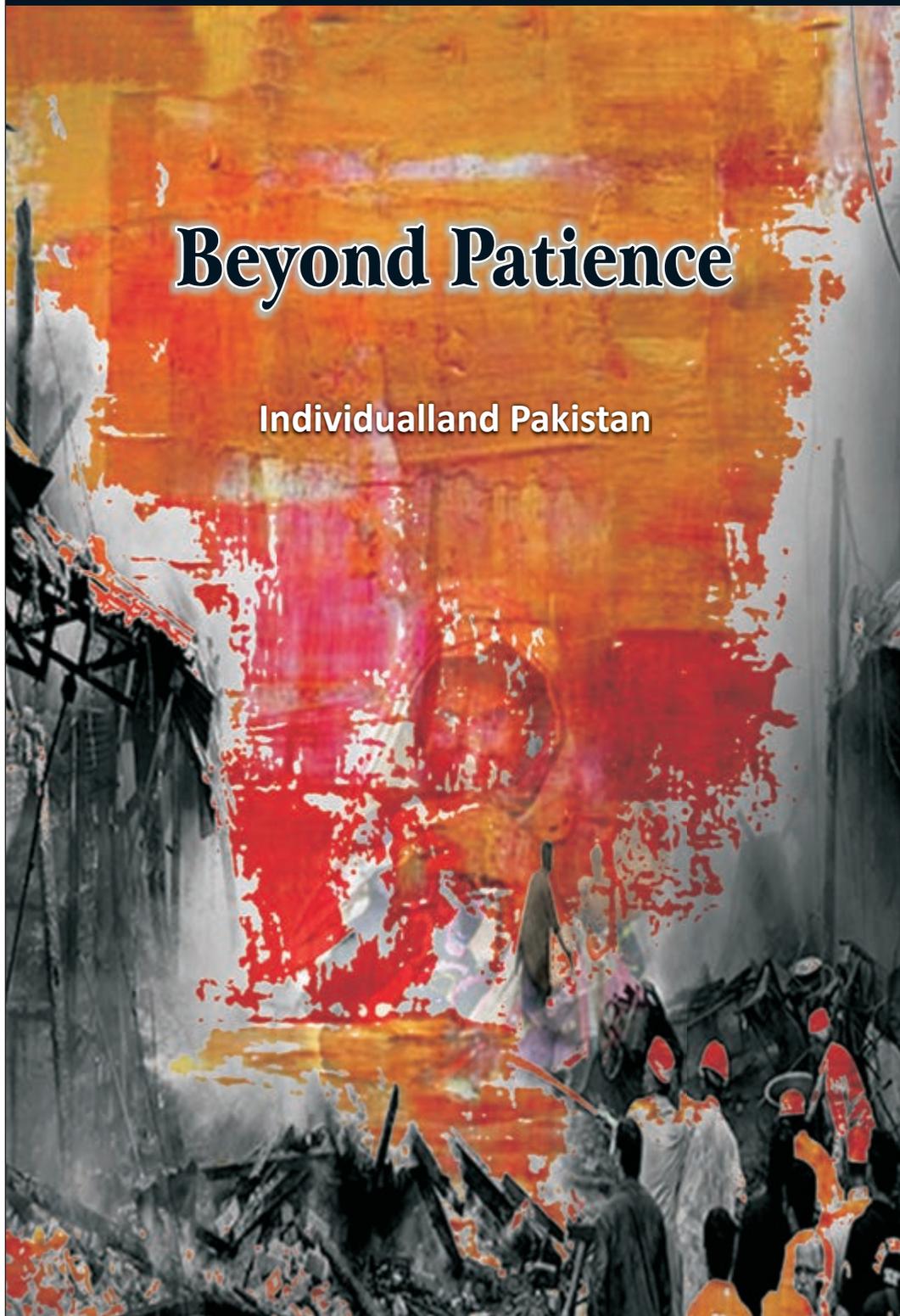


# Beyond Patience

Individualland Pakistan



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## A note on Violence

The rise in urban violence both political and sectarian has turned Pakistan into the most dangerous place in the world. It seems that we are living in a fear-bound society, where everyone is afraid of his/her fellow beings. The entire society is being governed by the fear and corruption. Fear inculcates a sense of insecurity in the minds of citizens. A southasian politician, who spent twenty years of her life in detention, says that fear corrupts absolutely. In the face of fear, one fights back. "I fight, therefore I exist," is an expression of an insecure person. Violence had tainted the history of mankind. It has many forms and each one has its own origin and impact on society. The use of brute force had been the main plank of statecraft and Catholic church in the erstwhile Europe and other parts of the world. The holy wars had been and are the extension of the sacred and mundane violence.

It is an old story that people fight for rights and identities. They want to be identified as free and independent human beings. They do strive for a homeland, faith, polity and culture. Their violent struggle varies from region to region. Being oppressed people, they had rendered sacrifices to get their homelands freed from the hold of occupant forces. The history of the Inquisition also reveals the record of lynching, crucifying and killing of rationalists on religious grounds during the Dark Ages. Despite having opposite world views, perpetrators and victims behave alike when they resort to violence.

Famous British philosopher, Bertrand Russell says, "Life is nothing, but a competition to be the criminal rather than the victim." Down the centuries, oppressed and oppressors, freedom fighters and aggressors, Cathari and sinners had



preferred to be the defenders of their respective national identities, countries, sects and ideologies. However, with the passage of time, violence has got itself divorced from the political ideology. Now, we live in the “apolitical time”. The killer does not know why he/she kills and the slain does not know why he/she gets killed. Here are some untold stories of hapless mothers, who either had lost their sons in a spate of bloody events or their sons had been the cause (perpetrator) of violent deaths.

It is a well established fact that families of extremists or would-be terrorists can play a key role in convincing them to leave terrorist organizations. This statement is substantiated by the case study of a would-be 9/11 bomber, namely Mushabib Al-Hamlan. After getting trained in a camp in Afghanistan, Al-Hamlan went back to Saudi Arabia. He had clear instructions from his handlers not to contact his family, but he contacted his family and after learning that his mother was ill, decided not to continue with his plan.

Mothers run family affairs and act as nuclei in their families. It is also true that mothers are able to detect early warning signs of radicalization in their children. However, it is still debatable whether mothers have been able to successfully counter violent extremism within their families. A number of efforts are being made on the international level to include families and particularly mothers in developing counter violent extremist narratives. The appearance of Aicha el-Wafi, mother of Zacarius Moussaoui, a convict in the 9/11 attacks, and Phyllis Rodriguez, mother of a victim of 9/11 attacks in a TED talk was a leading example where the mother of a convict and the mother of a victim became a powerful symbol of forgiveness and dialogue.

Although Pakistan is a predominantly patriarchal society, mothers still play a dominant role within their families,



especially when it comes to the growth and development of children. The country is plagued with violent extremism and terrorism and so far more than fifty thousand people have lost their lives. In Karachi, where violent extremism has a different dimension to it, lives are lost on daily basis. Hundreds of mothers have lost their children due to the ensuing gang wars and sometimes due to terrorist or sectarian attacks. Similarly, mothers of violent extremists have also lost their sons permanently due to their involvement with gangs and violent extremist or sectarian outfits. It would not be wrong to state that none of these mothers, either of victims or perpetrators is at peace due to the permanent void left in their lives.

Individual and Pakistan took the responsibility to locate and meet these mothers, in order to draw conclusions from their stories. Most of them were mothers who had lost their children to violence, but there were also mothers who had lost their sons due to their involvement with violent outfits. Both groups of mothers were asked different sets of questions and their responses were noted. Their answers provided conclusive evidence of the lives their children lived. Mothers of victims have had messages for those who were behind their loss and all of them reacted differently when asked about the kind of treatment they expect for the perpetrators. Similarly, mothers of perpetrators have had different responses to the questions asked. However, the one thing common between the responses of the two groups was that both of them were grieving the loss of their loved ones.

It is hoped that these mothers' testimonials will provide the reader with some insight into the lives of countless mothers who have suffered at the hands of violence plaguing the country, either being mothers of victims or mothers of perpetrators.

## Why Mothers?

A renowned American essayist, lecturer and poet, Ralph Waldo Emerson once said “Men are what their mothers made them.” He could not have said it more beautifully and in a more simplified way. A mother assumes a central role within a family. While a mother has various roles, her role in the growth and development of her children is considered as most important. A mother shapes the personality of her children, and has the ability to motivate her children in doing or not doing a particular task.

However this being said, the role of mothers throughout the world is constant, but the dynamics of different states and societies vary at the same time - a prime reason for diversity in thoughts and beliefs of the children. Mothers certainly shape the personalities of their children but society too has a very important role in shaping the beliefs of an individual.

Culture, politics and religious beliefs influence mindsets of individuals including mothers. For instance in Palestine, which is enlocked in a state of permanent war since the 1940s, several examples exist where mothers often encourage their sons for Jihad (armed struggle/militancy) and even for suicide bombings. A similar situation can also be witnessed in Pakistan as well. A good majority of Pakistanis are deeply religious people. Extremists often manipulate such people and misguide them in following their own interpretation of religion.

A cleric-turned-butcher, who has lost his life in a drone attack in the tribal area, was a master trainer. He would select young students from seminaries, and convince them for voluntary death. He was a symbol of religious altruism. He trained his



brother and father as suicide-bombers. After his death, both (his brother and father) had exploded themselves in separate suicide attacks. Pakistan is plagued with such kind of extremism.

Such examples exist in Pakistan, where young boys have joined the ranks of militants after being motivated by their mothers or other family members. In Swat, Pakistan, it is a documented fact that mothers not only donated their jewellery to fund the so called Jihad that the Taliban were waging, but also sent their sons to join their ranks. The main reason behind such a change in behavior was the fiery speeches delivered by Maulana Fazal Ullah, famously known as Mullah Radio. He purposely targeted women because they made up the majority of listeners, as men mostly left their homes for work. However, after the Taliban established their rule in the valley, their real nature was revealed. As a result, mothers who had supported the Taliban previously started realizing that they were wrong. In a study titled 'Documenting Renunciation', we came across one such young boy who was influenced by his mother to join the ranks of militants. However, after the army operation and the ouster of Taliban from the valley, this young man discontinued his relationship with his family, particularly his mother, whom he blamed for his predicament.

In this initiative we have tried to document the detailed personal experiences of:

- a) The mothers of individuals that have lost their lives to terrorism in the country;
- b) The mothers of the individuals who were involved in violent extremism, but were oblivious of the fact that their sons were involved in illegal activities; and
- c) Those mothers have also been interviewed who thought that



their children were religious and stayed out of home to attend religious congregations or to participate in religious activities, which was the reason why they were not ready to accept the fact that their children were involved with banned outfits.

This publication aims at presenting the testimonials of mothers on both sides of the fence, even those who are in the grey area.

With the necessary precautions taken, every effort has been made not to overlook any details which explain and underscore the experiences of these mothers. It is important to note that these are all individuals who live within our society and by analyzing their accounts we can perhaps prevent or curtail radicalization and violent extremism for the benefit of our future generations.



## **In Search of Mothers**

Keeping in view the statistics of human fatalities in Pakistan due to violent extremism, we can safely say that this is a nationwide problem. The situation in a number of cities like Karachi, Quetta and Peshawar is even worse. We had delegated our field researchers to compile information about mothers who have lost their sons to violent extremism either as victims or as perpetrators. However, this was not an easy task. Our field researchers identified such mothers, but it was quite difficult to get their or their families' approval for the interviews. In some cases, a male member of the family or a mentor would talk instead of the mother herself. Some of the families had the false impression that we wanted to help them either financially or in some other way, which turned out to be an ethical dilemma for the team. This publication summarizes seventeen accounts of mothers who we interviewed.



We held extensive discussions with the mothers, usually at their homes. Meetings were not possible at any alternate locations or public places, due to sensitivity of the information and the inability of women to gain access to those places. Some of the interviewees did not narrate their stories all at once. Sometimes more than one meeting had to be arranged with each of the interviewees, but only after the mother had satisfied herself of the field researcher's background and credentials.

Overall, the whole process was lengthy and consisted of three phases:

### **Hiring of Field Researchers**

Field researchers were identified and shortlisted for conducting interviews of the identified mothers. They were selected carefully on the basis of their experience in field work, ability to make the interviewee comfortable and to stay calm in an unpleasant situation. Our field researchers were instructed not to ask the typical 'what, when, who and how' type of questions, lest they serve to intimidate the interviewee. Maximum efforts were made to create an ambiance where the mother would feel comfortable in expressing her thoughts. Out of the seventeen, some even interviewed our research team, asking them probing questions. Some mothers in the beginning did not allow any note taking, be it via recorder or a pen. However eventually, they felt more comfortable and allowed us to video record the interviews.

### **Development of Questionnaires for Interviews**

Once the field researchers were hired and taken on board, two



separate interview schedules were developed (one for mothers of victims and the other for mothers of perpetrators). The interviews were conducted on the basis of these schedules and therefore, they were devised very carefully. It was ensured that no offensive question be asked due to the sensitivity of the situation.

## **Identification of Mothers**

As mentioned earlier, the identification of mothers ( both of perpetrators and victims) was not an easy task. Even when they were identified, the field research team faced difficulty in gaining their assent on giving the interviews. It was relatively easier to get the agreement of mothers of victims for interviews perhaps because they wanted to share their predicament with the whole world. However, mothers of perpetrators did not share their accounts all at once. Their identification was also difficult. It is generally thought that due to fear of reprisal, families of perpetrators of violence stay away from the limelight and do not want to be identified. Perhaps this was the reason why the field research team found it difficult to first identify such mothers and secondly get their agreement on giving interviews. Most of them were either in denial, hesitant to speak or were ignorant about their children that had adopted the path of terrorism. Therefore, a lot of effort was involved in comforting and reassuring them.

## Mothers Speak!

The mothers of perpetrators of violence that we interviewed have had their reasons for supporting their children. They were either unaware of the activities of their children, or were heavily manipulated in the name of religion, leading to a belief that their children were actually following the directives of religion by carrying out such activities. Interestingly, some of them firmly believed that despite the allegations on their children, they were innocent and had been targeted by the state. For instance, the mother of a perpetrator named Shaukat, who is serving time in jail, had inversely posed a query, "Has peace prevailed in Pakistan after Shaukat's arrest? Terrorism is still ongoing, why has not this stopped? Even though my innocent son is in jail...Unfortunately, no one gets justice over here...Only God and the government can curtail terrorism. No one else has the capacity to do so."

On the other hand, the mothers of the victims of terrorism also feel helpless and blame the state for their loss. LaalBibi, mother of a victim named Usman, believes that the reason for terrorism and violence is the lack of job opportunities and education for the youth. She is of the opinion that it is the duty of the government to provide equal opportunities for education and jobs to the citizens. However, the government seems least interested in solving these matters.

The seventeen interviews enabled us to identify many issues and factors which often lead to mothers motivating their sons to indulge in activities like these. On the other hand, the interviews with the mothers of victims revealed various issues, most of them questioning the functioning of the state and society. On the basis of these interviews, we have come up with three prime



findings.

## **Monastic Sources of Extremism:**

After 9/11, Pakistan was left with no option, but to carry out the war in Afghanistan. At that time, the then military ruler, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, had refused to take a decisive action against the seminaries. He opined that religious schools were the biggest NGO that provides food, shelter and impart education to the have-nots of society. He denied that students of Madrassas were involved in acts of terrorism. He didn't utter a single word about the centuries-old curriculum, influenced by the Greek translations, and teaching method in vogue at the religious schools. These seminaries have been the main source of undeclared conscription for the proxy war being fought in Afghanistan during Zia regime. Taliban or students of seminaries are like ATM cards, only those will cash them, who carry them. It may be any country which has stakes in conflict zone. Seminary students, who hail from the lowest strata of society, are trained for special purposes. They are treated as subhuman species and strategic assets, but they don't know their worth. Only their handlers know they are priceless and matchless in a proxy war.

Though most of the religious schools are related to the Deoband school of thought, but they lack the kind of simplicity, austerity and modesty, which was the only asset of the founding fathers of the Dar-ul-Aloom Deoband. They were opposed to all kinds of princely and official grants and fundings for the school. They had kept the independence of the school alive even in poverty and wretchedness. But, their self-proclaimed successors had been part of tyrants and dictators. They are power partners of feudal lords and dictators that is why they have been silent spectators



of rampant corruption, misuse of powers and exploitation of citizens.

They are adamant to keep the present status of Madrassas intact. These Madrassa are being funded by particular Muslim states which do not believe in democracy, human rights and dignity of the womenfolk. The anti-gender and anti-democratic narratives are the basic tenants of their religio-political edifice.

### **Secular Sources of Extremism:**

Karachi is unmanageable, because it is too big to control. It has become a base for ethnic, lingual and political violence. Urban violence is more dangerous than rural or tribal, because in urban centers, educated youth is involved. They are its perpetrators and victims at a time. The Mutahidda Qaumi Movement (MQM), controlled by Altaf Hussain, has a big following of all shades of educated people, which include university teachers, engineers, doctors, business people and socio-political activists. They are secular in their approach, but violent being a political organisation.

The police had also used new methods on youth to break them. They had castrated scores of boys, who were detained at police stations. In the police parlance, it is called “cheera lagaana”. Conversely, when criminal boys would apply sadistic techniques upon their prey, they drill deep into hands, arms, legs, feet and even head. They use all kinds of sadistic methods, because they themselves had undergone such ordeals. In 1984, criminals had thrown acid-filled tubelights on women in Ali Garh Colony, Karachi, which triggered the ethnic violence in the metropolis. The ethnic violence has divided the urban political landscape of the country. Extremists, political and religious, are the masters of



the city. They kill, kidnap, rape and extort money from harassed population.

## **Making of a Terrorist**

Abid Salam alias Luddan Bhai was a daily wage-earner, who lived in Liaquatabad. He would work in a small factory near Sohrab Goth. One day a gang of teenagers in a Suzuki car stormed the shop of a tailor in Liaquatabad No. 7. They sprayed the young tailor master with a volley of fires. After killing him they sped away. The local police reached the spot and rounded up some of the people, including Luddan Bhai. Later, police implicated him in the murder case.

After six months, Luddan Bhai was released on bail. His friends and local shopkeepers visited his house and congratulated him for getting the blessing of an ethnic party. Whenever he took his visitors to a nearby hotel for tea or meal, Shafi Bhai, owner of the hotel, didn't charge him. Similarly, Noor Bhai, owner of the paan shop, would provide him everything free of cost. They would boast, "We are proud of Luddan Bhai. He is a shield for us and our business". Whenever he passed through the market, shopkeepers gave him a standing ovation. The fear-laced respect, which he received from the local people, had changed his chemistry. Luddan contested the election for a provincial assembly seat. He shot dead his rival candidate belonging to a religious party. He had won the election.

One day, when he was herding local people towards a public meeting near party secretariat, a young boy, son of his rival candidate, pumped six bullets in his head. Luddan Bhai died on the spot. His fans and followers disappeared from the scene.



Only his mother, Malaka Bibi, was crying around his body. Next morning, he was laid to rest in the party's graveyard. Malika Bibi once witnessed the life-size colored image of her son impaled on a roadside iron fence. He was her only bread winner. She complained that political hatred had snatched her son.

Mazoor Ahmed was also the only son of a divorced mother. He was opposed to second marriage of his father. Despite his odium for his father, he was still living with him. His mother was living with her parents in a far flung village. His mother would always advice him to learn Islamic teachings and be a good Muslim. One day, he quietly left the house and joined a Jihadi outfit in Muzaffarabad.

How he spent his days in a training, nobody knew. One day his cousin Rashid, who was working in Islamabad, was informed by the Jihadi brothers that Mazoor had embraced "martyrdom" in a village in the Indian-held Kashmir. After three days, head of a religious party arrived at his residence and congratulated his father over the "martyrdom" of his son. It was a puzzling scene for the local residents. The mother of deceased (Manzoor) didn't come to attend his last rites. She could not say goodbye to her son. She was a victim of multiple agonies.

## *Bad Company*

*Halima Bibi believes that her son Mobarak Solangi, aged thirty, fell victim to the company of unfavorable extremist individuals who used to visit him. He had been missing since three months at the time of this interview. According to information from other sources, he had been arrested in Peshawar by law enforcement agencies, laced with arms and ammunition. He is now serving jail time, while the family remains oblivious of this fact and has no contact with him. Halima knew that Solangi was in the company of extremist mullahs frequently. Neighbors constantly used to warn her that Solangi was seen with suspicious people, but she was unable to do anything. She confronted him on this issue but he would wave her away and would assure her that he was on the right path. According to Sarwat, "Some listen to their mothers while others listen to their friends. Initially my son was obedient, but after the influence of his circle of friends increased, he stopped listening to me. He was stringent and regular in religious practices, and he also participated in religious preaching out of the city and out of the country. After moving to Quetta, he severed all communications with his family. After Solangi's disappearance, his family tried to look for him everywhere, including jails and police stations but could not find him. No security agency ever contacted the family to investigate or share information. Halima somehow does not live in illusions; rather she does have an idea of the path her son has chosen. She appeals to such extremist outfits to stop ruining the lives of innocent people and transform themselves according to the religion they claim to uphold.*

## **Influence of Religious Extremists**

As mentioned earlier, religion is something that influences the lives of most of the people living in Pakistan. Moreover, with the lack of educational institutions in the country, especially in the rural areas, most of the parents are forced to send their children to Madrassas- institutes where religious education is imparted to children. The fact that Madrassas impart religious knowledge might be useful, but lack of monitoring of the kind of education imparted is leading to various difficulties. The teacher may teach his students his own interpretation of Islam in some cases. His own interpretation might be violent as well, and that is the reason why Madrassas have been under scrutiny for a while now. While this is not the case with all Madrassas, it has been argued that since the inception of the Cold War between the former USSR and US and recently the 9/11 development of 2001, some Madrassas have turned their focus completely to the concept of “Jihad”, and this maybe one of the prime reasons for the increasing insurgency in the country. For instance, a leading factor through most of the accounts is the belief of some of the mothers that their sons had been fighting for the primacy of religion and country. Afghanistan is mentioned as especially critical because, as reiterated by militants to us, “All the non-Muslims have gathered on one platform in the form of NATO and are fighting against Islam and Muslims.” Over the years, perhaps initiating in the 80s, Pakistani society has become more prone to militarisation in terms of life style, thinking and mindset. Not only a few Madrassas, but using the name of religion, many extremist individuals are manipulating the mindsets of vulnerable communities.

30 year old Mubarak Solangi also became a victim of such manipulation according to his mother. Solangi often used to visit

mullahs in his area and with time, the frequency of the visits increased. Mubarak's mother had already identified that the mullahs that her son was roaming around with were “false mullahs” who had nothing to do with the teachings of Islam. She could feel the negative impact of mullahs on her son, and tried to stop him. However, Solangi did not listen to her and eventually ended in the prison. On the suspicion of terrorist activities, he was taken by security agencies and is still serving jail time. His mother, unlike other mothers, is not in denial over her son's actions, but believes that the people who manipulated him into committing terrorist activities should be punished.

### ***Forced Disappearance***

*Izzat Khatoon resides at a religious seminary with her five sons. One of her sons, Attaullah, has been missing since nine months at the time of the interview. Attaullah was married and his son was born five days after his disappearance. According to his mother, Attaullah mostly used to remain in the seminary and only go out for religious preaching for up to 40 days at a time. He also used to lead prayers in the seminary. It was in the afternoon, when men in plain clothes emerged from three police vehicles without number plates and took away Attaullah. A student informed Izzat of the incident, while people in the neighborhood were also concerned. The men had approached the student and inquired about Attaullah. They told him to tell Attaullah that his friends were here to see him. After meeting them, Attaullah got in their car and they drove away. His mother believes her son is innocent and regarding the recent spate of violence states, “Nobody knows who is behind the incidents. It could be Muslims or could be Shias.” As they do not have any money, they are unable to afford a lawyer. The person in charge of the seminary gives about PKR. 8,000 to the family. According to Izzat, no organization has come forward to assist them. So far, the family has been unable to locate Attaullah, while they've contracted the police and courts. The police initially refused to lodge a First Information Report (FIR), but after orders from the High Court and Supreme Court the FIR of a missing person case was lodged. However, till date no progress in the case has been made.*

## Religious Profiling

On the other hand, some mothers were also of the view that because their sons had a close affiliation to religion, they were picked up by the agencies on the basis of that alone and that their sons had no involvement in any heinous or terrorist crimes. Their closeness to religion was the basis of suspicion on which they were taken away or imprisoned. This is a very important finding.

Every religion in the world demands its followers to be close to it throughout their lives. In a country like Pakistan, an individual that is close to his/her religion maybe considered pious but because of the misunderstood link that has been created between terrorism and Islam, in last few decades, such individuals unfortunately sometimes can be seen with suspicion.

Attaullah, son of Izzat Khatoon, is also such a “victim” according to his mother. According to Izzat, her son Attaullah's closeness to religion and his religious activities became the reason for his arrest by the security agencies. One day while Attaullah was in the seminary, he was picked up by the police on the suspicion of involvement in terrorist activities in the area. When the news reached Izzat, she, along with her neighbors, rushed to the nearest police station. However, she could not locate him. She has visited various police stations since then and even lodged an FIR about her son's disappearance but still has not managed to spot his whereabouts.

Another such mother is Fatima. Ten years ago, her sixteen year old son Rahimullah was picked up the security agencies on the suspicion of being a terrorist. Rahimullah's only fault according to his mother was “closeness to religion”. One day when



Rahimullah was offering prayers at a mosque, he was picked up by police and since that day he is serving imprisonment. According to Fatima, when the police raided her home to search for any weapons or any proof that could link Rahimullah to being a terrorist, they failed to find any. Despite that, they did not release Rahimullah. Fatima has been fighting unsuccessfully for a decade now to get her son released. Not only did religious stereotyping become the reason for Rahimullah's arrest, but the lack of competency of the state and the law enforcing agencies also played a part in taking Rahimullah away from his mother.

Maryam Bibi is also one such mother who thinks her son became a victim of what according to her is religious profiling. Her son Jehangir is currently languishing in jail on the suspicion of involvement in terrorist activities. Jehangir was picked by police during a religious congregation, or "Ijtema". Our research reveals that Jehangir was an activist for a religious group involved in anti-government protests. According to his mother, however, he was only involved in religious activities.

Sadiqa Begum insists that Shaukat has no affiliation with any group. She maintains that if there had been anything she would have known it. The police tell her that "Amma, you do not know anything...", but she refuses to believe them.

### ***Guilty or Not***

*Fatima, a resident of Karachi, has been roaming the courts for the last ten years for securing the release of her son Rahimullah. He was sixteen years old when he was arrested by the police and charged under 17 cases of terrorism, which included incidents even before his birth. He was a student of eighth grade, used to work at a shop and also went to a nearby seminary for religious study. Rahimullah was taken into custody from the*

mosque by the police while the family was unaware of the event. After two days of his disappearance the family wrote an application to the authorities citing his disappearance. In response, they were asked to contact the nearby police station. The police also came to their house and asked about Rahimullah. According to Fatima, they had arrested him under the misconception that he was much older. When the police came to their house, they thought that the 17 year old son of her eldest son was Rahimullah's son. She also claims that while the police were inspecting and searching the house, they were saying, "These people do not have anything."

Fatima also went to the police station to meet her son, where according to her, the police claimed not to have tortured him. She also got into an argument with the police and upon inquiry, her son, Rahimullah hesitantly agreed with the claim of the police. Fatima sold her daughter-in-law's jewellery and hired a lawyer, who was later killed. Due to lack of finances, Rahimullah is represented by government lawyers, who have no interest in the case. Although he has been declared innocent in certain cases, others still remain, and are preventing him from being released. She also claims that the police visited her house twice and demanded an amount of PKR. 100,000 in exchange for letting her son go free. She could not pay them such a huge amount, so she refused. Fatima believes that the justice system is flawed and mostly, innocents are behind bars while the perpetrators are roaming free. While she is of the opinion that terrorism is plaguing Pakistan, she also perceives that non-Muslims are the real enemy and should be targeted.

## Citizens' Distrust of the Government (Victims)

Lawlessness, corruption, unaccountability, lack of infrastructure and unavailability of services by public departments, mostly as a result of dictatorial regimes and incompetent political setups throughout the six decades of Pakistan's existence have all been debated. As a result, the general perception of the citizens about the functioning of the state has also become highly negative. The populace has lost its belief in the laws and the law makers of the country. The law is often accused of not providing justice to the citizens.

The mothers of both perpetrators and victims of terrorism were firm in the belief that the legal system in the country is lacking in the imposition of the 'rule of law and access to justice'. The mothers of victims maintained that the law has failed to provide any security to their loved ones, who lost their lives as result of terrorism. Moreover, the state also failed to pay any compensation on many occasions to the families of victims of terrorism. The criminal justice system is also unable to apprehend and convict the perpetrators.

Naseem, an unfortunate mother who lost her eleven year old son in a bomb blast earlier in 2013 is one such victim. Although the government did pay her an amount of 1.5 million as compensation, Naseem still feels betrayed by the government. She believes that the government has not done enough to stop the acts of terrorism that claim the lives of innocent people in the country on an almost daily basis. Moreover, she also believes that the government and law enforcing agencies both have failed terribly to catch and penalise such perpetrators.

Laal Bibi is another such mother who became the victim of



incompetence of the state in dealing with the issue of terrorism. Her son, Usman, lost his life in a bomb blast in Lyari when he was out shopping for grocery in a nearby market. The police sent the family to the mortuary to identify the body. LaalBibi believes the reason for terrorism and violence to be the lack of job opportunities and education for the youth. She is of the opinion that the government is responsible for providing these, but is not interested in solving these matters.

Raees Fatima, mother of another young victim of terrorism also reiterated the tragic event that took her son away from her. According to her, not only has the state failed to stop terrorist activities in the country but it does not even provide the families of victims with relief. As she reiterated, “when the incident occurred, no state institution came forward, instead the people carried out rescue efforts on their own”.

She believes that those who carry out the attacks should be rehabilitated and guided instead of being punished as punishment is only the short term solution to this menace. Psychologically she is still in shock, and the slightest noise scares her. With a sigh she says, “Only a mother can understand my pain; the pain of losing a young son whom she has loved so much.” She considers the perpetrators of such violence as Satan's disciples and inhuman, but she still prays for them to be set on the right path. “They are not aware of the punishment they will get on the Day of Judgment. What has happened to us has occurred with thousands of families. There is no peace in this country.” She advises them to renounce violence and pray for forgiveness from God. She wants to persuade them through her kind advice, as she considers that will have more impact.

## ***“Indifference”***

*Eleven year old Baqir's mother Syeda Naseem Zehra recalls the tragic incident of March 03, 2013 at Abbas Town, which took her son along with 47 others. Baqir wanted to become successful, so he could not only provide for the family, but also be able to give his mother a comfortable life. He, being the youngest in the family was also the most loved. Naseem was at a funeral when she got the news that a blast had occurred in the vicinity of her home. She rushed back only to find Baqir's concerned grandmother and sister, but her son was nowhere. They frantically tried to locate Baqir through every means possible but to no avail. An hour and a half passed before they were informed that her son died in the blast and his body was at the mortuary of the nearby hospital. The impact of his loss was such that his grandmother suffered psychologically. She is unable to comprehend that he is no more and keeps on uttering Baqir's name. His school also conducted a mass prayer after his death. The government provided the aggrieved family with PKR. 1.5 million. Naseem felt betrayed by the government and the state, as she perceived their efforts to be too little, too late. She felt that the government had not done enough to stop such incidents and were least bothered regarding this loss of innocent lives. She stated that “They should hang them in public to ensure no one dares to repeat the acts in future.” Naseem wants the families of victims to remain patient and wants the perpetrators to realize that the people they target also are humans and have families.*

## ***Motherly Advice***

*Raes Fatima was not even shown the body of her son Hasan Ali, when it was taken out of the rubble three days after a bomb blast. Her other son received serious injuries in the incident. He was 18 years old and worked at a cosmetic shop in Abbas Town. Not a single day passes when his mother does not cry for him or waits for his return, even though she knows that he is no more with them. She remembers him as a hardworking and obedient child, who had never uttered a word of disrespect. It was 6:30 pm on March 03, 2013 as a blast shook the entire locality of Abbas Town. Fatima's husband rushed to her and informed her that a blast had taken place outside. Both of them headed out of the house and found blood*

*splattered across the street. The electricity was out due to the blast and one could only see dead bodies lying around in the dark. They started searching for Hasan but were unable to find him anywhere. Friends and neighbors tried to comfort her, but in her heart she knew that Jahangir had not survived.*

*It was three days later when the family got the confirmation, through the discovery of the body. Psychologically, she is still in shock and the slightest of noise scares her. With a sigh she says, "Only a mother can understand my pain; the pain of losing a young son who she has loved so much."*

## **Role of State and Perpetrators**

The mother of an accused perpetrator questions the rule of law within the country. In many instances, people are picked up and even sent to jail on the basis of suspicion or according to the mothers, false information only. Lengthy court procedures only increase the agony of the families. Despite the availability of a legal procedure, the police and other law enforcing agencies at times deviate from the constitutional laws. On the basis of information provided to them, the agencies at times not only invade people's privacy without an official warrant, but also raid their homes, harassing the people living there. In the detailed section of the accounts of these mothers, you will find various stories in which the security and law making agencies picked up individuals without citing any reason and without the knowledge of their families. It should be noted here that although the raids or imprisonments were not done in a way they should have been done, the law enforcing agencies did not just randomly act. They had evidence and information. However, the arrests made were not in accordance with the law, which forms the basis of reservations from the mothers of perpetrators



interviewed.

Sakina Anjum, mother of two such victims, shared her story during the interview. Her two sons Amjad and Azam were picked by the authorities on the suspicion of involvement in attacks on the rangers' headquarters in Karachi. When cases were registered against both, Sakina sent her sons into hiding to Punjab. However, the police tracked both of them. Sakina believes that the police, on mere suspicion and without any clear investigation, imprisoned both her sons. The question that begs to be asked of course, is why did she send her sons into hiding if they were innocent?

According to her, the law enforcing agencies register false cases against people and torture them in custody. Sakina feels fortunate that her sons were eventually released. However, she questions the authority of the state in controlling such cases of false FIRs and registrations by the police.

Cases like these are alarming because they raise serious questions about the functioning of the law enforcing agencies. If these state controlled agencies themselves carry out such arrests without doing investigation, then no citizen in the country can feel safe.

Hamida Bibi is one such unfortunate mother. Her son Tariq was picked up by the police on suspicion of involvement in terrorist activities. The news came as a shock to her. She took the route of courts and police stations in order to provide her son justice, but it was of no use. Shahnawaz was accused of robbery but the police failed to present any proof of his involvement in the crime. As per her knowledge, no law enforcement agency ever contacted them for any investigation regarding the case. They were barely able to arrange some money to hire a lawyer, while



no one approached them to assist in their predicament.

While the law enforcing agencies are targeted and criticized by mothers whose sons were taken away by the police on the basis of false information or mere suspicion and without following legal procedures, there are also extreme cases where the law enforcing agencies not only failed to take proper legal measures but in fact inflicted pain upon the family of an accused terrorist.

Zarina not only lost her son permanently but was also devoid of money and valuable stuff after the police looted her home during a raid. Ali, Zarina's son, left after meeting his mother and the very next day, Zarina found about the death of her son through the media. The police accused Razzaq of notorious activities and on the suspicion of that, took him into custody, and tortured him to death. Not only this, but during the raid, according to Zarina, they also stole valuable stuff from her son's home.

After a robbery, people usually ask the police for help. But what could Zarina do, as in her case, the guilty party was the police itself? Not only did they take her son away, they hurt her and the family financially as well.

In this section we have discussed the grievances of both the mothers of victims and perpetrators against the incompetency of the state and the law enforcing agencies. There is no denying that the state is taking measures to counter the ongoing issue of terrorism and violence in the country. However, the fact that it is failing to provide any justice to victims or without any concrete proof and sentencing people to prison is alarming and needs to be checked.

## **Lost Sons**

*Sakina has actively participated in protests held for the release of people missing while under the custody of authorities. The reason is because her own two sons Amjad and Azam, in their mid-thirties, were picked up by authorities and remained in custody for nine months. One of the brothers was also wanted in relation to the attack on the rangers' headquarters in Karachi. Both the brothers were arrested from Punjab as they were residing and working there, while the rest of the family is in Karachi. According to their mother, the police had registered cases of murder and robbery against them. Sakina sent her sons out of the city with the perception of securing their future, as the situation in Karachi was volatile and tense. Both brothers had barely completed their eighth and tenth grade education. A third brother is associated with a media house, while Azam initiated a mobile shop. Sakina claims that they had no links with any organization, and that no one came forward to assist them in troubling times. The police never carried out any investigation regarding Azam and Amjad from their family.*

*Sakina believes that members of the police apprehend and register false cases against innocents to receive promotions, while terrorism is carried out by political parties with the assistance of security agencies. After their arrests, it took the family eight months to locate them. The family approached the courts and police, while resorting to legal proceedings. Azam and Amjad were acquitted by the courts and released after the charges were not proven. After their return, the brothers felt hesitant to step out of their home, but later on the situation returned to normal.*

### **“He is my son...I know him”**

*Twenty year old Shahnawaz is the eldest of the five siblings and was a major bread earner of the family. His mother Hameeda Bibi has gone through the pain of seeing her son behind bars, day after day, for more than three years. He studied till the tenth grade and worked with a contractor as a welder. The last pleasant memory of Shahnawaz she has is of him being dressed in smart trousers and shirt, on his way to buy grocery*

from the market. He was arrested there, while the family remained unaware of his whereabouts for an entire day. They came to know of his fate after reports emerged in the media. According to Hameeda Bibi, he has been charged with robbery, a police encounter and various other allegations.

Hameeda Bibi insists that she knows Shahnawaz as he is her son. He is not involved in any of the allegations over him; rather, he is an honest person who also used to offer prayers regularly. She alleges that the police have put false allegations, and Shahnawaz also told her that he was not guilty. The absence of Shahnawaz has not only put the family under psychological strain, but they are also facing financial constraints. Hameeda's husband is unable to work due to health conditions and the younger son is facing difficulties in acquiring a suitable earning. Nabeela appeals for the release of her son.

### **Victim of Incompetence**

The story Zarina's son Ali has is perhaps unique in the sense that he became a target of the incompetency of the security apparatus in the backdrop of terrorism. Razzaq was a government employee, married and had two daughters and one son. He was the sole breadwinner of the family. On that fateful evening, he came to meet his mother and then left for his home. It is not clear whether the police called him to the station or broke into his home, but the next morning it was in the newspapers. Zarina raised a hue and cry but that was the only thing she could do now. According to Zarina, it was a case of mistaken identity, as the police perceived her son to be a notorious gangster of the same name and took action without proper investigation on false information.

Friends and relatives retrieved Ali's dead body from the mortuary. Zarina also alleges that the police broke into Razzaq's house and took away not only expensive appliances but also food items. Applications have been filed by the family, but to no avail. Zarina, in a state of helplessness, conveys that "We cannot do anything; God will seek revenge for us, as we have left everything up to Him."

## Helplessness

While the mothers of the perpetrators blame the security agencies for raiding their homes and taking their sons to prison without even a warrant or an apparent reason, on the other hand, the mothers of the victims of terrorism have little faith in the judicial system of Pakistan and in fact, the state itself. According to them, the state has failed to assist them in any way, be it financial assistance as compensation or ensuring the security of their and their loved ones' lives.

These families have taken the support of religion and have left everything to God, as they consider themselves helpless. A major percentage of the mothers of victims of violence reiterated their heartbreaking stories and the never ending trauma, which according to them would stay there until the end of their lives. Zahida's story also is an example of such helplessness.

The families, especially the mothers, have learned this helplessness with time. When the mothers of victims were asked whether they would seek revenge from the perpetrators for their loss, most of them replied with a big "no". The main reason for this answer again was the lack of trust on the government and the learned helplessness. However, one very critical point was also observed; most mothers of the victims of terrorism have strengthened their bond with religion. It is not clear whether it was present before or not, but now it is very much there. They believe that God will eventually take their revenge from those that made them loose their loved ones. One of the mothers of the victims interviewed wished to meet the killers of her son once and ask them the reason for targeting them. She wished that no one else should go through the pain that she



went through, but unfortunately, distrust has deep-rooted itself in her so stoutly that she has little faith left in her prayers.

Razia is one such unfortunate mother. She lost her fifteen year old son Shabbir in the violence that engulfed Karachi city. Shabbir had left his studies and was employed at a shop, as his family could not afford his education. That day the city was facing an increase in the state of violence. The entire city was echoing with gunfire. As Shabbir failed to arrive at the given time, concern grew within Razia. She and her family searched for him everywhere but could not find him anywhere. Eventually, two days later, Razia was handed over her son's dead body by the police. The tragedy has devastated Razia. She does not expect any justice from the state or any individual.

Another mother Uzma, whose life turned upside down after a bomb blast took away her 2 year old son and injured her elder son and husband, is living in immense agony. In the time of distress, no one came forward to help her and therefore she doesn't expect anything from anyone else now. She has left it all to her God. She highly mistrusts the legal system and state institutions and considers them to have failed in protecting the people. Uzma has a strong belief that God will punish the perpetrators for their wrongdoings. According to her, these people commit such crimes for greed of money and do not care for the suffering of others. She appeals to them to stop such ruthless killings and realize that they are wrong. Uzma believes that they might someday have to face a similar tragedy themselves, and experience what they had done to others.

The two stories mentioned here depict the state of helplessness felt by the mothers of the victims of terrorism. It should be noted here that their helplessness is a result of



disbelief in the system as well as a result of psychological helplessness. Helplessness is something that happens when people start feeling that they have no control over any given situation; then, they may also begin to behave in a helpless manner. This functioning can lead people to neglect opportunities for relief or change.

While it may be difficult to treat the psychological aspect of helplessness in this regard, the state can address it by coming up with solutions to ensure the provision of justice and measures to control the issue of terrorism.

### *Senseless Killing*

*Now the concern grew into distress and fear. They decided to approach the police and registered the First Information Reports (FIRs) in two police stations. Despite the hope within them that Shabbir will be fine, they also visited hospitals and mortuaries, but there was no progress in finding his whereabouts. Two days after Shabbir went missing, his family was informed about the finding of his dead body. He was shot multiple times in the head and rest of the body. In this time of need, the family was left to themselves and no one approached to assist them. Razia now has to work at people's homes to earn a living for her family, as her husband is not able to contribute due to his ill health. The family is unable to approach the courts as they cannot afford the legal fees. She has left everything to God, as she believes that He will punish the culprits. Razia is of the opinion that the government is not interested in solving their problems. She pleads that "We want peace and harmony. We do not want our children to go out and then receive their dead bodies."*

### ***“I lost everything...”***

*Jahanzeb was a 15 year old boy, who had a deep interest in computers and the internet. He wanted to move to Malaysia, along with his family after completing his intermediate studies in information technology. A resident of Abbas Town, Karachi, he was a victim of the blast on March 03, 2013. He got an LCD as an early birthday gift from his father, a few days before his demise. He did not live to see his sixteenth birthday a couple of months away. His mother Narjis went through the agony of not only losing her son, but also her husband and the primary breadwinner of the house. Jahanzeb and his three siblings had gone to their uncle's shop in the afternoon to assist their father. His father used to do a job in the morning and tended to the shops in the evening. That fateful day, instead of Narjis's two brother-in-laws, her husband and son were present at the shops. A few minutes later a massive blast ripped through the area, in the vicinity of the plaza where the shop was situated.*

*Narjis, being in a state of shock, ran outside and found three of her children running towards her. Her two daughters suffered bruises and wounds resulting from the blast; she immediately started towards the hospital. The whole area was a scene of chaos and carnage. On her way she saw that the plaza was engulfed in flames. Narjis ended up dropping her children at her sister's place, as her thoughts were overwhelmed with the concern for her husband and Aitedal. Throughout this time she had been praying for the safety of her husband and son.*

*Narjis's prayers were not answered as her husband and son had died in the blast, along with eight of their employees. The rescue teams were only able to acquire her husband's body from the rubble created in the aftermath of the blast. Jahanzeb's body parts were found and he was identified from his feet. While arduously narrating this tragic incident, Narjis rightly stated that “I lost everything that day.”*

*Although friends, relatives and government assisted the family in this hour of need, yet this incident devastated them socially, psychologically and financially. Her daughter received treatment for three days at the hospital for her injuries. Her two brothers-in-law are struggling to make ends meet due to the sudden financial pressures. Her thoughts still revolve around*

her husband and especially her son. Every day, she see Jahanzeb's stuff lying around at home and feels his absence even more. Regarding the people involved in terrorist activities she stated, "I do not believe that people involved in such heinous crimes have any relation to humanity. If they had, they would never carry out such activities. One thing is for sure: that they are from our society. Not a single religion in the world endorses violence and bloodshed. These people are ignorant, if they knew about the importance given to human life in Islam, they would never do it. It is the duty of religious scholars and thinkers to guide them and convey that they are on the wrong path."

Narjis realizes that she is not the only one who has lost her loved ones. She observes such events occurring on a daily basis, while she also finds a lack of will within the society to prevent and address such issues. She wants these terrorists to be dragged to the courts and accorded punishment on the spot, so as to deter any one thinking of carrying out such a crime. For the survivors and families of the victims Narjis suggested, "...to remain patient, while not losing hope and faith in God...not deviating from the right path..." religion does not preach violence."

### **Bearing the Pain**

Uzma Ramzan's son Muhammad Rehan had not even comprehended the world around him, when he died in a bomb blast at the age of two. Her husband and elder son received serious injuries, while the husband is still in shock, disbelief and grief. Her husband is now unable to earn for his family. Uzma still has to witness the agony of her son, who suffers from the injuries and consequently also reminds her of her deceased son. That fateful day, the father planned to take the children out and Uzma gave Rehan a bath and made him wear new clothes. "I did not know this would be his last bath." While Uzma stayed at home, the two children along with their father went to a juice shop. The bomb was placed within a rickshaw parked beside the shop and it exploded as the family was enjoying their drinks. Within a few hours the news had reached and the entire family reached the hospital.

*She not only had to bear with the pain of the injuries sustained by her husband and elder son, but also the loss of her two year old innocent child. The government or any other organization did not come to their aid; rather, friends and relatives assisted them in this hour of need. Uzma feels helpless and states that citizens cannot take action against these elements; they can only remain patient.*

## Denial

During our research and interaction with the mothers of perpetrators of violence, it dawned upon us that almost every mother was in complete denial of her child's involvement in any proscribed activities. This can be due to the fact that either they are honestly not aware of the activities carried out by their offspring or are not ready to admit to anyone that their son is guilty. It is possible, as most of the perpetrators are facing trials, that they also fear that any such statement may have adverse repercussions on the trial. Keeping all these factors in mind, mothers claimed that their children were innocent, and cited various references. This adheres to the concept given in the Attachment Theory, which emphasizes the bond between the mother and child, stating that the mother provides safety and security to the child.

Sadiqa Begum considers her son to be innocent; he has been arrested under the charges of terrorism. She states, "I never received any complaints regarding my children...He was a very helpful boy." Although she herself stated that her son Shaukat had been arrested twice during violent protests, Sadiqa still denies his alleged involvement in any violent activity. The same can be seen in the case of Muhammad Atif, who had been arrested on allegations of participation in robberies and police encounters. His mother Shahida also terms him a decent person claiming that "He is my son, I know him". She believes that he is a victim of false allegations, fabricated by the law enforcement agencies. In both the situations put forward the allegations have yet to be proven, but the element of denial is especially apparent in Sadiqa's case as she knows that her son was previously involved in violent activities.

It is obvious from most of the interviews with mothers of perpetrators that



they tend to incline towards the statements conveyed by their sons and also believe them at face value. It has been observed that the mothers are unable to dig deeper into the reasons and circumstances leading to the entanglement of their children with law enforcement agencies. Their faith in the innocence of their sons is further fortified by the conduct of security agencies, where they raid homes and arrest perpetrators without warrants and charges or following any proper procedure. Then there is the lack of evidence, no proper investigation, lengthy court procedures and demands of bribes by personnel belonging to law enforcement agencies. These factors also provoked Sadiqa Begum into asking the question whether peace has prevailed within the country after her son's arrest.

Weiner's Attribution-Affect Model also points out towards this aspect, where attribution towards someone's actions by another person is related to his/her emotional response or connection with the individual. As parents, especially mothers, have a lot of affection for their children, they might deny any wrongdoing carried out by their offspring. This not only stays limited to denial but also leads to distortion of reality as part of a defence measure to protect their child. There has been a shifting of blame to someone or something else in most of the interviews given by mothers of perpetrators. This also reflects in the statement of UmmeTameem, mother of alleged perpetrator Hafiz Qasim Rasheed, "I do not think our children are involved in such activities, but those who are, will meet their logical end." In Qasim's case, he was arrested earlier in 2002 on charges of terrorism, although the charges were never proven.

### ***Ijtema***

*Sadiqa Begum is convinced that her son Shaukat is innocent, while he is under trial on charges of terrorism and murder. It has been nine years since he was arrested and has also been acquitted in one of the cases. She remembers when Shaukat used to take care of her when she was ill and is still driven to tears. According to her, "Sometimes he used to go to an Ijtema (religious rally), but everyone attends those gatherings, so there is nothing wrong about it." Before this, Shaukat had been arrested twice for blocking a road during a protest and hooliganism. Both the times the family somehow got him out of trouble. He studied till the eighth grade and got his religious education from a nearby mosque. Shaukat then started working at a Public Call Office (PCO) and later also transported*

*poultry. On the day he was arrested, he had gone to refuel his vehicle. The family did not know his whereabouts for three days, until the news came in the media. The news drove the family into shock and they started searching for him.*

*Sadiqa claims that after his arrest, he was initially taken to an undisclosed location.*

*Sadiqa states that the police came to their house at 3 am in the morning to search the house; they were unable to find anything. The family approached three different lawyers, but now they are unable to hire a lawyer as the burden of expenses has increased. Old age and strain of the events have taken a toll on Sadiqa Begum, as she is unable to walk and consequently cannot go to meet her son. No person or organization has come forward to assist them. Sadiqa maintains that Shaukat could not have committed such heinous crimes in which he is alleged to be involved in, as he is not affiliated with any group. She insists that Shaukat was an obedient, religious and a truthful son. If there had been anything, she would have known it. The police tell her that “Amma, you do not know anything...”, but she refuses to believe them. According to Sadiqa, “Has peace prevailed in Pakistan after Sahukat's arrest? Terrorism is still ongoing... why has not this stopped? My innocent son is in jail...Unfortunately, no one gets justice over here...Only God and the government can curtail terrorism, no one else has the capacity to do so.”*

## **Illusions of Ignorance**

Carrying on with the discussion in the previous section regarding interviews with mothers of perpetrators, our researchers and analysts witnessed ignorance on behalf of mothers regarding the activities of their child. They have misconceptions about the activities of their children, which are mostly based on the image built by their offspring. Ghulam Fatima claims that her son Taufeeq was close to her: “My son was working for a lawyer at City Court...I often used to ask him if everything was fine. He



used to tell me to ask the lawyer... I also went to see the lawyer numerous times...I was satisfied." Apparently, the lawyer for whom Tafteeq worked represented a violent sectarian group and was targeted and killed while on his way home during January 2012.Tafteeq was arrested by law enforcement agencies later on, while he was also arrested earlier in December 2006 for participation in sectarian violence. Despite all this, Fatima maintains that Tafteeq is "...a boy with very good habits."

Fatima also believes that because she is a good mother, her child can never be involved in anything bad. This connects to the positive illusions of parenting, where the parents rate themselves and their children highly. They consider themselves to be good parents, while consequently also perceiving their child to be better than other children. This illusion is also maintained through referring to the alleged perpetrator's attachment with religion and religious practices, which is discussed in detail in an earlier section. The only exception in this regard has been Halima Bibi, who admits that her son was involved in religion based violent extremist activities. She was aware of the company he kept and had also confronted him on this, but he paid no heed to her. She refers to his wrong choice in friendship that played a role in his adoption of a violent path.

Despite the fact that the track record of some perpetrators evidently shows their involvement in violent or anti-social activities, mothers consider their sons to be innocent and victims of false allegations, levelled against them by law enforcement agencies. This is evident in the cases of Shaukat, Tafteeq and Qasim, who had been arrested previously on charges of terrorism. Tafteeq spent two to three years in jail after his arrest in December 2006, while the organisation with which he was affiliated is also currently providing him with legal support. The mothers, despite knowing the affiliation in these



cases, are still living under a delusion, where they seem to be conveniently ignoring the obvious factors pointing to the involvement of their sons. Mothers ignorant of the deeds carried out by their children also suffer under the illusion that their sons are on the right path. Sakina Anjum's two sons were arrested by law enforcement agencies and charged under terrorism, although the charges were never proven. She maintains, "If the parents are not involved in such violent activities, then how will the children be exposed? It is the responsibility of the parents to raise their children properly... my children did not do anything like this."

As discussed in the earlier sections, the conduct of the law enforcement agencies also makes the belief firm, where they arrest or pick up perpetrators without the knowledge of their families. In addition, there is extraction of information and confession based on torture. In the case of Rahim Ullah, son of Fatima, the family came to know after five days that he had been arrested. Fatima also claimed that he was tortured during that time. "He was brutally tortured and had injuries all over his body, while his hands and feet were chained." In the instance of Sakina Anjum, she came to know about the whereabouts of her sons eight months after they were taken into custody. This type of technique adopted by the law enforcement apparatus only creates doubts about the need to take such measures if the person held is guilty.

Mostly, the parents are not ignorant of the impact of violence which has engulfed the society. Izzat Khatoon, whose son has been allegedly picked up by law enforcement apparatus states, "I do not know who is involved in such activities... All this violence and killing is wrong." Halima Bibi also has similar views: "I would ask those who are involved in such crimes, to immediately stop

and transform themselves into better human beings.” However, there is another type of mindset, where parents justify the violent means adopted by militant groups. This will be further discussed in a later section.

***“A boy with good habits...”***

*According to Ghulam Fatima, her 26 years old son Taufeeq Ansari, a resident of Karachi, was a very obedient, respectful and religious boy. He completed his official schooling till the eighth grade. She believes that she knows her child best and perceived Taufeeq to be very close to her. Fatima believes that he used to tell her everything and hide nothing. She stresses on his inclination towards religion as the biggest reason for not being guilty. Taufeeq used to participate in religious congregations and rallies arranged by religious groups or political parties. He used to work for a lawyer at city court and earned up to PKR. 10,000. Fatima had also met the lawyer once or twice, who assured that he considered her son to be like his own sibling. Taufeeq, along with two others, was previously arrested in December 2006 by law enforcement agencies for their links with banned sectarian organization and participation in sectarian violence. This information was shared by Fatima and also emerged through other sources. However, she was unable to describe the exact details of the charges under which he was held.*

*He spent 2 – 3 years in jail and was later released. The lawyer, for whom Taufeeq worked for represented a violent sectarian group and was also looking into cases of missing persons (allegedly picked up by law enforcement agencies) affiliated with the organization. The lawyer was targeted and killed while on his way home during January 2012. Taufeeq was extremely concerned for his safety and decided to leave for Abbottabad, where he could stay with his aunt for 15 – 20 days. On the way, he was arrested by the Crime Investigation Department (CID), who confiscated everything including his money, camera and clothes. The*

family was unaware of the unfolding situation and was awaiting any contact with their son. They finally found out about his arrest after a lawyer called and informed them. Members of security agencies came to the house late at night and took away some files, cash and motorbike. Taufeeq had been arrested again under allegations of carrying out terrorist activities, including murder of lawyers; for a banned sectarian militant outfit.

Taufeeq was sent to central jail in Karachi and is brought to the city court for every hearing. It has been more than a year and a half and the cases are still ongoing. According to Fatima, Taufeeq's health has deteriorated in jail and there are also blisters over his body, which have become infected. During meetings with him, she takes clothes, food and medicine for him. She also claims that the security officials asked for money in exchange of letting Imran free, but the family does not have the necessary resources to pay the amount. The group, for which Taufeeq used to work, has provided a lawyer for him. The family and the organization are jointly bearing the expenses for the case. His mother strongly believes that her son is innocent and blames the legal and justice system for the troubles their family has gone through. After all this time, Fatima's only desire is that her son will attend her funeral when she dies.

## Violence as Means

As mentioned earlier, our researchers and analysts came across mothers who justified the violent means adopted by various proscribed groups, perhaps also leading towards the justification of the alleged activities of their children. Although Fatima, mother of Rahim Ullah, denied her son's involvement in any violent activity, she was of the view, "The Mujahideen or Taliban are fighting for their rights... (The government should) negotiate with the Taliban to end this violence. When negotiations are initiated then the violence will subside. Terrorist activities are carried out by foreign elements and the blame is shifted to the Taliban. I want my son and all other sons to be released. I consider the Taliban my sons." It is evident in this excerpt from the interview that Fatima believes that militants are resorting to violence for achieving a just cause. However, she also believes that the violence is spread by 'foreign elements' and that the wrong people are accused.

Similarly, according to Sakina, "When false cases are registered against innocents, it is obvious that they will retaliate in their anger." In this case again, the mother justifies the violent means adopted by various groups and individuals.

This was also observed during interviews of militants who renounced violence for our earlier publication of "Personal histories of choices: Documenting renunciation". In one instance, an individual belonging to Swat was pressed by his mother to join the militancy as she perceived the Taliban to be righteous. If we take the example of Swat again, Maulana Fazal Ullah used his illegal radio stations to influence women in the valley. He not only encouraged them to donate their belongings to the cause, but also to send their children and men to fight. On

a contradictory note, the mother of Maluana Fazal Ullah, who was interviewed before her death, wanted her son to quit what he was doing. Initially she had supported him, as he was taking revenge for the death of his brother along with three sons in a drone strike on a religious seminary at Bajaur during 2006. However, as his methods went out of control, his mother wanted him to stop.

There are several instances in Pakistan, where young boys have left their homes in order to join militants after being motivated by their mothers or other family members. This has also been pointed out in our earlier research. This perception also fits into the 'Just War Theory' which justifies the use of violence as means of acquiring righteous goals.

### ***Right and Wrong***

*Fatima is of the view that the Taliban are fighting for their rights, while acts of terrorism are being committed by someone else and the blame is being transferred to the Taliban. Fatima's thirty year old son Rahim Ullah was a rickshaw driver and is also a father to three children. He was arrested by Crime Investigation Department (CID) five years ago and remained in their custody for five days, before his family finally came to know of his fate. Fatima had to submit an application to gain access to her son, where according to her, she witnessed torture marks all over his body. She was unable to recognize him due to his condition. It has been two years since she last saw him, as she has not been granted permission a second time. Rahim Ullah has been charged under terrorism and kidnapping, while Fatima believes that he is innocent. She also claims that the police had falsely reported in the documents that they had arrested him from a different area of the city.*

*Fatima cites her son's attachment to faith as the most prominent factor to his innocence.*

*She believes that a person with such religious values cannot be involved in such activities. The family has hired a lawyer to defend Rahim Ullah in the court, while no one has turned up to assist them. Fatima is driven to tears as she prays for her son to be released. Fatima states that if her son is released, she would strongly advise him to disassociate himself from anything other than his own work. She also appeals to the authorities to carry out negotiations with the Taliban and claims that “These are foreign elements, who are carrying out terrorism in the country...I consider the Taliban to be my sons.”*

## **Displacement and Denial**

Another observation, which our researchers came across during the interviews, was that the denial of violent activities by mothers of perpetrators went hand in hand with the shifting of blame towards someone or something else. The shifting of blame instead of taking responsibility has spread like contagion within society. The reason for this blame shift is perhaps that one's image is under threat and the threat to that image needs to be curtailed. Here, the mothers may not only be protecting their offspring, but also attempting to save their parenting techniques from criticism. Time and again during the interviews they stressed that as they had raised their children well, they were certain of their innocence. According to a study, “Blaming becomes common when people are worried about their safety...”

For example, consider the case of Amjad Hussain and Azam Farooq, who were held under the charges of terrorism. Their mother was of the view that “The political parties are responsible for these terrorist activities. They carry out such activities with the assistance of intelligence agencies.” Fatima,



after denying her son's involvement in any violence stated, "Someone else commits these acts and the blame is shifted to others... Terrorist activities are carried out by foreign elements and the blame is shifted to the Taliban." UmmeTameem also shifts the blame by claiming, "This is the work of the United States. Our Muslim brothers can never carry out such activities...A Muslim will never kill his Muslim brother...This has been going on since the US presence over here. It had never happened that children with religious backgrounds were classified as terrorists."

Let us take a closer look at the case of Hafiz Qasim Rasheed son of UmmeTameem. Qasim is in his late-thirties and resided in interior Sindh with his wife and children, while the rest of the family lived in Karachi. Qasim was arrested earlier in 2002 and nine cases of terrorism were registered against him at the time; it took more than four years to get him released. After being asked about the allegations by his mother he responded, "These are false allegations against me." According to his mother, "He claimed that he will be declared innocent as they had no proof against him, and he was declared innocent." He was held again by law enforcement agencies in 2012 and remained missing for four days. Seven cases of terrorism and target killing have been registered against him. The police also claimed his affiliation with banned organisations. UmmeTameem claims that her son was tortured, stating that "He was in very bad shape; he couldn't walk as his feet were swollen. Whoever has to bear such brutal torture will even admit to murder."

From the above given case of Hafiz Usman, it is clear that the mother believes the statement of her son at face value, and despite his previous alleged involvement, she considers him innocent: "...My poor boy is innocent. Of all my children, he is the



most intelligent and responsible one. He also assisted in the daily household chores...Our children do not even have a slingshot to play with, from where would we get Kalashnikovs?" UmmeTameem shifts the blame to the presence of foreign troops in the region and their targeting of youth with religious backgrounds. She is of the view that the actual perpetrators are roaming free, while innocent youth are being targeted.

The case of SakinaAnjum is also not much different, whose sons Amjad Hussain and Azam Farooq were held by authorities on charges of terrorism; one of the brothers is listed in the Red Book of Sindh Police with reference to a rocket attack at Rangers Headquarter in Karachi. Amjad and Azam were arrested from Lahore and Gujarkhan, as they were working and residing there at the time. Their whereabouts remained unknown for eight months, while during this time Sakina not only adopted legal procedures, but also took an active part in protests for the recovery of missing persons. The whereabouts of Amjad and Azam were eventually traced after the family approached the court and the brothers were subsequently released as the charges against them could not be proved. Sakina shifts the blame to intelligence agencies, political parties and law enforcement apparatus. Her blaming the political parties and intelligence agencies is apparent from the statements given previously. Regarding the law enforcement apparatus she says that "In order to receive promotions the police arrest innocent youth and register false cases against them...I would only advise them to stop registering false cases so that you can also live a normal life."

## *Logical End*

*UmmeTameem maintains that her son Hafiz Qasim Rasheed is innocent and states, "I do not think our children are involved in such activities, but those who are, will meet their logical end." She blames the presence of foreign troops in the region as a factor for their predicament, as according to her, youth with religious background are being targeted. Qasim is in his late-thirties, was employed and resided in interior Sindh with his wife and children, while the rest of the family is in Karachi. About eight months ago from the time of the interview, Qasim had come over on Eid to drop his family and was arrested by Crime Investigation Department (CID). The family got worried as he did not return home and his whereabouts were not established for four days. Seven cases of terrorism and target killing have been registered against him. The police also claimed his affiliation with banned organizations. Tameem claims that when he was produced in court bearing marks of torture, he could barely walk.*

*She insists time and again that he is innocent and refers to his attachment to religious practices, while also mentioning that Qasim also participated in religious congregations. The family hired a lawyer, sold most of their assets and became bankrupt due to the legal proceedings. After his arrest, the police came to their house searching for weapons. Qasim was arrested earlier in 2002 after the Friday prayers. Nine cases of terrorism were registered against him at the time and it took more than four years to get him released. After that he spent most of the time in isolation from the rest of the family. Regarding the people actually involved in such crimes she claims, "This is the work of the United States. Our Muslim brothers can never carry out such activities." She believes that youth belonging to the lower strata of society are being targeted by the authorities, rather than the real culprits being arrested.*

## Conclusion

Mothers are living testimonies of the lives of their children. They bear the burden and pain of bringing an infant into this world and help them grow into individuals having distinct identities. Certainly there are external factors that influence the growth and development of an individual, and that was one of the reasons why we embarked on this initiative to record testimonies of mothers of victims and perpetrators of violence. These testimonials of mothers serve as the biggest proof of the lives led by their sons irrespective of the fact that whether they were victims or perpetrators of violence.

A common perception is that mothers that have lost their sons as a result of terrorism are only at the receiving end. While this is true, one aspect that we often tend to ignore is that the mother of a terrorist is also going through a lot of agony. On the surface, she may just be a mother of a terrorist and believed to be either linked to her son's activities or share the same mindset; however, the reality is a complete contrast to the general perception. The society they live in, manipulation by violent organizations in the name of religion, lawlessness in the country and the violation of their rights by the state all play a major role in moulding the mindsets of these mothers.

The stories discussed provide a grassroots image of the rise of militancy in Pakistan and its effects in the last few decades. This document does not offer any remedies on how to counter such elements in society. The sole purpose of the publication is to identify the mindset, the challenges faced, and the factors which lead a mother into believing that her son, by following a violent path, is actually doing something demanded by the religion or fulfilling a requirement of the society they live in. Moreover, it



also highlights the challenges faced and constraints upon the mothers who have lost their children as a result of terrorist activity.

The problems faced by both the mothers of victims and perpetrators are sometimes a complete contrast to each other and on other occasions similar. However, with the help of interviews, it has been found that the role of the state, or, to be more precise, the incompetency of the state to deal with the issue of terrorism is one problem common between the two. The mothers of victims also have their reservations regarding the lack of any financial assistance or social security and the absence of and provision to ensure justice. On the other hand, mothers of the perpetrators of violence have concerns over transgressions by the law enforcing agencies.

Apart from strengthening the state institutions, mothers in general need to be prepared with the essential knowledge and self-confidence to become active players in the security arena. The aim should be to sensitise mothers and make them aware of their potential in influencing and guiding the lives of their children and preventing them from getting involved in violent and terrorist activities.

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