the city and pelted vehicles with stones and also torched some tires.

Later the law-enforcement personnel rushed to the spots of the trouble and after firing some teargas shells managed to disperse the protestors. Mobs torched a bus each in Ayesha Manzil, Rizvia Society and Water Pump and a truck at Al-Asif Square.

Meanwhile, ASWJ's Akbar Saeed Farooqi, told media that an activist of the ASWJ, Zainul Abedin, was killed by the police near Kazmien Imambargah in Sector 11/E in the New Karachi Industrial Area police limits. However, the police gave an entirely different version of the incident in which Zainul Abedin died.

The SP New Karachi, Salman, told that two armed men, including Zain, riding a motorcycle had fired at the Imam-bargah. When the policemen posted at the Imam-bargah opened fire on them, they fled. As they were escaping, the deceased fell off the motorcycle and his skull was smashed which was the cause of his death.

See the earlier accounts of December 2012; two activists of the ASWJ, Ghulam Haider, 25, and Abdul Hafeez Baloch, 30, received bullet wounds when unidentified people riding a motorcycle opened fire on them near Chamcha Hotel in Orangi Town. The injured, one of them was a police constable, were taken to the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital where they died during

treatment.

Syed Shahid Hussain Zaidi, 25, was shot dead in his fruit shop in the same police limits; the incident was sectarian in nature.

Rozi Khan, 25, Naimatullah Khan, 22 and Ateeq-ur-Rehman received bullet wounds when unidentified people riding a motorcycle opened fire on them just outside the Makki Masjid opposite the Parking Plaza in New Preedy Street while they were coming out of the mosque after offering *Isha* prayers. The injured, belonging to a particular religious sect, were taken to the JPMC where both persons died.

Referring to the REUTERS Report dated 24<sup>th</sup> February 2013; when Aurangzeb Farooqi survived an attempt on his life that left six of his bodyguards dead *on 25<sup>th</sup> December 2012*, the Pakistani cleric lost little time in turning the narrow escape to his advantage. Farooqi said in remarks captured on video shortly after fire on his double-cabin pick-up:

*"Enemies should listen to this: my task now is Sunni awakening. I will make Sunnis so powerful against Shiites that no Sunni will even want to shake hands with a Shiite. They will die their own deaths; we won't have to kill them."*

Such was the kind of speech that chilled Pakistan's Shiite community, braced for a new chapter of persecution following a series of bombings that had killed almost 200 people in the city of Quetta in early 2013. Lesser known spate of murders in Karachi, a much bigger city, suggested the violence was taking on a volatile new dimension as a small number of Shiites could fight back.

Tit-for-tat killings on the streets of Karachi were another massive threat to Pakistan: a campaign by *Lashkar e Jhangvi* [LeJ] and allied Pakistani anti-Shiite groups to rip open sectarian fault-lines in the metropolis of 20 million people; more than 80 Shiites were assassinated in Karachi in six months, including doctors, bankers and teachers.

In turn, a number of hardliner Sunni clerics who shared Farooqi's suspicion of the Shiite sect were killed in drive-by shootings or barely survived apparent revenge attacks; dozens of Farooqi's followers had also been shot dead.

Discerning the motives for any one killing has always been a misty job in Karachi, where multiple armed factions are locked in a perpetual all-against-all turf war; the stark killings in Karachi suggested the polarizing forces of intolerance were gaining ground quickly. The divide was getting

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much bigger between Shia and Sunni. One had to pick sides any way; the city never experienced that much hatred since decades. Farooqi once told the media openly:

*"We say Shias are infidels. We say this on the basis of reason and arguments; I want to be called to the Supreme Court so that I can prove using their own books that they are not Muslims.*

*.... But we oppose violence and we deny any link to LeJ."*

However, security officials believed his supporters were broadly aligned with the heavily armed group LeJ, whose leaders deem murdering Shiites an act of piety. Maulana Farooqi, was then Karachi head of Deobandi organization called *Ahle Sunnat wal Jama'at*; the new name for *Sipah e Sahaba* Pakistan [SSP].

In 2013, LeJ prosecuted its campaign with renewed passion, emboldened by the release of Malik Ishaq, one of its founders, who was freed after spending 14 years in jail in July 2011. Malik Ishaq had been appearing at gatherings of supporters in Karachi, too.

Concerned officials keep record that regional powers have been stoking the sectarian fire in Pakistan, with donors in Saudi Arabia and other Sunni-dominated Gulf countries funding LeJ, while Shiite organizations turn to Iran. Whatever be the factors, the successive governments' hesitant or poor response was the main reason for promotion of sectarian violence in the country, otherwise law of land was equally applicable on all.

In Karachi, Maulana Farooqi and his thousands of followers projected a new feeling of confidence. Crowds of angry men chant "*Shia infidel! Shia infidel!*" at rallies and burn effigies while clerics usually abuse them after Friday prayers. Their goal was to convince the government to declare Shiites non-Muslims, as it did to the Ahmadiya sect in 1974, as a first step towards excluding the community from main stream. Maulana Farooqi explained:

*"When someone is socially boycotted, he becomes disappointed and isolated. He realizes that his beliefs are not right, that people hate him.*

*What I'm saying is that killing them is not the solution. Let's talk, let's debate and convince people that they are wrong."*

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However, the Shiite community held that they would not succumb to the plans by LeJ to provoke sectarian conflict. One Shia cleric said:

*"In our sect, if we are being killed we are 'shaheed' [martyrs]. We are not supposed to carry out reprisal attacks. If we decided to take up arms, then no part of the country would be spared from terrorism - but it's forbidden."*

The MWM played a big role in sit-ins that paralyzed parts of Karachi and dozens of other towns to protest against the Quetta bombings - the biggest Shiite demonstrations in years. Police believed the small Shiite *Mehdi Force* group, then comprised of about 20 active members in Karachi, was behind several of the attacks on Deobandi clerics and their followers. SSP Raja Umar Khattab said:

*"They [Mehdi Force] don't have a background in terrorism, but after the Shia killings started they joined the group and they tried to settle the score - they kill clerics only, not masses."*

In November 2012, suspected Mehdi Force gunmen opened fire at a tea shop near the *Ahsanul-Uloom* seminary, where Farooqi had a following, killing six students. A scholar from the *madrassa* was shot dead the next month, another student killed in January 2013. *"It is definitely a reaction; Shias have never gone on the offensive on their own,"* said DIG Police Shahid Hayat.

As per the Citizens-Police Liaison Committee [CPLC]'s record, some 68 members of Farooqi's *Ahle Sunnat wal Jama'at* [ASWJ] and 85 Shiites were killed in the city from early September 2012 till ending February 2013.

2013 - THE DEADLIEST YEAR:

The Karachiites had the feeling that well-connected Shiites within the city's dominant political party, the MQM, which usually commanded a formidable force of gunmen, could have a hand in some of the more sophisticated attacks, or some where rival Sunni factions could also be involved.

Despite the growing body count, Karachi exhibited adequate tolerance. Some Sunnis made a point of attending the Shiite protests - a reminder that Maulana Farooqi's adherents were themselves a minority. Yet as Karachi's murder rate was setting new records, the dynamics of the city's con-



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flicts and their limits were being tested by the history. Abdul Sattar Edhi, while despatching an ambulance, said:

*"The best religion of all is humanity; if religion doesn't have humanity, then it is useless."*

On 3rd March 2013; a powerful bomb blast in Karachi in the area of Abbas Town killed 45 people and wounded 150 others. The Bomb exploded outside a Shia Mosque as people were leaving from prayers. The blast destroyed the building, set other buildings on fire, and caused a power outage in the city. Human rights group accused the Pakistani government of turning a "blind eye" to the bombings.

[The details of this episode is given on other pages of this volume]

Referring to the 'Pakistan Today' dated 9<sup>th</sup> December 2013;

*"The statistics disclose that at least 109 people fell victim to sectarian target killing till December 5 (2013) in the ongoing year in the metropolis (Karachi).*

*Out of these 109 killings done by Takfiri terrorists of ASWJ – SSP, 56 are Shiite community members, 9 belong to Deoband school of thought (moderate Deobandis), seven belongs to Tableegi Jamaat (moderate Deobandis), four members of Ahmadi community, four Bohra community, 14 Sunni Barelvis (including two of Sunni Tehreek), two Shia Islamili and one belongs to Hindu community. Twelve activists of banned terrorist outfit Sipah-e-Sahaba, currently operating as Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ) were killed, some of them in defensive firing by Sunni Barelvis, Shias or moderate Deobandis.*

*In total, at least 71 people of diverse faith and sect backgrounds were target killed by Takfiiri Deobandi terrorists of ASWJ-SSP."*

Thus it confirmed that terrorists of banned Deobandi outfit *Sipah e Sahaba* Pakistan [SSP, currently operating as ASWJ] killed not only Shiites and Sunni Barelvis, but also Ahmadis and Hindus in Karachi in 2013.

It may be noted that this was only an account of individual target killings; not the collective massacres of Shias and Sunni Barelvis by Takfiri ASWJ-SSP terrorists, e.g Abbas Town, Ahsura attacks etc in which hundreds of innocent Sunni and Shiites were killed.

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Most of the sectarian target killings in Karachi took place in November 2013 in which 26 people were gunned down on basis of their sects while July proved as the most peaceful month on account of sectarian killings in which no one was targeted on sectarian accounts.

Month-wise situation of sectarian killings remained:

- January 2013: 11 people including five Shia, three Sunni Barelvi and three Deobandis were killed.
- February 2013: 17 people including seven Shia, 10 Sunni, five Deobandis and one member of Barohi community were killed.
- March 2013: four people including three Shia and one Hindu had become victims of sectarian attacks.
- April 2013: four Shiites; May 2013: one Shia; June 2013: three including two Shia and one Ahmadi, July 2013: None;
- August 2013: 10 people including three Shiites, two each Ismaili and Ahmadi, one Sunni and two moderate Deobandi activists of *Tableegi Jamaat*.
- September 2013: 11 people including nine Shiites and two members of Bohra community,
- October 2013: four people including two Shiites, one each Sunni Barelvi and Ahmadi.
- November 2013: 26 people including 16 Shiites, eight Sunni Barelvi, one each Deobandi and Ahmadi.
- December 2013: 15 people including five moderate Deobandi activists of *Tableegi Jamaat*, four Shia and two Sunni Barelvis were killed by armed men during first three days.

Most of the sectarian killings were carried out in the West zone while East zone stood comparatively peaceful regarding sectarian killings.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2013; two foreigners were among 15 people killed in Karachi as violence reared its ugly head after a lull; the spiral was a calculated move against the ongoing Rangers-led operation in the metropolis.

Late on the same day night, four suspected gangsters were shot dead in two alleged encounters with police and Rangers in Lyari, said SSP City Faisal Bashir Memon.

On 4<sup>th</sup> December 2013; Several parts of Karachi were tense in the wake of sectarian violence which claimed at least 15 lives; funeral prayers for Shia leader Allama Deedar Ali Jalbani and his guard were held at Numaish Chowrangi in Karachi; then his dead body was shifted to Khairpur via helicopter for burial.

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Private schools in the city remained shut and public transport was thin due to security fears following a protest call given by Shiite organisation, *Majlis-e-Wahdatul Muslimeen* [MWM], of which Jalbani was the Deputy Secretary General; around 1,200 Shias rallied in the city to protest against the said killing.