

Banned Islamist group planned coup in Pakistan - investigators

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Abstract

Despite being declared a banned organization in Pakistan after all these developments, the HT members can be seen at various key mosques on Fridays in Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi, distributing volatile literature propagating the revival of the Caliphate. Apart from organizing underground meetings and seminars, the HT has used text messages on cell phones and social networking sites to spread its message. An open letter dated June 3, 2011, addressed to the "sincere officers" of the Pakistani armed forces, and posted on the website of the Pakistan chapter of the Hizbul Tehrir (www.hizb-pakistan.com), called for removal of the "traitors" amongst the civilian and military leadership of the country for their alliance with the United States. The letter stated: "The need of the time is the Khilafah (the Caliphate) to gather the Ummah (the Muslim community) as the single most resourceful state in the world. Whilst you look upon the humiliation of the Muslims, their misery and despair, the Ummah looks upon you as sincere officers of the most powerful armed forces across the globe that can make Pakistan the starting point for Khilafah."

Full Text

Text of report by Amir Mir headlined "HT had coup plans" published by Pakistan newspaper The News website on 23 June

Lahore: Despite claiming to be a non-violent group whose sole objective is to recommence the Islamic way of life by re-establishing caliphate, those questioning Brigadier Ali Khan of Pakistan Army for his links to Hizbul Tehrir, believe the latter had a violent agenda to overthrow the government in Islamabad and remove the military leadership, for their pro-US stance, through a coup it wanted to stage with the help of its moles in the armed forces.

Investigations being conducted by the authorities following the arrest of Brigadier Ali Khan and several other officers of the Pakistan Army for their links with Hizbul Tehrir have revealed that the leadership of the banned group had actually marked Pakistan as a base from which it wanted to spread Islamic rule across the world. Hizbul Tehrir has managed to maintain its presence in Pakistan despite being outlawed by the Musharraf regime following the July 7, 2007 London subway suicide bombings, conducted by four British nationals of Pakistani origin who were reportedly indoctrinated in London by extremists belonging to militant groups like Al-Mohajiroun and Hizbul Tehrir. Asif Mohammed Hanif, the terrorist who blew himself up in a cafe in Tel Aviv on April 29, 2003, and his accomplice and would-be bomber, Omar Khan Sharif, were British-born Muslims affiliated with HT. The group recruits members from the urban, educated and professional segments of the society and is also known to have spread its influence in the military ranks in recent years.

The Pakistani intelligence sleuths who are responsible for monitoring the HT activities believe that the group might be working in tandem with al-Qaeda under the garb of pan-Islamism. They reminded that 35 members of Hizbul Tehrir were arrested from a house in Islamabad, which was being used to plan a coup plot to overthrow the government and replace it by Caliphate, as envisaged by the group's founder Umar Bakri. Hardly a few weeks before these arrests were made, the Pakistan chapter of the HT talked about spilling blood to stage an Islamic revolution in Pakistan. At the same time, Tayyab Muqem, a key Hizbul leader in London, had declared that many HT activists had been sent to Pakistan to bring about Shariah "by force". He had further claimed that the Hizbul had converted four Pakistani army officers during their training at Sandhurst in England.

However, despite being declared a banned organization in Pakistan after all these developments, the HT members can be seen at various key mosques on Fridays in Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi, distributing volatile literature propagating the revival of the Caliphate. Apart from organizing underground meetings and seminars, the HT has used text messages on cell phones and social networking sites to spread its message. An open letter dated June 3, 2011, addressed to the "sincere officers" of the Pakistani armed forces, and posted on the website of the Pakistan chapter of the Hizbul Tehrir (www.hizb-pakistan.com), called for removal of the "traitors" amongst the civilian and military leadership of the country for their

alliance with the United States. The letter stated: "The need of the time is the Khilafah (the Caliphate) to gather the Ummah (the Muslim community) as the single most resourceful state in the world. Whilst you look upon the humiliation of the Muslims, their misery and despair, the Ummah looks upon you as sincere officers of the most powerful armed forces across the globe that can make Pakistan the starting point for Khilafah."

The contention of the Pakistan chapter of the Hizbul Tehrir is that the current rulers of Pakistan, civilian as well as khaki, are agents of the United States, and their only agenda is to protect the American interests. The group further propagates that the American and the Pakistani governments are responsible for the killing of innocent men, women and children in drone attacks and military operations which are being conducted in the name of the war on terror.

According to media reports, the Pakistan branch of HT was established in December 2000 when a group of British youth of Pakistani descent, headed by Imtiaz Malik and guided by British-Pakistanis Dr Abdul Wajid in Lahore and Dr Abdul Basit Shaikh in Karachi among others decided to use Pakistan as the base camp for their movement to re-establish Islamic Caliphate. While Imtiaz Malik, a British-born Pakistani is considered to be the underground leader of the Hizbul Tehrir in Pakistan, his deputy, Naveed Butt, a graduate of University of Illinois in the United States, remains the most vocal leader of the group in Pakistan. Butt is assisted by two youngsters, Imran Yousafzai and Shahzad Sheikh.

According to an October 2010 study report compiled by Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) and titled "Hizbul Tehrir in Pakistan: Discourse and Impact", far from being deterred, the Hizbul Tehrir has continued its efforts to infiltrate into high echelons of the Pakistan Army and the elite of the Pakistani society. The report quoted Shahzad Sheikh, a Hizbul spokesman of Karachi, as saying that the group had been persuading the Pakistan Army to stage a bloodless coup in the country to overthrow the government in Islamabad. Interestingly, in a bid to effectively promote its agenda, the HT clandestinely enlisted some Pakistan Army officers, who were receiving training at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS), commonly known as Sandhurst, an elite British training academy. But these officers were arrested in 2003 after their links with the HT were discovered by the Musharraf regime.

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