

# Our Heart Goes out to Afghanistan

Our Heart Goes out to Afghanistan

We, at Shia Rights Watch, are deeply saddened by the ruthless targeting of Afghan Shia by two suicide bombers attacked a Shia mosque in the western Afghan city of Herat on August 1, 2017. The attack was reported to have killed as many as 29 individuals and wounded up to 64.

Afghan Shia have been attacked and killed for decades and such attacks have elevated since the beginning of 2017. In the month of July, 30 Shia were killed and 42 wounded in a suicide car-bomb in heavily populated Shia district of Kabul. More than 1,700 civilians have been killed in attacks in Afghanistan so far this year, many of which belong to the minority Shia community.

As we condemn all killing and acts of violence, SRW emphasizes the need for minority rights advocacy as most human rights violations in the world are inflicted upon minority groups.

We also urge the Afghan government to take immediate action to protect Shia populated areas to prevent further attacks.

Our heart goes out to families and community members of all victims of terror, and we invite international committees to stand up for minority rights.

---

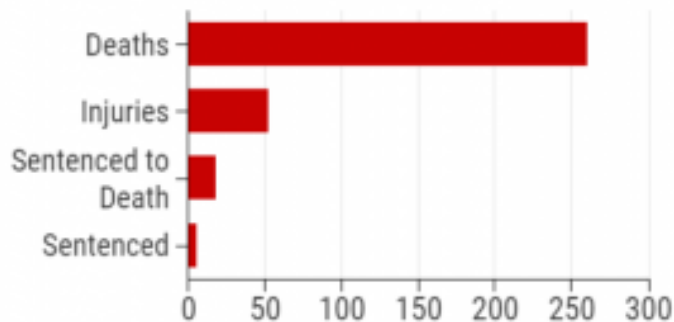
## Incidents of Anti-Shiism in July, 2017

### Monthly Analysis: July 2017

The 20 attacks that occurred in July left the Shia population in a position susceptible to human rights violations. Despite the overall decrease in casualties

in July from June of 2017, 262 individuals were killed and 53 were wounded. These large numbers bare witness to the continued systematic targeting of the Shia Muslim population around the world. The violations of human rights range from arrest and detainment, to sexual abuse and torture in prisons, and as seen this month, mass execution.

## July 2017 Incidents



Shia Rights Watch (SRW) has compiled a list of the reported attacks that occurred in July, confirmed through extensive research and collaboration with Shia rights activists around the world. This report will detail the reported instances both physical and psychological, including deaths, injuries, sentencing, and tortures.

The cases detailed have occurred across several countries including: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. Further attacks and human rights violations may have occurred in other places, however, this list consists of the cases recorded by SRW researchers. Incidents often go unreported due high risks and fear of attack and/or further social discrimination.

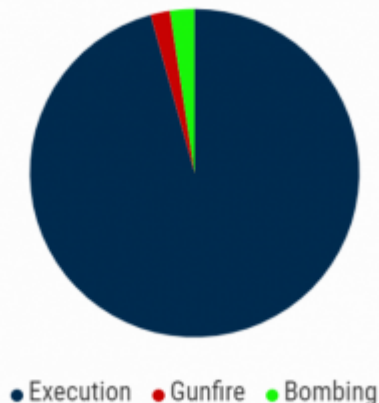
### Iraq

Fewer numbers of attacks and casualties have been reported in the month of July in Iraq. However, the casualties are much larger due to isolated massacres conducted by ISIS in small pockets of power such as Tal Afar and Hawija. Tal Afar witnessed a systematic massacre of 200 civilians on July 5th. Such an attack can be explained as a way to reassert ISIS's dominance after their increasing losses in Mosul.

ISIS first declared Mosul its Islamic Caliphate in 2014, and Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared victory in the city on July 9 after the strenuous three-year battle for control on. The Iraqi army forced the group to retreat from the city, and has pushed ISIS into cities like Tal Afar. The Islamic State is now

consolidating power in Tal Afar and it remains the closest ISIS-controlled urban area the so-called caliphate that can be used to launch terror operations back into Mosul.

## Type of Violence in Iraq



To the southeast, the capital city of Baghdad witnessed seven attacks in July. Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and adhesive explosive devices (AEDs) remain a reality in the city. This is a sharp decline from the twelve attacks in June which specifically targeted busy Shia areas. The cooling down of attack efforts may be attributed to the end of Ramadan, which ISIS claims to be the “holy month of Jihad.”

The end of Ramadan, paired with the drastic decline in Islamic State power, may be the cause of the decreased number of attacks against the Shia population in July. However, the massacre at Tal Afar provides a grim portrayal of how ISIS might continue to operate as it loses control in areas throughout Iraq and maintains its control over its remaining footholds.

## **Bahrain**

The ethnic and religious backgrounds of Bahrain intertwine the political, economic, and social realms of influence. Bahrain is neighbored by the Middle East’s most prominent Muslim nations: the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the west, the Islamic Republic of Iran to the north and east, and the State of Qatar to the southeast. The influence from these powerful neighbors, along with the unique history of the region, explicate the ethnic and religious composition of the country. While the exact religious demographics are still unknown and a highly contentious issue, it is estimated that of the Muslim population, roughly 70% are Shia and 30% Sunni. Despite this uneven divide, the government is ruled by a Sunni royal family, and a human rights dilemma has emerged out of this power

dynamic. The cases reported in July displayed the continuation of human rights violations against Bahraini Shia Muslims and the relentless government pushback against rising humanitarian concerns.

Prominent human rights activist Nabeel Rajab received a two-year sentence on July 10th after being accused of spreading 'fake news' about Bahraini authorities. This sentencing caused outrage by several human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, and came shortly after the release of *Torture in Bahrain: A State Behavior & A Systematic Policy*, a report condemning the torture of prisoners by five human rights organizations within Bahrain.

Yousef Ali Riza reported sexual harassment by guards in his prison cell on July 3rd, the same day that Ebtisam al-Saegh was detained the second time for government criticism on social media. Al-Saegh was previously held in May where she reported torture and sexual assault. She started an open-ended hunger strike on July 11th, but by the 25th she was reported to have lost eleven kilos. Further diagnosis of her health showed a fracture in her right arm sustained from previous torture.

Continued reports of human rights infractions demonstrate the need for reform in Bahrain's treatment of prisoners and expose the need for global attention on this issue. The Bahraini authorities arrested Shia cleric Sheikh Hani al-Banaa' while he was visiting his detained son in Dry Dock Prison on July 3rd. Al-Banaa' was released after being held in the prison for nine days. Another prisoner, Hussein Mohamed Habib died on July 5th after being arrested and subjected to severe torture and abuse in prison in March 2011.

Unfortunately, mistreatment of Bahraini citizens extends from what has occurred in prisons. On July 20th in the northwestern coastal town of al-Budaiya, state troopers stormed the house of Sheikh Bashar al-Aali and arrested the cleric without providing any reasons. Another situation occurred in July 28th, where Bahraini authorities charged 60 Shia for forming a group against the king. These individuals were accused of "forming a terrorist group," and show the continued suppression of government opposition.

In addition to the reprehensible treatment of prisoners, many Bahrainis have lost their citizenship. By July 8th, 103 people had citizenship revoked or denied during

2017. On July 22, the wife of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Deqaq lost her citizenship after refusing to spy on her husband. The denial and revoking of citizenship has seemingly become the way in which the Bahraini government suppresses their critics. Loss of citizenship in combination with the growing detention of human rights advocates and their ill-treatment while in prison reinforces the regime's systematic crackdown on minority populations and Shia Muslims in the country.

## **Pakistan**

Although less casualties have been reported in Pakistan since the end of Ramadan, the Shia minority feel no more secure. More than 2,000 Shia have been killed in Pakistan since 2002, and the incidents in July show this number continuing to rise. Groups like Lashkar-e-Jhagvi, an extremist Sunni militant group, have pledged: "all Shias are worthy of killing and the intention is to make Pakistan their graveyard," according to an open letter they wrote to the Hazara people in Baluchistan.

Recently, two Shia brothers were arrested without declared charges, rendering the arrests illegal. There has yet to be a statement, but the two brothers are under "enforced disappearance," according to local activist.

Also, just 25 miles south of Quetta, in Baluchistan, a group of Hazara Shia were on their way to the port city of Karachi on July 19. A drive-by shooter pulled up and riddled their vehicle with bullets. Three men and one woman were killed.

The fear generated by attacks similar to this one have caused some Shia to avoid traveling alone. Even the government fears that people of the Islamic sect travel at their own peril. This July, around 1,000 Shia on their way back from pilgrimage from holy sites in Iran and Iraq found themselves unable to continue at the border between Iran and Pakistan in the border town of Taftan. The pilgrims found themselves with the option of having to continue through hostile territory that is extremely dangerous for Shia without protection. They refused, and the Pakistani government is currently rallying forces to send as escorts, but the effort is taking long. Conditions are breaking down, but the pilgrims would rather put up with the harsh environment than risk traveling through Pakistan unguarded.

Pakistan is growing increasingly dangerous to the livelihood of Shia Muslims. ISIS's growing influence in Afghanistan is emboldening Pakistani Deobandi groups to act in likeness with ISIS's cruelty. Their intention to annihilate the Shia

population is daunting considering the Shia make up one third of Pakistan, but that's not discouraging some from picking them off little-by-little. The Pakistani government needs to further engage this issue by implementing special protection in Shia-dominated towns like Quetta in Baluchistan. If neglected, the issue can easily find its footing on a slippery slope to sectarian violence.

## **Saudi Arabia**

Al Awamiyah, in the Qatif region of eastern Saudi Arabia, remains a contentious town as Saudi forces maintain their siege. The town itself dates back to the Ottoman Empire 200 years ago, and the town's historic center is being demolished. The constant raids have injured large numbers of civilians, and Saudi forces have responded to protests with a tight crackdown against its opposition.

The Kingdom carried out four executions of Shia Muslims for their participation in protests in Al Awamiyah. This area has been under extreme lock-down since July 26th.

The Shia population has been promised safe conduct of leave. Before, however, soldiers milled the streets firing at anyone walking by. Vehicles packed with luggage exited the city hanging white T-shirts as white flags with hopes that soldiers won't fire upon said vehicle. A group of Asian migrants were forced to strip and lie on their stomachs in the middle of the street. Al-Musawarah, a neighborhood with structures dating back to the Ottoman Empire, is falling victim to Saudi bulldozers.

Saudi raids continue in the region, as just days later, two men were shot and wounded on 11 July. On July 13th, a court in Saudi Arabia has postponed the trial of Shia cleric Sheikh Hussein al-Radhi over his pro-democracy comments as Riyadh presses ahead with its heavy-handed crackdown on members of the Shia community. In another raid on July 15th, Hassan Abdullah, Ja'far Mubayrik and 'Saadiq Darvish were killed by Saudi forces.

Saudi troops, equipped with heavy weapons, attacked Al- Awamiyah town, damaging and destroying several homes, business and historical sites. Residence were asked to stay home while the government shut down their internet and phone lines. Two Shia reported killed during the attack on July 26th. Just four days later, three men were killed in a raid in a parking lot. On July 29th, Saudi snipers shot and killed Ali Mahdi al-Sobeiti and Hussain Abdullah al-Sobeiti on the

road to an Awamiyah.

The Saudi Arabian Supreme Court upholds the death sentences of 14 Saudi Shia after an unfair mass trial and it is a worrisome reminder of the country's lethal crackdown on dissent. Fourteen Shia waiting to be executed are following:

1. Hussain Muhammd al-Muslim
2. Muhammad Mansur al- Mansure
3. Mustafa Ahmad Darwish
4. Fazil Hussain Labbad
5. Saeed Mihammad al-Sakafi
6. Salman Amin al-Quraish
7. Mujtaba'a al-Sweikat
8. Muneer Abdulah al-Adam
9. Abdulah Salman al-Sarih
10. AbdulAziz Hassan al-sahwi
11. Ahmad al-Rabia
12. Ahmad Feisal al-Darwish
13. Hussain Hassan al-Rabia
14. Abdula Hani al-Tarif

The lack of proof of serious allegation is a serious development, as SRW, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International point out a sharp rise of death sentences for Shia Muslims carried out by the Kingdom.

## **Syria**

The town of Hama was home to death of two Shia women and the injury of 11 others as a suicide bomber detonated his vest. Sources report the diffusion of two other bombs at the site. The bomb caused extensive damage to the Imam Muslim Mosque and a bus station nearby.

In 2017 alone, there have been over 240 deaths as a result of anti-Shiism. The attacks were propagated by anti-Shia extremists taking advantage of the social and political distress in the nation.

## **Nigeria**

On Friday, 7 July, the Federal High Court in Nigeria rejected the suit of Shia cleric

Ibrahim Zakzaky. Zakzaky brought forth a suit through which he meant to sue the Nigerian government for \$5.6 million in damages over a December 2015 attack in which the Nigerian government killed 347 Shia Muslims including Zakzaky's three children in the city of Zaria in the northern state of Kaduna. The dead were then buried in a mass grave.

The Shia population is a small minority of the Muslim population. The demographics of all Nigeria include 50% Christians and 50% Muslims.

## **Afghanistan**

A car filled with explosives rammed into a bus and detonated killing 24 people and wounding 40. The attack occurred near a prominent Shia cleric's house, so it is unclear whether the bus was the actual target. June saw two other attacks targeting the Shia population.

The Hazara ethnic group make up a large portion of Afghanistan's Shia population. For decades, the Hazara have been under attack by extremist organization and have lived a marginalized life. Increased attention is needed on the case of Hazara's when addressing anti-Shiism in Afghanistan.

## **Kuwait**

Late July, Kuwaiti officials suspended license for a locally operated Shia TV station, ceasing their operations. While Kuwait historically has displayed acceptance and inclusion for their Shia population, a recent increase in targeting of Shia media and scholars can be seen.

Shia Rights Watch is concerned of increasing actions limiting the freedom of speech in Kuwait.

## **Conclusion**

The month of July stood witness to just over 260 deaths and with 53 injuries as a result of anti-Shiism. SRW estimates the death rate to increase as many of those injured were in critical condition and treated in areas with limited medical resources.

Shia Muslims continue to live in fear as they are ostracized in their home nations, and arrests of Shia activists and scholars continue in the Gulf states and the



surrounding nations. The increased incidents of anti-Shiism are consistent with those estimated in previous reports. With arrests and ill-treatment of prominent activists such as Ibtissam al-Saegh and Nabeel Rajab, anti-shiism remains as strong as ever.

## Types of Sentences



In Saudi Arabia, the siege in al-Awamiya continues. Despite international efforts, the death count continues to rise. Many of those killed by government shootings are women, children, and immigrant workers. Activists and humanitarians are standing up to the injustice, but are facing the backlash from governments and other major actors. Shia Rights Watch calls for governments across the region to increase protections on Shia and other religious minorities, and to reverse and stop all ill-treatment of these populations. SRW urges the Saudi government to reverse their sentences condemning fourteen protesters of the al-Awamiya raids to death. Shia Rights Watch demands the release of all pro-democracy activists and religious scholars in the Gulf nations. Further, Shia Rights Watch condemns the siege on Awamiya and warns of the dangers of continued marginalization in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and across the region.

---

# Saudi Arabian Supreme Court

# upholds the death sentences of 14

The Saudi Arabian Supreme Court upholds the death sentences of 14 Saudi Shia after an unfair mass trial and it is a worrisome reminder of the country's lethal crackdown on dissent. Saudi Arabia has made it clear that freedom of any kind is not tolerated. Any sort of domestic dissent is managed in the worst of ways.

Saudi Arabia's authorities have displayed their commitment to the use of the executions as a weapon to crush dissent as at least 66 people have been executed in Saudi Arabia since the start of 2017 as of July 24th.

Fourteen Shia waiting to be executed are following:

1. Hussain Muhammd al-Muslim
2. Muhammad Mansur al- Mansure
3. Mustafa Ahmad Darwish
4. Fazil Hussain Labbad
5. Saeed Mihammad al-Sakafi
6. Salman Amin al-Quraish
7. Mujtaba'a al-Sweikat
8. Muneer Abdulah al-Adam
9. Abdulah Salman al-Sarih
10. AbdulAziz Hassan al-sahwi
11. Ahmad al-Rabia
12. Ahmad Feisal al-Darwish
13. Hussain Hassan al-Rabia
14. Abdula Hani al-Tarif

Mujtaba'a al-Sweikat, was only 17 when he was sentenced to death. He had planned to visit and attend Western Michigan University but was detained by airport authorities in Saudi Arabia for allegedly attending a pro-democracy rally.

The exact date of the execution is not announced yet and there is a chance that it won't be until after the execution that the world will hear about it. Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr was quietly executed on January 2, 2016, as the world was busy celebrating New Year.

Once covered-up crackdown against Shia is now the largest military campaign in Saudi Arabia and the world is watching.

Not only does Saudi Arabia use its funds and influence to thwart dissent domestically, it also imposes its beliefs on Shia populations in the region: Saudi-

backed forces in Bahrain, airstrikes in Yemen, and founding Wahhabi school around the world have resulted in mass violations toward this population in and outside this Kingdom.

“As human rights activists I believe it is time for the international committees and world leaders to stand up for human rights and remind Saudis of our values,” says Mustafa Akhwand the director of Shia Rights Watch.

“We are responsible to take all actions to stop the execution of these 14 Shia men. Such action of Saudi kingdom is only another sign of weakness and incompetence” he continued.

Shia Rights Watch condemn the action of violence and Anti-Shiism carried by Saudi authorities demanding equal rights to Shia Muslims in Saudi Arabia.

---

## **A Worsening Prisoners’ Dilemma**

On 18 July 2017, the Bahrain Center for Human Rights released another article calling out the country for its inhumane conditions for its prisoners, including many human rights advocates. These harsh conditions were documented by BCHR ,also confirmed by SRW, and reported that they went against the *Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners*, set by the United Nations. These UN specifications include accommodation standards, separation of prisoners, personal hygiene, and many other rights to be guaranteed to prisoners. Following the January attack on Jau Prison, the largest male penitentiary in Bahrain, worsened conditions for prisoners were reported.

- Prisoners and their family members reported the excessive use of shackles, despite Rule 47 from the UN Standard prohibiting the use of restraints in a way that is either specifically degrading or painful.
- The reports also stated that prisoners were subject to bodily searches or shackling in order to receive any medical attention, which directly violates both Rules 27 and 31 of the Standard.
- Many prisoners, such as Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace, did not seek medical assistance due to the demands for excessive shackling to attend the

appointment. Abdulwahab Hussain was not only denied access to medical facilities, but was mistreated and tortured during his prison sentence.

- The conditions that prisoners like Mr. Hussain were subject to repeatedly demanded the attention of the United Nations Universal Periodic Review, which issued 175 recommendations in relation to the Bahraini prison conditions.

Shia Rights Watch (SRW) urges the government of Bahrain to strengthen its resolve to uphold all rules set by the United Nations' *Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners*, and to increase protections on the rights of Bahraini citizens. SRW also calls upon humanitarian organizations to continue to advocate for more human rights protections in Bahrain.

---

## **Suicide Bomber Strikes Near Shia Mosque in Kabul, 4 Killed**

June 15th, 2017

Today, June 15th, there was an explosion in the al-Zahra mosque in the western outskirts of Kabul. The attack killed four, including the leader of Afghanistan's ethnic Hazaras, Hajji Ramazan Hussainzada and injured seven.

The attacker attempted to enter the mosque armed when police stopped him. An exchange of fire ensued between police and the attacker. The attacker took refuge in the mosque kitchen, and there he detonated his explosive device.

ISIS has claimed responsibility.

This is the third major attack in Afghanistan during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. On May 31st, a truck bomb killed more than 150 people in the diplomatic quarter of the city. On June 6th, a motorbike, parked outside the historic Jama Masjid mosque detonated killing seven people and wounding 15.

---

# **Qatif Sniper Shooting**

Activists reported sniper fire occurring in the Saudi Arabian village of al-Awamiyah, located in the Shia populated Eastern Province. At least 31 civilians have been reported injured thus far, most of which have been transferred to the central hospital in Qatif. The majority of casualties were civilians, many being women and children.

For the past 36 days the town has been under siege by the Saudi government, with many road blocks and reported closed off areas.

Shia Rights Watch (SRW) calls on the leaders in Saudi Arabia to stop this attack against civilians and the Shia population within al-Awamiyah. SRW condemns the actions of the Saudi forces holding the village under siege and the cruel attack on the Shia population. SRW urges the international community denounce these actions and the attack on civilian populations.

---

# **ISIS in Iran, 12 Killed and 40 Wounded**

12 people killed and 40 injured as four attackers entered Iranian parliament, some of which dressed as woman. Security forces surrounded the parliament as people helped each other escaping from the window, witnesses report.

Although Iran is actively fighting ISIS in Iraq and Syria, this group has not, until now, carried out any attacks inside Iran. This attack is known to be first that ISIS took responsibility for in Iran.

SRW urges Iranian government to investigate the attack and prevent any future possibility of more ISIS activities in this country as Iran is a Shia country and ISIS

is one of the main active anti-Shia terrorist groups.

---

## **14 More to be Executed in Saudi Arabia**

Saudi court sentenced 14 Saudi Shia due to charges related to demonstrations in Qatif back in 2011 and 2012. Same court convicted 24 others with different charges.

Although Saudi Arabia had sought the leadership slot of the entire Human Rights Council of the U.N in 2015, this kingdom has the highest execution rates in the world. Beside execution, arbitrary arrest, torture, home raids, violation to the right to education, assembly, protest, religion and speech is at its highest in this country.

Most violations are carried against Shia Muslims minority. The court uses any accusation, including charges of terrorist crimes to oppress peaceful protestors.

SRW condemns all violations toward Shia population and asks international committee to take actions to stop such violation in Saudi Arabia.

---

## **Soon majority of Bahrain population will be in prison**

On Saturday, June 3rd, Bahrain's Supreme Court of Appeal upheld the five-year prison term against seven defendants charged with "unlawful" assembly, the gathering of 5 people or more; setting tires alight; and hurling petrol bombs at government vehicles in Juffair, a neighborhood in Eastern Manama, on August 2,

2013. Along with these sentences, the seven defendants will also have to pay a fine of 300 dinars or 795 USD for the burned tires.

Five other defendants were sentenced to three years in prison for “unlawful” assembly. Each of these investigations, though civilian, took place in a military tribunal in accordance with a constitutional amendment ratified by King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah on April 3rd of this year.

These two cases come in the midst of protests that have occurred almost daily since 2011. Bahrainis are calling for the Sunni Al Khalifah family to relinquish their power in favor of a political system that represents both Sunnis and the Shia majority, the Shia make up about 70% of the entire country.

Today, an over two hundred year old wealth disparity exists within the island state. Starting with the invasion of the Bani Utbah tribe, led by the of the Al Khalifah family, the dominating strategy in the 18th century was to take the power from the indigenous Shia and re-appropriate the wealth to the Sunni. The strategy of wealth appropriation still remains. The small island state’s economy remains largely undiversified, and the few major positions, both government and private, are strategically given to those close to the Sunni Royal Family and a select few Shia families.

The Bahraini government has responded to the discontentment with troops from both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to clamp down on protesters and activists.

Shia Rights Watch calls on both the Bahraini government and the international community to take action. The Bahraini government and the Al Khalifah family have the responsibility of security of the citizens. Acting on behalf of the minority in order to dominate the majority infringes on this responsibility and delegitimizes the government as a protector of the state and the people in it. The international community has the responsibility to defend the Universal Declaration of Human Rights established in 1948. Much of Bahrain’s economy relies on its oil production, and the government has failed to diversify further. This weakness can be exploited in order to strong-arm the Al Khalifah family into protecting all Bahrainis rather than actively discriminating against them.

---

# Two Killed as Attacks to Shia Community Continue in Pakistan

According to activists, “unidentified armed men opened fire and killed man and woman belonging to Shia community in south western city of Quetta.”

Muhammad Ismail was one of the two victims shot while riding his motorbike, and he is also one of the many victims targeted in a wave of anti-Shiism in Pakistan.

In Quetta, the Shia are easy targets. Most belong to the Hazara sect, numbering in approximately 600,000. They speak a different language and are ethnically central Asian and Mongolian. Because of their differences, average Hazaras make open targets for radicalized terrorists to pick off in an effort of a total racial purge of Pakistan. In 2012 an extremist group, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, sent an open letter to the Hazaras of Quetta stating that “It is our religious duty to kill all Shia, and to cleanse Pakistan of this impure nation... All Shias are worthy of killing and the intention is to make Pakistan their graveyard.”

Shia Rights Watch implores Pakistan to uphold its sovereign laws and the Universal Declaration of Human rights, for which Pakistan voted in favor. The continuation of these attacks prove that Pakistan has no control over the extremist groups within its borders, invalidating its capacity or will to protect its people. These attacks also violate Article 1 under which “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” Pakistan needs to show a genuine and honest effort to prevent Sunni Pakistanis from attacking more Shia Pakistanis for the sanctity of both state and its peoples.