



**Personal histories  
of choices:**

**Documenting  
Renunciation**

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of choices:

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Renunciation

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From the ones who lived it



With thanks  
to  
all those  
who made  
it  
happen



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## Glossary

**Jihad:** Jihad Literally means 'exerted efforts'

**Jihadi:** Jihadi is a term or an expression referring to an individual who participates in jihad. The Jihad could be of political or military nature. However it is most often referred to the people directly engaged in extremist activities or supporting it.

**Jalsa:** It is the Urdu word for congregation.

**Qira'at:** It is a word of the Arabic language, which means reading. The recitation and the different methods of Recitation of the Holy Quran is known as Qira'at.

**Shariat:** It is a word of the Arabic language, which means 'Legislation'. The moral, religious, economic and political laws of Islam are referred to as shariat

**Tabligh:** It is a term or a concept coined by Deobandi school of thought in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Indian Subcontinent. The basic purpose or aim of Tabligh is to spread the word of Islam door to door.

**Tablighi:** Refers to the individuals who take part in Tabligh.

**Ummah:** It is a word of the Arabic language meaning nation. It is commonly used to refer to the collective nation of Islamic state also referred to as Muslim Ummah.

**Qital:** Quran uses the term Qital for armed struggle. The term Qital is mentioned in fifty four verses of the Quran.

**Malik:** Malik is the title given to an individual who represents the common interest of a community. In many Pashtun areas the village head is referred to as Malik

**PKR:** Currency: Pakistani Rupees

**Mullah:** Religious preacher

**Madrassa:** It is an Arabic word for any type of educational institution. Mostly Madrassa is referred to as an institution where religious education is provided to students.

**Shaheed:** Arabic word for Martyr

**Ghazi:** Muslims who return back home alive from a war or war like situation.

**Nafs:** Id



“There’s no single path to radicalization...”  
Ken Ballen<sup>1</sup>

Today’s Pakistan is engulfed by terrorism. There have been thirty-nine thousand fatalities during the last decade, including more than 4,000 security personnel.<sup>2</sup> Behind these figures are countless stories, the veil seldom lifted from the enshrouded dynamics of the secretive and cultish organizations undertaking terror as an instrument of policy. There has been some research bringing into public view the murky structures and leadership of militant organizations. Information on individual terrorists apprehended by state organizations remains largely classified, part of the ongoing intelligence operations and thus shielded from public view. Some ambitious researchers have found their way into the households of militants, documenting their findings regarding their families.

There are those who are actively involved in terrorism but then there are those who were once part of it and have since renounced it. Our study targeted this group, identifying and approaching a cross segment across society of the ex-militants who managed to make an exit after having undergone the indoctrination and training that appears inescapable for most who get involved.

We document the personal journeys of individuals who voluntarily and consciously chose the path of terrorism and then renounced it. This compilation tends to highlight those factors which pushed them towards this path, including their motivation, their apprehensions, the risks faced by them and the end result of their association with terror groups. The stories also attempt to document the individuals’ convictions: those that led them to join and those that led them to renounce terrorism and dissociate from militant terrorist groups. As there is no single path or a single cause contributing to radicalization, it will be up to the readers to discern the factors leading these individuals away from militancy.

It has been determined that “There is no profile of the type of person who becomes a terrorist. Indeed, the process by which a person embraces violence is fluid, making it nearly impossible to predict who

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<sup>1</sup>Ballen, Ken. 2011. *Terrorists in Love: The Real Lives of Islamic Radicals*. New York: Free Press.

<sup>2</sup>South Asian Terrorism Portal. 2012. *Fatalities in Terrorist Violence in Pakistan 2003–2012*. Accessed from: <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/casualties.htm> on March 14, 2012.

will move from espousing 'radical' views to committing violent acts."<sup>3</sup> It is still important to identify the various aspects which determine a person's inclination towards radicalization and converging towards a path of terrorism. The pressing question is not only why some renounce violence but also what leads a person towards a violent life purely for his principles. The reasons militancy flourishes in certain areas more than others also need to be highlighted. Is social injustice in the form of poverty, discrimination, absence of good governance and deprivation of basic needs a meaningful measure? Is militancy deemed a tool of retribution for ethnic, political and religious animosities? It is not claimed that all these questions will be convincingly answered, but it is hoped that some reasons may be identified through the accounts of these former militants.

Behavioral sciences studies highlight as a substantial factor towards violent behavior the set of actions underwritten by particular belief that are now classified as Hate Crimes. These appear to stem largely from the power difference between the vanquisher and the dispossessed, where the latter opts to seek vengeance through extreme measures outside the social systems established to deal with conflict resolution. Away from public scrutiny, such motivations on a collective level can morph into ideologically heterogeneous terrorist organizations promoting extreme militancy. Such organizations then attract all types of individuals with proclivities towards violence, their individual motivations and rationale not necessarily carrying all the way through the hierarchy of the organization to the leadership, but their ready resort to violence a common thread throughout the organization. Such individuals remain malleable, a soft target for manipulation by nefarious masters.

The question "Why Do Terrorists Renounce Violence?" has to be judged in a three-dimensional perspective: *on the individual level*, in terms of repressive mindset; *on the group level*, in terms of consistencies, conflicts, and policies; and *on the societal level*, in terms of ideological radicalism and its general acceptance supplemented through conducive support structures. Similarly, the post-renunciation perseverance of the abandoner has to be viewed from the same standpoint: *on the individual level*, in terms of intrinsic motivation; *on the group level*, in terms of inter-group dissonance; and *on the societal level*, in terms of sustained acceptance, support and security assurance for revisionism.

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<sup>3</sup> Patel, Faiza. 2011. Rethinking Radicalization. New York: Brennan Center for Justice.

Radicalization has been an issue which still eludes our comprehension. People may have created stereotypes and categorized a certain segment or ethnic group as more vulnerable than others. The accounts mentioned here – and several other such narratives which some of us may have come across – all run counter to stereotypical concepts prevailing in our minds. *Anyone can be radicalized*. Keeping this in mind, a strategy will have to be devised for identification and isolation of the factors leading towards a militant mindset. Whatever the underlying reasons contributing to an individual's decision to resort to violence, certain elements exploit these deprivations for their own vested interests. These individuals become foot soldiers and often cannon fodder in service to nefarious elements, who take advantage of their grievances and sometimes their convictions. They thus become a soft target for radical outfits, who use them as cogs in their particular machines.

In this compilation, the journeys of fifteen such individuals are documented and the chain of events and the thought processes leading up to their decision are underscored. It has previously been ascertained in certain case studies that "...individuals who have either experienced violence themselves, or who live in communities that have been violently attacked, display more altruistic behavior, are more risk-seeking, and act less patiently."<sup>4</sup> These traits will be obvious in the accounts of the individuals interviewed for this compilation. It is evident from the following narratives that while some were able to leave their respective militant organizations without exceptional difficulty, others had to face considerable resistance and coercion. The inclination and persuasion of their family, friends, community and media also had a role to play; all this appears in these stories.

A dominant factor through most of the accounts is the belief of individuals that they had been fighting for the supremacy of religion and country. Afghanistan is mentioned as especially important because, as stated by one former militant, "All the non-Muslims have gathered on one platform in the form of NATO and are fighting against Islam and Muslims. So this is a golden opportunity for Muslims." Another militant during his interview emphasized his allegiance and patriotism for Pakistan, defined by him as "protecting Pakistan from infidels and opportunist Muslims against which the Quran also warns." Over the years, perhaps initiating in the 1980s, Pakistani society has become more

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<sup>4</sup>M.J. Voors, E.E.M. Nillesen, E.H. Bulte, B.W. Lensink, P. Verwimp, and D.P. van Soest. 2011. *Violent Conflict and Behavior: A Field Experiment in Burundi*. Netherlands: Tilburg University.

prone to militarization in terms of lifestyle, thinking and mindset. In the rural areas our research team learnt that it was common practice for young people of the village to join training camps run by militant groups while they might or might not have participated in actual combat. They receive basic combat training here, and contrary to popular perception, they are initially free to exit the camp whenever they want. It is only after initial opportunities to exit have been foregone and some longevity with the groups established that psychological and social pressure is applied to stay for ever. Interviewee after interviewee stressed that he had joined of his own accord and that there were no economic, social or any other coercive pressures on him. There was also a general acceptance of people leaving the training camps after brief sessions – as exemplified by students returning to their studies after having spent summer vacation at the camp.

The basic camps act simultaneously as entry points for possible recruits and summer camps full of activities for others.

There are exceptions to the general trend also. Going through this compilation the reader will come across certain accounts where communities organized a social boycott of militants. This was done only when the communities were victimized at the hands of terrorists and they realized the consequences of cooperation with the violent mindset.

References to specific locations have been edited out and names of interviewees have been changed in order not to compromise the security and safety of the researchers and the interviewees both.

With the necessary precautions taken, every other effort has been made not to leave out any details which explain and underscore their journeys to and from the life of militancy. It is important to note that these are all individuals who live within our society and by dissecting their accounts we can perhaps prevent or curtail further radicalization in the society.

### **Behind the Scenes...**

A common assumption is that people who are or have been involved in *jihad* live an isolated life. It is believed that they are isolationists who neither interact with nor live within everyday society. Our limited experience proved otherwise. These militants who are or have been involved in *jihad* are very much living right next to us, communicating with us on a daily basis and involved in the same sort of everyday

activities as we all are. Besides the difference of their having received combat training and been involved in violent terrorist activities in stark comparison with the lives of others, it is difficult to discern differences in their outward lifestyles.

We realized this when we started making inquiries about individuals who have renounced militancy. We assumed rather incorrectly that we would have to “dig them out” and that they would be shrouded in mystery, but such turned out not to be the case. They were all around us. When we put our field research team to work and assigned them different parts of the country we found out that in some areas/localities almost every other child or young boy had in his brief lifetime received the *jihad* trainings and some had even participated in missions and local operations as well. From Khyber-Pakhtonkhwa (Peshawar, Nowshera, Akora Khattak, Kohat, Mardan, Swat) to Punjab (Gujrat, Gujranwala, Mandi Bahauddin, Narowal, Rajanpur, Sialkot, Sargodha, Kasur, Multan, Lahore.) to Azad Jammu and Kashmir (Mirpurkhas, Rawalakot) and Balochistan (Quetta and Pishin) even in the Federal Capital of Islamabad we were able to find them. People belonging to different walks of life and from different family and educational backgrounds revealed that they had been on *jihad* trainings in their lives. The researchers heavily relied on informants or young boys of villages or towns they were visiting. They were of great help, particularly in identifying those who have been on such trainings. We came across many stories but this compilation only summarizes fifteen. There were others who initially claimed that they had renounced terrorism but the interview revealed that they had either fallen out with the group leader or were compelled by family responsibilities etc. They considered themselves “on a break” and were waiting for the call of the Ameer – the leader of their group. Four such stories have been included to provide insight into their thinking. We understood that they have not renounced terrorism but their stories provide a contrasting and educational narrative to those of the ones who did renounce it.

The most interesting fact that unfolded during our field visits was that many young boys in their summer vacations went on *jihad* physical trainings for the sake of recreational activities.

Those who were fond of body building or physical exercises often went to these training camps returning home when schools started. It was usual to find out that the parents and elders of such boys approved of

these trainings and did not see any harm in sending these boys to such camps.

Our interest did not revolve around the ones who had been on these trainings only. Our objective was to interview those who willfully opted for the terrorism path, went on trainings and then were assigned different missions, fought and killed people. Then somewhere during this process realized that it was not what they had opted for and then left or renounced this path. Our questions revolved around the idea of 'why' they left jihad as well as why did they join in the first place? A total of fifteen interviews out of the total qualified our criteria. These people became center of our attention, once we started scrutinizing the interviews.

We held profound discussions with them, usually at private homes. They took it as a sign of respect accorded to them when we invited them to private homes rather than meet at a public café etc. In fact, one of the interviewees stated that having been invited to the researchers' house actually added to our credibility. No interviewee narrated his story all at once. At least two meetings were arranged with each of the interviewees only after the individual had satisfied himself of the researcher's background and credentials. The credential check did not focus on academic qualifications etc. Instead, the local contact(s) who had arranged the meeting was quizzed a number of times about us before the interview took place. Sometimes at the appointed hour the person would fail to show up. We later learnt that this was to ensure that no law enforcement personnel had been secretly invited and that at the meeting time we were being watched. However, once the individual had satisfied himself and the interview began, it was very candid. At some instances, it felt that they were looking upon this experience as a personal catharsis. Of course, there were those who were not satisfied of our credentials and did not meet us after the initial contacts were made.

During the planning stage, we consciously made a decision to avoid asking probing, closed-ended questions. This is reflected in the stories that have been compiled here. Although an effort has been made to get the stories in a certain comparable framework, there are missing links in some stories... some points have been deliberately left out for reasons that have to do with the complex set of local, national and international players of this deadly game.

Thus, 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. An effort was made to create such an environment where he felt comfortable and safe to say whatever he thought. Out of the fifteen, some even interviewed our research team, asking them probing questions. Some did not allow any note taking be it via recorder or a pen. However, there were others who not only allowed us to take pictures (to substantiate our work) but also shared with us pictures of their *jihad* times.

Some of our field researchers were female. For them it became pertinent to change their attire as well as their body language. For instance, they would not offer the interviewee refreshments as is the norm in Pakistani society. A male colleague would do that. Of those who were interviewed by female researchers, only one objected to being interviewed by a female. The others were quite comfortable although the body language and attire of the researcher, it is believed, played an important part in this.

### **And so it begins...**

We learnt that truly there is no single path to radicalization. The journeys and vehicles used might be different. Yet the destination of all these people is the same i.e. the 'armed struggle'. When the stories were recorded and analyzed, a number of commonalities were expected.

However, we found differences between all the stories; just when we were tempted to draw a general conclusion, some complexity or contradiction would emerge.

It is generally assumed that people living a life of extreme poverty and misery are most vulnerable to the call for recruits to jihad or militancy. The stories do not generalize such a trend. It was observed that people with educated and wealthy backgrounds also chose violence over other means of defending and promoting their ideas. Class grievances can still be an instigator towards militancy, as made evident in Swat. There the Taliban were mostly Gujjars, economically discriminated against by the Khans who occupied prime land. The leader of the Swat Taliban Maulana Fazalullah had as a young boy seen his brother's body delivered to the family in pieces, as related by his mother to one of our sources.

In some cases parents and family members also played a role in influencing these people to take up *jihad*. Some of those interviewed indicated being swayed by larger societal influences also, such that television plays, songs and radio programs also influenced them into picking up weapons for their beliefs. It was not beyond the pale to find

out that many young boys chose this violent path under the influence of certain clerics of their religious seminaries.

We found in our stories that jihadists function at levels falling into one of three broad scales of involvement and activity. The first, similar to guerilla warfare or a direct conflict with enemies; the second, conducting suicide missions; and the third, espionage. Boys recruited for these tasks came from different areas of Pakistan.

The training camps are situated and located in the mountainous regions of Pakistan but not restricted to only these areas. If there is a Maskur A (Camp A) near K then there is another one in M; some militants have been trained at places around Islamabad, too. The initial trainings were not of more than twenty to twenty one days. At the beginning of their journey of militancy the boys were moved from one place to another.

The camps and outfits operate in an organized manner and according to procedure. The outfits are organized hierarchically, having a City office, District office and then a Divisional office. Their duties include the handling of newly admitted boys and their transportation onto different locations. Their operation mechanisms appear very professional. They divide areas into different sectors and term their missions as launches. Each launch involves six to eight boys, and each sector has a militant in-charge who remains responsible for all the launches and the boys operating in his sector. All these boys or militants were given a stipend to pay for their food and shelter as well. This stipend, contrary to popular belief, is not much. An average of fifteen hundred to three thousand Pakistani rupees is given to each militant. The real money is with the leaders. The foot soldiers are kept at a subsistence level.

Having issued the disclaimer that one cannot really draw any water tight conclusions, we would like to state that of the people who we interviewed, their reasons for joining can be categorized as:

- Influence of hearsay and effectively targeted propaganda
- Influence of jihadi and mainstream media
- Influence of the community (parents, friends, family members or clerics)

Many, when asked the reasons for joining *jihad* stated that while growing up they heard stories of women being raped and assaulted by the enemy soldiers (Russian soldiers during the Russian invasion in the

late 1980s, Americans later, Indians in Kashmir, Ahmedis in Pakistan.) Such influences were tagged as hearsay because when asked further they explained that they never had direct knowledge of such atrocities being committed. Similarly, many people when asked the reasons for joining *jihad* told us that while they were growing up, they were greatly influenced by the plays, songs, and shows produced to highlight the honor and valor of the Pakistani army and of those *mujahideen* going in to fight the Russians. When they grew up these dramas and songs remained ingrained in their minds causing them to want to join the *mujahideen*. These stories are put under the topic of influence of media. Last but not least is the influence of family and the community, under which the people who were influenced by their parents or religious clerics to go on Jihad are categorized.



## Influence of Hearsay



### **Grandparent's Stories**

Rashid Javed, who now lives a quiet life in a small village in Narowal district, was once a militant. He had joined *jihad* in the year 1999 and remained a *jihadi* until 2004. His main motivation to join *jihad* was to free Muslims living in non-Muslim occupied areas. The tragic and tormenting stories which he used to hear from his grandparents about the atrocities inflicted upon Muslims compelled him to take this path.

Rashid belonged to a middle class family. His father retired as a Non-Commissioned Officer and had altogether nine sisters and two brothers. Both his brothers are in the Pakistan Air force, whereas he had studied till his intermediate (equivalent to high school).

Rashid is now 31 years old ,married with two children. He has his own mobile phone shop in his village from which he earns his livelihood.

He sat on the mat in front of us. After asking about his family details, his education background and where he lived, the conversation shifted to the more intense questions about his reasons and motivation for becoming a *jihadi* and how he was admitted in the camp. His opening sentence to this question was "my grandparents stories". His grandparents had migrated from India and narrated in detail the atrocities and challenges that they faced while coming to Pakistan. While the details would vary depending on which friend or relative his grandparents missed more that night, the end was the same: Hindus and Hindustan could never be trusted. While he was growing up, stories like these became ingrained in his mind, so much so that as time passed he wanted to take revenge from all those who were involved in destroying the peace and harmony of their land and to punish these people for treating his land with such ignorance.

By the time he had completed his intermediary education he knew what he was going to do next, to enlist himself as a *jihadi*, a fighter. This was quite easy and possible when he found out that his (maternal) uncle had links with a religio-political party which could help him with this. The fact that his family was overjoyed at his decision further strengthened his resolve. Rashid received his initial training in a mountainous region inside Pakistan after which he was sent to carry out different missions in different areas. Due to his enthusiasm to fight more, within no time he became sector in-charge. His spirit to fight the "infidels" led him to stay on missions for a long time. Normally, the boys were allowed to stay on a

specific mission for not more than six months but his stubbornness made him stay on a mission for consecutive fourteen months. He along with other boys in the sector received a stipend of PKR 4500 per month, in which they had to cater for transportation fuel, food and shelter.

When we asked Rashid about the nature of his launches in the sector, he replied that their main aim was to infiltrate the enemy area. Stay there and report about the movements and activities of enemy soldiers. The tasks that he and others were given did not demand an attack or killing people, rather it was more focused on gathering intelligence and reporting to his commanders. They used to live with the local people, ate with them and interacted with them freely. However, they were instructed to move from one location to another, in order to not raise suspicion.

By this time we had gained Rashid's trust even more. He was openly discussing intimate and intricate details of his life as a militant. After we had received ample information about his family and his ways, it was time for us to jump to another set of questions. Questions like the rationale of *jihad*, the meaning and importance of *jihad* and the existing situation of *jihad* in the country.

His rationale of *jihad* was to infiltrate enemy lines and to create chaos and anarchy among the enemy so that their "evil minds" are diverted from Pakistan. He quoted different verses from the Holy Quran stating the importance and pertinence of *jihad* but then he further added that "the way we are executing *jihad* is not useful, we will never get the desired results out of it. The *jihad* policies transform with time, for example in 1980s and 90s, there was a boom, even till 1998 and onwards it was popular to go for *jihad*. After 9/11 the state clamped down and discouraged *jihad*". He also stated that the experienced *jihadis* have become corrupt and received kickbacks.

With the passage of time he realized that the money received by them was coming from his own society, i.e. through charity given by common people. It was not appropriate to stay there for long and waste the money. Keeping this factor in mind he realized that it was time to head home, therefore he gathered eighteen boys within his camp and returned back to their respective hometowns. They left on this note that if their commander ever needed them they will happily return to serve this "noble" cause.

However, when he came home and started interacting with his friends and family, he saw how *jihad* had been "corrupted." The son of the Amir is a local criminal masquerading as a government contractor.

He uses his father's influence to browbeat local officials to get contracts and is a local gang boss of sorts. The area's transporters have to pay him a certain monthly amount in the name of supporting *jihad* but it goes into his private pocket. "Why should I leave my family to wage *jihad* under the leadership of such a man who cannot teach his son to curb his *nafs* which is the greatest *jihad* of all?" Rashid asks now. He said that during the 2010 floods, messages were sent by his ex-colleagues and leaders to return but he refused.



## Educated Jihadi

Arslan has a Bachelor's degree, hails from the North Eastern part of Pakistan and has three brothers and a sister. His father was a truck driver. Arslan was a *jihadi* from 1996 till 2005. Now he is 33 years of age and works in an aluminum shop. He got married in 2007 and has three children.

In hindsight, Arslan narrated how he was compelled to go to *jihad*. He grew up with stories of the misery and pain his elders had faced throughout their lives. According to him, he felt the pain that his relatives and others in the area had felt and always wanted to do something about it. He felt that it is his prime duty to help them out and so it became his motivation to join *jihad*. His motivation was further boosted by the fact that others belonging to far-flung areas like Gujranwala, Gujrat and other parts of the country were also joining *jihad*. He had the idea that it is not easy to leave home and loved ones behind. However, he was of the view that the cause of serving Islam is higher than serving the family and loved ones. He also learnt from his friends that not only his fellow countrymen, but Muslims from all over the world were signing up for *jihad*.

He joined an organization that had the reputation of being non-sectarian, and was focusing more on the cause of the whole Muslim *umma*. As an educated person, according to him, he could "easily" differentiate between groups who were promoting their own agenda and those who were focused on *jihad*. However, he asked, "what to do when these groups merge into each other like one factory buying another factory?" Arslan was pleasantly surprised to see that many educated people, mostly engineers, were joining his group to wage *jihad*. Arslan went on and described that *jihadis* are trained to be tough, so they can endure the harshness of weather and can survive with minimum resources. He further described that ethical training was also an integral part of the training process.

While briefing about their *modus operandi*, Arslan described that they did hurt innocent people, irrespective of their religion. Their main aim was to resist and tease their enemies to the point that they start negotiating with them.

While sharing one of his experiences, he told that on one instance they attacked their enemy's camp. They were 18 boys and there was cross fire for one hour. They killed 27 of their enemies. However, while they were

retreating, they were attacked from behind. As a result, three of his fellows were injured. On another instance, he told that while sitting with a friend in the camp, they felt the presence of their opponents around them. His friend hurled a hand grenade at their enemies. However, while he was doing it, he too got shot and fell down. He couldn't survive and died.

When asked whether *jihadis* are really fighting for the cause of Islam or not, he replied that it is complicated. He has now realized that all their hard work and toil has gone in vain. They have been used by their leaders in fulfilling their own personal objectives. There are a handful of people, leaders, who are largely benefiting from this cause. Young boys are totally unaware and led by their emotions blindly trust their leaders. The leaders travel in luxury vehicles and call it a physical handicap due to excessive travelling for the cause of *jihad*.

When asked what would happen to those boys who received trainings from these camps and came back in the communities, as now, they don't have access to employment opportunities or other sources of income and entertainment, he states, "This is the major challenge. This is not something that you put on your resume. They are still vulnerable. I got lucky. I am able to survive and support my family but my circumstances were different. I got out at the right time and had the advantage of my father-in-law who as a disgruntled leader of a major group encouraged me to get out along with him. However, others are not that lucky. They are still vulnerable to anti-social elements in the society."

When asked if he has really left or that he just exited with his father-in-law, he adamantly states, "You can live one day without your convictions but not a life time. I am a man of convictions. I joined the *jihad* because of my convictions. Slaughtered 18 Hindus because of that. However, when my friends and I were used as pawns, as bargaining chips for vested interests, I could not go on. My life is still devoted to religion and ***jihad***: the *jihad* of raising my three children as good human beings with the ability to think critically."



## Passion to Serve

Thirty one year old Arshad Umar is the youngest of six siblings; five brothers and a sister. Originally from Balochistan, Arshad's family has been in Lahore for the last two decades. His father, formerly a member of a banned organization was also his inspiration to join *jihad* at the age of 14.

His passion for *jihad* which he defined at that time as struggle against the infidels who raped Muslim women led him to Afghanistan. His training reinforced what his father had told him that in the dead of the night, "silent" helicopters hover over Afghanistan, air lift people, rape the women in the helicopter and then kill them. The bodies would then be dropped to the ground and villagers would wake up to find the bodies. This was his prime motivation for *jihad* after a training of 21 days that he received in a militant's camp. Arshad recalled how during those 21 days he had difficulty sleeping at night as he was traumatized by the helicopter story.

He had heard from his father that rape was used as a weapon of war but it was only at the camp that he learnt about the helicopters in detail. When he went to Afghanistan, he also met religious people who swore that they had seen the helicopters. However, since no one ever emerged from the helicopters alive, there were no survivors to narrate the facts.

Arshad stayed in Afghanistan for four years and today he wonders as to why he never saw any helicopter in spite of being on night duty too at the camps and launch areas. This is one of the few questions that he asks himself today. Among the other questions that he put to himself is: what is actually *jihad*?

As a quiet and passionate young man whose father was known also in the militant circles, Arshad rose through the ranks and became the trusted guard of one of the commanders. It was here that he saw sodomy, visits of political people coming to the commander bringing him money and other "presents". Arshad was very disturbed and came especially to Pakistan to share this with his father. On hearing his story, his father apparently became as upset as Arshad and there and then contacted a senior person to "report" the commander. However, Arshad later found out that this was only to appease him. The father, through Arshad's elder brother, tried to convince him to be pragmatic. For him this was hypocrisy but he still went back to Afghanistan to another

subgroup. He stayed there for another three months but couldn't survive. He no longer felt that he belonged.

He returned to Pakistan after three months and spent almost eight months at home doing nothing but sit in his room alone. His family thought that he had a nervous breakdown and sent him to Karachi. Arshad was happy to be away from his family environment particularly his father who was insisting on sending him back to Afghanistan.

In Karachi, he today works as a conductor, has friends, offer prayers five times a day but refrains from any religious or political discussion. According to him, "the only thing true are prayers, rest is all manipulation". Arshad got married in August 2012 and also teaches children in his spare time. He is not in touch with his family although he misses his mother.



## Running from Paradise

Ikhlaq was a sixteen year old college student of a local institution in Swat back in 2008. He belonged to an upper middle-class educated family of Mingora. During this time the Taliban started gaining influence in the area and the community. Ikhlaq became gradually influenced by the Taliban and this involvement became evident to his circle of friends by the change in his views and habits. The seriousness of the situation became evident to one of Ikhlaq's friends, when he proudly proclaimed that he had joined the militants and had the rank of commander. As the situation progressed in Swat, the government and Taliban came to a direct confrontation and armed conflict initiated in the area.

During the conflict Taliban gained considerable control over Swat and local populace started fearing them, and the graph of social acceptance of the militants also fell during that time. Ikhlaq believed in the cause of Taliban and considered their style of government as a cure for all ills. He expressed his displeasure and discontent over the legal system, education and the rising unemployment, while declaring the entire system corrupt. During his stint with the Taliban Ikhlaq was assigned a suicide mission. Before going on the mission he went to meet one of his friends, Nazir. His friend tried to dissuade him, but Ikhlaq was adamant. Nazir informed Ikhlaq's family, so they could perhaps prevent him from taking such a course.

Nazir somehow convinced Ikhlaq to visit his family, where they were also in shock. His father especially disapproved of his actions and after failing to convince him, disowned Ikhlaq. After Ikhlaq left, the Taliban came to his father and threatened him. As a result he suffered a stroke, which left him paralyzed. Due to the social reaction against the Taliban, Ikhlaq's sister, who had been married for four years and had two children, was also divorced, being related to Taliban. Meanwhile, Ikhlaq's commander also got information of his meeting with his father and upon his return accused him of being a traitor. He was resultantly incarcerated and tortured by the Taliban outfit. There were also individuals present during interrogation, who were not locals and whose language Ikhlaq did not understand. A person belonging to Bannu, on the premise of being a government employee was also executed in front him.

This was the turning point for Ikhlaq, who realized his mistake and saw the true nature of Taliban. In the meantime army operation had begun in Swat and the security forces finally captured the camp, after a four hour long battle. The army rescued all the prisoners and transferred them to

Mingora. Ikhlaq ended up in Attock, where he again met Nazir, who had left Swat during the operation. Nazir took him to his family who were overjoyed to see Ikhlaq alive and well. Ikhlaq renounced the path of violence and the radical ideology of Taliban.

Ikhlaq is now trying to lead a normal life. However, the guilt that his sister got divorced because of him still haunts him.



## **Kidnapped for a Cause**

Fifteen year old Hamza was taken hostage by Taliban during the time when Swat was ruled by the militants. The boy was kidnapped and kept at a secret place along with other boys of his age, to be trained as a suicide bomber. At the time of his abduction, he was a student of fourth grade at a local school.

After the Taliban were driven away from Swat by the Army, Hamza was among those boys who were rescued and sent to a rehabilitation center in Malakand Agency, named "Sabaoon". This center was established by the army and was aimed at the rehabilitation of those children, mostly boys, who were trained by the Taliban to be suicide bombers. Hamza was interviewed, when he was undergoing training and therapy at the rehabilitation center. This interview was helpful in getting an insight into how the Taliban recruited young boys and convinced them to carry out suicide missions.

Hamza was one of six siblings and his father used to sell drugs, to make ends meet. He narrated in his account that one day members of Taliban came to his house and asked for him. They conveyed to him that his father was in their custody and he was going to be executed for selling drugs. He wanted to say goodbye to him, for the last time before he is executed.

The Taliban took him to Bajaur. When he reached there he realized that they had been lying to him. The group had actually kidnapped him and had brought him there for training. Later on he was ordered to carry out a suicide mission, but he refused. As a result, Hamza had to face severe consequences, where he was tied up in a room and repeatedly beaten. When there seemed to be no end to these punishments and the beatings became unbearable, Hamza finally gave in and promised to carry out the attack.

Later, Hamza was shifted to another room with a young boy, where they would receive sermons from radical clerics. These clerics used to give them speeches and lectures on the glory and success which was awaiting them, if they lay down their lives for the cause. Despite all the mind games played by the Taliban and the physical violence, Hamza remained adamant and refused again. Finally, when all else failed, Hamza was administered a pill and the series of lectures and sermons started again. According to Hamza, the pill had a profound effect on his senses.

As a result he became less resistant and kept obeying what the Taliban used to tell him.

He was preached about virgin maids and promises of heaven, if he was successful in his mission. He was also told that the Pakistan army, their local allies and sympathizers were the enemy of Islam. The drug clouded his judgment and also created memory loss. He forgot about his family and did not have any fear for his own life. When he was finally asked, if he was ready for the mission; Hamza gave an affirmative reply.

The suicide jacket was put on him and a person took him half way to a mosque, where he was told to blow himself up. He told us that before embarking on the final mission he kept visiting the mosque earlier on Taliban instructions, so that no one suspects him of being a stranger. This mosque was near a local leader's home, and he was the apparent target of the attack. This person was probably a government sympathizer and was considered a threat by the Taliban.

Hamza further stated that when he entered the mosque, he saw people reciting Holy Quran and offering prayers.

This had a profound effect on him, as he realized that he was going to take the lives of innocent people. He could not blow himself up and so he returned to the camp. As a result of this disobedience he had to face the wrath of the Taliban, who beat him up severely. However, he managed to escape from the camp and reached his relatives at an Internally Displaced People (IDPs) camp at Mardan. The Army followed him there to the camp, arrested him but after interrogation referred him to the Sabaoon rehabilitation center which he had just left when we interviewed him.



## Don't Ask Questions

Hailing from Gujranwala, 32 year-old Wajid Ahmad with no educational background was inspired by a group which we will refer to as Organization A and wanted to follow its teachings.

Organization A is one of the largest and most active militant Islamic organizations and he wanted to be a part of it. His ambition was to fight the Holy War and wanted to be a *jihadi* fighter.

In 1993, Wajid decided that joining a militant camp will not only help him in joining Organization A but also fulfill his dream of becoming a *jihad* fighter. He wanted to prove himself capable, motivated and loyal towards this Holy War but as time went by, Wajid realized that he went to the training camp with a *jihadi* perspective but the hypocrisy of the camp leaders amazed him. Every night the camp in charge would listen to Indian songs and make rude jokes about different actresses with his friends. The leaders would talk about the personal example of hard work and sacrifice of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) but will make them wash their dirty clothes. They were expected to wait hand and foot on them. Once when a young boy asked them about this, he was beaten black and blue for being impertinent. In other words, he discovered, according to him, that they talk about Islam being a religion of peace and that the West was portraying it as a violent one. However, the training that he was being imparted was one in which violence without ideology was being taught.

He abandoned the training camp after nine months of training. He was let go only because his Uncle knew the camp's head. There were many boys who wanted to leave but were not allowed to.

Now, Wajid works as an electrician at an electrical workshop in Gujranwala. He lives with his parents and has a brother who is a tailor and two sisters.



# Influence of Media



### **Healing Wounds**

The primary bread earner of Fahad's family was his father, who was a small farmer in the rural area of Swat. His father always prevented him from working in the fields as he wanted him to concentrate on his studies. After he completed his matriculation, his father met with an accident which rendered him disabled. Fahad unable to study any further, took up farming in place of his father, but could not continue it, because of the lack of experience. The local Member of Provincial Assembly (MPA) on the request of his father installed him as a guard at a local school. As time progressed Fahad also completed a teaching course, after which he was appointed as a teacher by the MPA in a school. In the next election the politician lost and Fahad was transferred to a remote area by the newly elected representative, where he remained separated from his family.

Over the years Fahad had married and was a father to eight daughters. After his transfer, his wife was expecting the first male child in 25 years, but the child died during birth. Faced with the trauma of losing his child, Fahad soon lost interest in the job and was consequently fired. He then completed a course in dispensary and opened his own clinic in the area. During that time the Taliban were gaining influence in Swat and many people listened to the sermons of Fazalullah.

Fahad especially bought a radio to listen to these sermons, while he was at the clinic. His initial interactions with Taliban started when he treated them at his clinic. He also gradually gained access to their camps, where he treated their wounded.

During his visits to the camp, Fahad also noted certain people who were not local to the area and no one was allowed to talk to them. The Taliban adopted the method of executions to instill fear among their detractors and establish their control. A religious cleric at Charbagh, who was against these actions of Taliban and was very vocal of his resentment, was also executed by them. He was the only person at the time to stand against them, but his efforts were never recognized. The Taliban also installed a parallel system of government, which impressed the people, as they apparently provided instant justice and resolved cases which had been pending for years. During this time the Taliban also targeted the influential people of the area – including political figures. They demolished their homes and forced them out of the area. Fahad, because of these reasons felt more inclined towards the Taliban.

Gradually, the people started considering him a commander and came to him when facing a problem. When the operation started in Swat and everyone was ordered to leave the area, he asked for permission to leave with his family also, but this was not granted by the commander. Adjacent to his house the Taliban had established a camp. When the army came there was an exchange of fire and resultantly his elder daughter died, while one other daughter sustained injuries. His mother suffered a heart attack and died, during the commencement of operation and he faced considerable difficulty in burying his mother. A few days later when he again visited his home, he found it locked and learnt that his family had moved to Mardan due to the conflict.

Fahad escaped from the Taliban and went to the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camp in Mardan looking for his family. He was identified and arrested by the military, as he was considered a commander, he was resultantly jailed. During the exodus two of his daughters went missing and he has no knowledge of their whereabouts. He was released on the orders of the Prime Minister, after his relatives approached on his behalf and appealed for clemency, explaining the entire situation. Fahad presently runs a shop and is thinking of leaving Pakistan as everything here reminds him of his missing daughters.



## Hypocrisy

Tariq was sixteen years old and belonged to a middle class family in Mingora and was a diploma holder from a private medical institute, while also studying at a local college. His family was well-off as he also performed the functions of a doctor in his area, while one of his brothers had a business and the other was a government employee. The Taliban started gaining influence in Swat during that time. He never felt inclined towards the Taliban and their ideology, rather Tariq despised them. Apparently his mother got influenced by the daily sermons of Mullah Fazalullah on the radio, which were transmitted through his illegal FM radio station. She became a devoted follower of the Taliban and started convincing Tariq to join the outfit for *jihad*.

During this time the Taliban started running their parallel governance system, promising to resolve pending feuds. Tariq was influenced by this activity, as his family also had a pending problem over a certain property with their relatives. Tariq thought that by joining the Taliban, he would be able to reclaim the property. He started interacting in Taliban circles and joined the group. Tariq attended college in the morning and performed duties during the night. He was initially put on guard duty with his commander or governor of the area. During an execution, Tariq showed his displeasure, which was considered cowardice. The governor immediately assigned him to active duty in his area, as they thought of him as being weak.

During his stay with this organization, he noticed that there were some local Taliban and some foreign elements as well, who appeared to be Afghans and were being treated like kings, as the food offered to them was better, even water available to them was bottled water, while no one was allowed to speak to them. When Tariq expressed his displeasure over this biased treatment, he was imprisoned by the Taliban, but was later released. The senior Taliban leadership never prayed, while the rest were forced to pray five times a day. The reason given for this hypocrisy was that they were in a situation of war and during such situation the leadership was not bound to pray.

One day his commander ordered him to be part of a team which was to attack and capture an army post. After the initial exchange of fire, their weapons failed to operate. They also tried to utilize *aalooos* (Urdu: potatoe; i.e. grenades), but those also proved to be faulty. The team retreated to the camp and informed their governor of the faulty weapons, who showed indifference. The unit that Tariq belonged to was

not a favorite of the senior members, as the unit's members questioned every move of Taliban and even the unit commander himself showed displeasure towards the leadership. So, there was a rumor that they were being thrown to the wolves on purpose. This certainly convinced Tariq to leave the outfit, but there was the predicament of how he could do so.

When the army operation began in 2009, Tariq was sent to the front. During the journey, an army helicopter spotted them and attacked their vehicle. They escaped and mingled with the locals to reach Malakand. Now, he realized the social resentment present among the populace for the Taliban and the radical mindset. He discovered that his family was in Mardan and an acquaintance told him that his house had been destroyed during the conflict. He did not approach his family due to his resentment of his mother as she had insisted that he take this path.

Later on his brother somehow found him and approached him, convincing him to surrender to the authorities, which he did. Tariq stayed in jail for nine months and also attended the rehabilitation school setup by the military. He was 17 when released from jail. When Tariq visited his home, he expressed his resentment and displeasure to his mother. One week later his mother died of a heart attack.

Tariq has renounced violence and runs his own clinic in the area, while he regrets his decision to have ever joined the Taliban.



## A Drama

Hafeez, 37 years, resides in Hafizabad and is married with two daughters. At the age of 18 he finished his matriculation. He has eight brothers and three sisters, while two of his brothers also went to Jihad.

Since childhood, he was interested in fighting and during that time the print and electronic media were promoting *jihad*. TV dramas such as "Shaheen", based on a historical Urdu novel, was the brainchild of novelist Naseem Hijazi. The author describes the situation of Muslims of Grenada (Spain) at the time they were on the verge of getting expelled from Spain in 1942 in the novel. Moreover, the reasons that lead to the destruction of Muslim's empire in Granada are also summed up in the book "Talwar Toot Gae" is also by Naseem Hijazi based on the life and achievements of the Islamic Indian Ruler Sultan Haider Ali Tipu Sultan. Both were the prime source of inspiration for Hafeez. Whenever he saw military personnel he used to salute them. When he joined *jihad* and went through training, he had the view that it held a great significance in Islam. According to him, "*jihad* is not for any vested interest. It is God's blessing on *jihadi* that he does not have to earn anything and everything is provided by Him. People do not understand the spirit of *jihad*. Those who have never been to *jihad* cannot possibly know about its rewards."

During *jihad*, he was seriously injured four times. Once his left foot was severely damaged and he could not walk. The doctors gave him a negative prognosis, but according to him, he recovered due to his faith and went back to *jihad*. He considered the Afghan conflict a better *jihad*, as all the enemies are concentrated there.

He has received three months of training in weapons, such as anti-aircraft guns. During training, he was further preached to and there were lectures after every prayer. According to him the Holy Quran teaches about *jihad*. He was further of the opinion that the Jews have captured the whole world by taking the economy into their hands. Further, they have captured the entire world's education by controlling the universities and educational institutions.

According to him, 'our leaders have also graduated from the same institutions and thus have the same mindset. The dispute of infidels is with Islam.'

In case of Afghanistan, he stated that Taliban brought *shariat* and implemented Islamic practices successfully. In their time anybody could travel throughout Afghanistan easily but today no one is safe. To

demonize them and to restrict the Islamic *shariat*, the West invaded Afghanistan. In Taliban's reign drug trade was almost on the verge of elimination from Afghanistan, but today the picture is quite opposite. He further added that a European woman (*British Journalist Yvonne Ridley*) stayed in the custody of Taliban and later converted to Islam, after being impressed by their conduct.

He further stated that if there are 20 million youth recruited in *jihad*, they could conquer the entire world. In his opinion, the Government in Pakistan is part of the infidel coalition, too. Regarding women he had the viewpoint that there is no such restriction to talk to women in Islam. During missions they stay at the homes of local people, who warmly welcome them. If interacting with women was prohibited then they could not have stayed at their homes.

Political shift in government effects *jihad* and after the government's crackdown it has been restricted. He introduced around 250 young boys to the path of militancy, out of which four to five were killed. The militants cross the borders in small groups and move towards mountains. Even if they are from different organizations they support each other on a mission. He boasted that he has killed more than 80 opponents.

However, when the young boys that he had trained told him stories of "ill-treatment" at the hands of fellow *jihadis*, he started to question their motives and methods. According to him, after closely watching them over the years, he realized that the *jihadi* leaders are hypocrites and they betrayed thousands of young boys and their families after the government's crackdown post 9/11.

In the end, he admitted that if he had known the reality of this *jihad* early on, he would never have joined the cause.



### Friendly cross fire: a god send

Hailing from Akora Khattak, Kamal was eighteen years old when his father was killed in a road accident in Kuwait. The youngest of five siblings (four sisters and a brother) Kamal was tasked to stay at Akora Khattak to look after his mother as his sisters were all married and his father had also accommodated his elder brother into a company in Kuwait.

Reasonably comfortable, Kamal found a job at the tobacco factory in Akora Khattak and was quite comfortable with his duties shift. After his shift he would hang around the bazaar frequenting the local tea stalls where most of his friends would gather after work, too. One of his friends ran a DVD and computer CDs store and was quite generous in lending him DVDs to watch. Kamal was more interested in Bollywood movies, which his mother forbade him to watch at home. He would therefore often spend time at his friend's shop watching Indian romance and Western action movies. Kamal would usually spend two to three evenings at the DVD shop watching movies which made his mother lodge a complaint against him with his Kuwait based elder brother who was quite a disciplinarian in Kamal's life. Torn between pressure to stay at home in the evenings and his love for movies, Kamal discovered that if he brought Pakistani TV dramas his mother not only allowed him to watch at home but also watched it with him. He slowly made a practice of watching drama DVDs at least once a week with his mother; thus appeasing her. His friend, knowing this practice, suggested some religious text DVDs too, which talked about Islam and also had *qira'at* (Quranic recitation) to improve Arabic pronunciation for Quran. His mother loved it and would sit for hours, even when he was at work, watching these DVDs and practicing her Quranic recitation. She would often urge Kamal to sit with her and do *qira'at* together.

This turned out to be such a "bonding" activity that Kamal even mustered up the courage to tell his mother about the girl he was interested in marrying.

His mother was quite open to the idea but urged him to become more responsible, stop wasting time watching Bollywood movies and hanging out with his friends, thus becoming a *mu'min* - a true Muslim that the DVDs preached about so that he can acquire a reputation of a man with high morals. Kamal started offering prayers five times a day at the local mosque and even started teaching Quran to children at his home. A local *tablighi* (proselytising) group invited him to go with them for *tabligh* and

he travelled to various towns of Punjab with them. It was through his *tablighi* friends that he met one of the religious men teaching *qira'at* on a DVD that he had watched with his mother. He became quite close to him and it was he who urged him to help organize religious *jalsas* (congregations) for the group. Kamal even managed to get his brother to donate for the *jihad* that the group was carrying out in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Kamal recalled how his grandfather's brother had also been killed in *jihad* in Kashmir right after independence in 1947. It felt only natural to follow in his forefather's steps but he was apprehensive about leaving his mother alone. After internal family discussion, it was decided that Kamal would marry so that the wife can look after the mother and one of Kamal's nephew came to stay with the family to be the male around the house while Kamal was away on *jihad*. "I thought it would just be like *tabligh*. I would go, spend six months and then come back home. I didn't realize what I was getting myself into." Kamal spent a year in FATA. Initially he only cooked and cleaned for the more senior militants at their camp but slowly he was given tasks like night guard duty, picking up local intelligence about the Army's movements from locals, getting money from the local shop owners by threatening them. At around this time, Kamal realized that this was really all a cover for criminal activity since although the group prayed together, they did not have much in the way of religious knowledge. They would browbeat locals and talk about who would get which *malik's* land once the area was taken over.

It was a matter of good luck, in retrospect according to Malik, that he was injured by friendly fire. He was shifted to Peshawar for medical aid; he declared that his leg had been infected. Now he lives with his family at Akora Khattak and works as a teacher at a local school.



## Influence of Community



### **Qital**

Usman belonged to a middle-class religious family in Swat. One of his brothers was in Saudi Arabia, providing the necessary financial assistance to the family. In the family unit his grandfather was the most inclined towards religion and that had an effect on the entire family. Usman had developed interest towards education and was performing very well. While he was in the seventh grade, his family put him in a seminary to acquire religious education. During his time at the seminary, he noticed there was extreme strictness and the teacher or clerics placed greater emphasis on the importance of armed *jihad*. Gradually his mindset began to change and a concept evolved in him that Islam was only spread through the power of sword and armed *jihad*.

After he completed his religious education, he again joined school and passed the ninth grade exam with an A-grade. During this time Maulana Fazalullah along with the Swat chapter of Taliban had started emerging and gaining influence in the area. Meanwhile Usman opened up his own small seminary at his home. He had plans to extend the seminary, for which he required finances and he noted that the Taliban had the required funding available. In one case, the Taliban provided an owner of a video shop with the required amount of money, so he would burn all the DVDs and CDs. This made Usman realize that if Taliban are ready to pay for renouncing such activities, they will have no objection in funding his seminary. By that time youth were joining the outfit in large numbers and Usman also decided to join them, partly with the objective to acquire their financial assistance to develop his seminary on a larger scale.

The Taliban movement had gained considerable influence and control over Swat. They installed their parallel judicial system, imposed restrictions on women, female education and video shops. They also started extorting money from landlords and influential people of the area.

Usman noted that as they were gaining ground, there was an unexplainable influx of finances. Whenever Usman inquired of this from the leadership, they were unable to give a satisfactory answer. The amount of funding was at a scale that each foot soldier was being paid monthly an amount of PKR 15,000. There were also individuals with the outfit, who appeared to be Afghans.

Then the skirmishes started, along with targeting and executions of civilians, law enforcement and military by the Taliban. In a targeted bomb explosion one of Usman's friends also lost his life. These activities disturbed him and created doubts in his mind, regarding the objectives of the Taliban. When Usman expressed his displeasure to some of his counterparts, they accused him of being a traitor and reported the situation to the commander. The commander called him the very next day and threatened him with grave consequences for him and his family. Usman was able to convince the commander of his allegiance and termed everything a misunderstanding. Taliban then assigned Usman the task to give speeches and sermons at local mosques. Deep down he was very disturbed by the turn of events and wanted to leave, but feared for the safety of his family.

In the meantime, army operation started in Swat and everyone was ordered to leave the area. As soon as his family left Swat for Mardan, he also took the opportunity to escape. On reaching Mardan, he stayed with his friend, as he was unable to locate his family. He realized the fact that the Taliban were keeping everyone in the dark. Television had been banned by the Taliban in Swat, but during his stay in Mardan, Usman realized that there was nothing objectionable about television. After the operation ended and his family returned home, he contacted them. He was told of the social resentment of the general public towards the Taliban and their families. Upon the insistence of his family he surrendered to the military. He was jailed for six months, where he was interrogated and also sent to the rehabilitation center. Meanwhile his family had shifted to their old house, as their current house was extensively damaged in the conflict. After Usman's release, his brother also arrived from Saudi Arabia. His brother seemed visibly disturbed by the extent of damage to their home, as he had paid for its construction. He died of a heart attack resulting from the situation that he had witnessed.

Usman till this day regrets his affiliation with the Taliban and considers that he also had a part to play in the death of his brother.



## There and Back Again

Ali was inquisitive as to why his mobile phone and money was being taken away. He said that he didn't want to travel further, but they insisted that he should experience more. It was twenty-one days since he had been away from his mother and now he had no idea where they were taking him. He was stuck with them and couldn't escape.

It was in 2008 that Ali Ahmad, around 18 or 19 years old at the time, was encouraged by the mullah of the seminary to go and wage *jihad* in the name of God. Ali belonged to a small village in the Punjab province of Pakistan, some 25 km away from district Sialkot. His parents were divorced. Ali lived with his mother. His mother was a teacher in a government primary school and was earning a meager salary merely sufficient for making both ends meet. His father belonged to the medical profession but was known all around town for dishonest activities.

Ali was just an average young boy who used to balance his time between his government school and *madrasa*. He was five or six years old when he had joined the *madrasa*, where he aspired to learn the Holy Quran by heart. From the beginning, Ali was under the care of the mullah of the *madrasa*, who not only helped him in learning the Holy Quran but also motivated him to serve the "real cause." Little did he know that he was being asked to become a militant.

Ali's mother was content that her son was serving a noble cause, for this he left his government school's education and became a full time student at the religious seminary so that he could finish what he started. As time passed, the teachings of the mullah began to take root in his mind.

As Ali grew older and reached his teenage years, the mullah believed that the time was right to ask Ali to go and pursue a more "noble" cause. When the mullah asked him whether he wanted to go or not, Ali accepted the offer.

Ali was rushed to the city office of a militant organization along with other children collected by the mullah. From there he was taken to the (higher) district office in Sialkot, where all the other children were collected, counted and were transported to the yet higher division office in Gujranwala. All this time Ali thought that he was about to dedicate his life to God's service while throughout his mother remained in the dark, believing that he was going for *tabligh* (preaching). Ali was told by the mullah that he just had to attend a twenty one day camp, and if he didn't

like what he saw, he was free to come back home. For his satisfaction he was asked to bring his mobile phone and other belongings with him, so he could contact his mother whenever he missed her.

From the division office in Gujranwala the whole team of young recruits was shifted to Sheikhpura in Punjab. Here the team was subjected to the initial camp, which was of 21 days. Here they were not given guns or any other combats training but psychological training. The psychological training consisted of motivational speeches along with regularity of prayers, ablution and other Islamic principles. Here, Ali was allowed to talk to his mother, without any restriction.

After 21 days of training, Ali along with other recruits was transported to a totally new place, K, a town in Tehsil U near M in Khyber-Pakhtonkhwa province.

The entire team had been recruited in the Punjab province and had now been shifted to Khyber-Pakhtonkhwa province. At K they were searched for cell phones and all the cell phones and their clothes (mainly trousers and shirts) were confiscated. According to Ali, the camp authorities were waiting for nightfall. As soon as it was dark, they were taken a further ten km into the mountains away from M.

The mountainous camp, according to them, was called Maskar A (Camp A). Here, their initial level of training began, lasting exactly one week. Here they were given weapons. However they were not allowed to fire them, but were trained to dismantle the guns. The team of recruits was asked to follow a strict routine, which consisted of getting up early, offering prayers, recitation of the Holy Quran, then some physical exercise followed by breakfast and then the weapons training. Here, Ali and some other recruits realized that this was not as the mullah had said it would be, and he did not feel like continuing further. When Ali and others asked for their cell phones and other belongings back, they were refused the items but were assured that they will have them after first coming along and experiencing the real camp. On the eighth day the recruits were shifted another 50 km into the mountains. They had now reached the real camp where they were to be given the actual training to become militants. This camp was known as Maskar U. Here they were given weapons, rocket launchers, bombs and were trained to use, assemble and dismantle them. Every Friday a commander would come and give motivational speeches on the purity and nobility of *jihad*.

Ali and a few other colleagues realized that they were stuck in the wrong place; they were irritated as they were being treated very harshly and had no contact with the outside world, not even with their parents. Ali's mother was still under the impression that he was on a tour to preach Islam. At the closing ceremony of this training, the commander again came to the camp to give another speech and motivate the young teenage boys to go further. There were a total of 23 to 24 recruits, out of which 10 to 11 expressed a wish to proceed further.

Only seven were selected, however, while the others who raised their hands were asked to return because their family members were already working with the group.

The young boys were now under training, and when Ali and his friends demanded to be allowed to return home, the group rejected their plea and informed them that it was now mandatory for them to serve.

Nevertheless, on the 24th day of the training camp Ali and two other boys stole some guns, took their belongings and made an attempt to escape. He recalls escaping from the mountainous region around 9:00 a.m. on foot and walking for 17 hours continuously until they reached T, Khyber-Pakhtonkhwa at 2:00 a.m. the next morning.

Upon reaching T they offered prayers in the mosque where a religious group was also staying. Ali and his friends told them their story and asked them for some money so they could go back home. The group tried to persuade them that they should accompany them as the group was actually going on a mission to preach, but upon their insistence, the head of the group gave the boys some money. From T the boys took a public bus to M and from there took a bus to Rawalpindi, where Ali met with his relatives. His relatives provided him with shelter, food and clothes. Then he was returned to his parents.



## For the Country

Mani is 28 years old and lives in Gujranwala, hailing originally from Afghanistan. He joined the Taliban at the early age of ten and stayed with them until 1993. He has four sisters and two brothers. He lives with his wife and two children. The interview was conducted at his home, where there were only a few cups and plates, two pillows, two floor mats with two blankets and a stove. The children were sleeping on the floor and his entire family is living a life of poverty. During the interview, from time to time he emphasized his love and allegiance to Pakistan.

He was ten years old when his father threw him out because of his stepmother who did not want him to stay with them. His own mother died at an early age and his father married again. At such a young age he had no idea where to go and who to turn to. He had only the idea that Pakistan is a better place to earn a decent living. So, he stood by the roadside and started asking every passing vehicle to take him to Pakistan because he had no place to live.

People who brought him to a militant camp and told him they were Taliban, assuring him of his safety and wellbeing, picked him up. He was given a religious education and was also continuously preached the Taliban's cause. He said that he decided to join them and dutifully carried out their instructions at that early age largely because of concerns regarding food and shelter. As time passed, he became more confident that his decision to join the particular group was the right one.

When inquired about what was preached to him about Islam and its teachings, he said that Islam preaches *jihad* to ensure peace and prosperity in society, it is a complete guideline for everyone as to how they should live their lives. Women should stay within their homes and should be under the veil. According to him Afghanistan had reached its glory when the Taliban took over. There was peace and harmony within society and Islamic values were implemented. Women were given their due rights, and accompanied by their male family members, could go to the markets or elsewhere.

Regarding his role in the conflict engulfing Afghanistan, Mani said that he contributed to the fighting with the motivation to safeguard Islam. He left the Taliban in 1993 when his leader was killed during an operation.

He served the Taliban most of his life, but later on he developed differences and it became difficult for him to stay with them. After Mani

realized that he could no longer get along with them he migrated to Pakistan and started living in Rawalpindi.

He stayed in Rawalpindi for six to seven years. He earned his livelihood by performing unskilled labor, as he had no other training. Four years back when he got married to an Afghani girl he shifted to Gujranwala. He has never declared that he is ex-Taliban as that would create difficulties for him and his family. As he is not registered and does not possess any identification, he faces numerous difficulties. Whenever there is a crime or untoward incident in the area, the police take him away for questioning, whether he is involved or not.



## Sponsoring a death

This story was narrated to us by Arshad who along with his cousin and friend Fahad was a member of an organization we will term Organization H. As inhabitants of Rawalakot, Arshad and Fahad were fast friends, their ties further strengthened by the fact that they were related, too. They were educated at the local high school, with the fathers both working in Islamabad. Arshad's father was a driver at a foreign embassy and Fahad's father a security guard for a private security company at a foreign company. Though not middle class, both boys had the luxury to enjoy their childhood with the right to learn and play. Their fathers would come home on weekends from Islamabad and both belonged to close knit families. While still in high school, Fahad became interested in a girl who was from another village and used to talk to her every night. Upon discovery of this romance by the girl's family, there was a ruckus, which was amicably handled by Fahad's and Arshad's families. However, in order for things to die down and also realizing that the children had grown up, the fathers decided to put them to work. Arshad's father succeeded in sending his son to Iraq on a short-term contract while Fahad was placed at a company in Rawalpindi. The two friends remained in contact and such was the extent of their friendship that Arshad even used to send small pocket change and presents for his friend who, although working, could not afford expensive mobile phones *et cetera* for himself. Arshad tried to secure a job for Fahad but couldn't manage. However, increasingly Arshad "humbled by all that Allah had given him" started becoming religious and started instructing Fahad not to waste his time with girls in Rawalpindi and to instead devote himself to Islam. Arshad professed that he would like nothing better than to "devote himself to Islam and fight against the infidels based on what he saw the Americans do in Iraq" but he did not have the luxury to do that given his family obligations. However, Arshad offered to sponsor Fahad's life and family if he would devote himself to *tabligh*. Fahad agreed as he was also not very happy with his job and joined a *tablighi* group in Sector I-x of Islamabad. After a year of *tabligh*, Fahad became a member of a political party that was associated with a militant group sending people to Kashmir.

Fahad had already gone to Kashmir twice with the group (once for three months and the second time for a special operation) before Arshad came to know about it. Arshad now says he was uncomfortable with this but Fahad accused him of controlling his decisions just because he gave him money. Arshad kept quiet but was very happy when Fahad asked him to

open a *madrasa* in Rawalakot where he could impart religious education to children. The *madrasa* was operational when the 2005 earthquake hit and it took in a number of orphans and destitute, all sponsored in a major way by Arshad. Arshad's family started telling him that wanted men were visiting Fahad in the *madrasa* but Arshad did not take it seriously as his wife (he had subsequently married) was not too happy with this arrangement of sponsoring Fahad, his family and his interests. However, this was not idle talk and Arshad, home on vacation, discovered that Fahad was not only still actively involved in operations in Kashmir but that he was actively sending orphans there, too. Fahad convinced Arshad to go with him to Kashmir to "experience *jihad* himself instead of only signing the cheque." Motivated by Fahad and his new friends, Arshad did go but he could not muster the courage to participate in a "launch." "I spent my time cooking for the *jihadis* since I had been a cook in Iraq. I would observe how they would come back and joke about the look of horror and fear on their victim's face just before they slaughtered him and I thought to myself: who are these people? This is the same arrogance that I experienced in Iraq among the Western troops." Arshad kept quiet but thoughtful and after three weeks returned to Iraq. He started slowly decreasing the amount of money on one pretext or another to Fahad, who became very angry and even threatened his family. After this Arshad broke all contact with him. A year later, Arshad learnt that Fahad had been killed in Kashmir. Wiping his tears, Arshad said, "I think I was equally to blame as I encouraged him in the first place... but I encouraged him for Islam... I didn't know that he would become a militant but of course I had become aware... For the last four to five years I knew what was going on in the *madrasa*, known wanted militants were residing there, I was sponsoring them, sharing with them how the Americans operated in Iraq, encouraging them for Afghanistan subtly... I knew all this and am equally to blame for his life and his death." Arshad now lives in his village farming and teaching at a local government school.



## Childhood Folly

Ali had been serving in the Pakistan Army for ten years and had travelled to Kashmir, Wana and Swat with his unit. He had three children who lived with his parents and wife in his village near Kohat. He tried to serve well as he looked upon the Army as his second chance in life. For Ali had been a *jihadi* who had "served" in Kashmir for six years as a young boy. As an unhappy teenager frequently getting into fights in his village and consequently with his father because of that, one day he left with a group of *tablighis* who had come to his village. Ali and four of his friends who had all taken off without telling their parents, travelled with the *tablighis* for four months before ending up in Jhang where they joined an organization that we will refer to as Organization L. The organization, after giving them basic combat training sent them to Kashmir where he operated sporadically for six years. During those years Ali missed his family and home. Life was tough and dangerous, and he wanted out. Knowing that this change of heart would not be taken very kindly by his commanders, he pretended to have informally received word that his mother had died and used that as an excuse to return home.

Six years after disappearing, he received a warm welcome back home from his family and started enjoying the family routine of home life, three hot meals a day, friends, and recreation time. He told his family that he had been working in Karachi all those years as a laborer, bus conductor and waiter. The family started talking about his marriage but before that he needed to get a job. His father, a retired army person who had served with the Corps Commander, managed to get him into the army although he was slightly over age yet meeting all the physical requirements. This was ten years back. However, while serving in Swat, he was one day summoned to his superior's office who had received intelligence from the General Headquarters (GHQ) about him.

When confronted by his superior, Ali confessed to have been a *jihadi* but declared that to be a folly. The commander interrogated him at length and was quite candid in telling him that there was pressure on him to kick him out of the Army. Ali pleaded that as a father of three he had nowhere else to go if he was kicked out. The Commander relented and according to Ali managed to ward off pressure from his superiors by telling them that Ali was being monitored. "It was Allah's way of cleaning my name that within a month our post was attacked by the Taliban and I was on the forefront of the defense attack. I got a chest wound and sent on medical leave home, with all benefits."



### Waiting for the call...

Farooq, 45, belongs to Gujranwala. He went to Afghanistan in 1989 to wage *jihad*. He has served most of his tenure as a militant in Afghanistan. Farooq is a member of one of Pakistan's leading politico-religious parties. He still serves as an important member of the party. However, back in the days when he was actively involved in the fighting he was appointed the head (*ameer*) of Gujranwala and then deputy head of the Punjab province. He is also a member of the central Committee of the party and has contested elections for the provincial assembly in 2008 with his party's ticket but did not win.

Farooq currently owns a business and is a student of M.Phil at a private University. He is married and has four children, two sons and two daughters. Both of his sons are studying at college and if they are selected for Jihad they will happily go and become part of the struggle.

Farooq has four brothers and four sisters. His father was a government servant, his mother a teacher in a local government school in a village near Gujranwala. Two of his brothers had gone to jihad in the early 90s while one of the brothers stayed in *jihad* for thirteen consecutive years and finally received martyrdom, he says. One of his brothers serves in the government as a civil servant in the Federal Board of Revenue.

He told us that when he was in school he had joined the student organization of the party. Later when he was acquiring his Master's degree he decided to go for *jihad*. He went to *jihad* without informing his family because he was afraid they would not let him leave. When he reached one of the training camps in Afghanistan with the help of his organization he sent a letter to his family confirming that he was safe and embarked on militant training. He completed his training in Afghan camps. The only motivation leading him was his faith in God, which every Muslim bears, he says. According to him "it was the time when our Muslim Afghan brothers called us to safeguard them from the infidel invasion."

When discussing the place of women in Islam he said that only Islam recognizes woman as a respected entity, prior to which she was always humiliated and condemned. When he had visited England and observed that women are rushing to their offices and work early in the morning he pitied them and said that women should not be allowed to live such a life whereas they should be kept at homes with the responsibility of raising children and taking care of the family.

He is still of the opinion that if the situation gets worse and if there is a need of more people for *jihad* he would certainly go and become part of it again. However at the same time he reiterated the importance of education and stated his belief that education should be made obligatory for all the people but preferably Islamic education.



## Nostalgia

Faizan is 27 and resides in a village of Gujranwala. He went to *jihad* at the age of 16 and returned after eight months. He kept going back towards active militancy afterwards. He has five brothers and three sisters, while his father is a laborer. Two of his brothers have also received militant training previously. Faizan is currently running a shop in the village and due to the old age of his parents, has preferred to help out at home.

He went for the first time on training in 2001, for a length of three months. He showed his consent for *jihad*, influenced by teachings received from his *ameer*. He said that Islam instructs every Muslim to protect and promote it. He further said that Muslims are being challenged by opponent forces because they are Muslims. It is the prime duty of every Muslim to counter them in a manner that teaches the rest of the world a lesson. If a single Muslim is in a predicament, it is obligatory for the rest of the *umma* to feel that pain.

During *jihad* he prayed for martyrdom and he considered lucky those militants who had embraced martyrdom during combat. He describes the time of training as the most beautiful and excellent time of his life. He feels nostalgic for the time he spent in training, where he was treated as a family member. He further described that during Jihad one is closer to God and is purified of all sin. He was of the opinion that women too play an important role in Jihad. Faizan was of the view that Islam is spreading due to *jihad* and a single *jihadi* can overpower countless infidels. He still is determined to go back for *jihad* if his *ameer* calls him again.



### Basic Objective of Life

Salim lives in a village in Punjab. He is 28 years old and belongs to a militant organization. He went to for Jihad in 1998 and came back in 2001. He received his training and went on a mission.

He has eight siblings and his father was a laborer. One of his brothers went to *jihad* as well. He says at that time *jihad* was preached everywhere and being Muslim he received Islamic education, which strongly advocates *jihad*. According to him Seven Chapters of Holy Quran explain *jihad*, which clearly indicates its significance. On the other hand across the globe the Infidels are crushing Muslims. He said that if we take a look at conflicts in the world, most of them, for instance Palestine, Kashmir, Iraq and Afghanistan, are linked with Muslims and Islam. This was the motivation for him to get up and wage Jihad. He received his training and eventually became a commander.

He went on to missions more than once. He received weapons training and listened to Islamic lectures during his training at camps. The training duration was two weeks and three months respectively.

For him *jihad* is the core value of life. He strongly believes in it and deems it necessary in the current situation too. He also gave his opinion that different governments have had different impact on *jihad*. During the 1980s it was hyped but after that the governments due to America's pressure have always discouraged it.

He further explained that women should not interact with men. That is what he was taught during the training. Training sessions on ethics were highly motivating and impressive where the *jihadis* for the first time realized the true message of Islam. He said they were taught that "women with covered heads and innocent faces would come to us to dig out information from us so we shall beware of them, as they will be working for Western agencies." He said our culture is to respect women and not to refuse them help when they ask for it, so he agreed to talk after he had entered the room and found that the researcher is a woman.

He said that we can win the Holy War but our governments are also allied with Infidels. "We have not won it so far in the last 65 years because unless every man in the country is not ready to take part in *jihad* it cannot be won. We need to mobilize maximum number of people for the noble cause because it is a big game," he said.

He further mentioned that in his village most of the boys are trained by *jihadi* camps but they do not have experience of actual missions. They are sleepers and can be called upon by the *ameer* in an emergency.

He returned home because he has a big family and there is no one else to earn livelihood. His family's poor economic conditions made him come back and stay here. Now he works and runs a shop in his village. His monthly income is PKR 12,000 to 15,000 a month, which supports his family.

He still strongly believes that if the *ameer* calls him back, he would go without giving a second thought. He reiterated his belief that *jihad* is the basis of every Muslim's life.

When asked what would happen to his family if he returned to *jihad*, he said he believes that they would live on their own if he dies because living here at a time when his religion and homeland requires him is worse than death. If he dies in *jihad* it will be a blessed moment of his life.

He would consider himself lucky if God were to place him among His loved ones and take his life for the religion of Islam. Those who die as *shaheed* (martyr) are higher than those who return alive (*ghazi*), in his opinion.



## Safeguarding of Interests

Inspired by the sermons and speeches of the leader of a banned group, Saleem, now 43, decided in 1989 that it was incumbent upon him to go and join the struggle against the communists. He was twenty-one years old when he became a militant and he is still linked with one of the banned outfits of the country. Saleem is now married and has five children. He is currently in charge of media wing of the banned group. One of Saleem's sons after completing his matriculation also went on *jihad* training and after completing his training; he is now studying in a college.

When asked about speeches which inspired him, he stated that the speeches talked about the misery the Muslims were in. Afghanistan was in the hands of enemies and they were committing atrocities against Muslims, killing children, harassing and abusing innocent women. Under these situations he was left with no other choice but to wage a fight against these people.

When asked about his life during training and missions, he explained that in the training camp in Afghanistan he was trained to use the weapons and basics of guerilla warfare. The trainings were intense and hard. After trainings he was sent on different missions. He fought against the Russian troops in Afghanistan and it was due to fighters like him that the Russians were defeated in Afghanistan. This is a fight between Islam and infidels. If we observe the dynamics of the whole world it will be known to us that the whole world community is against Islam and Islamic countries.

All non-Muslims have gathered on one platform and are fighting against Islam and Muslims. Therefore it is the prime duty of every Muslim to safeguard their interests and call for battle against them. The only way to survive in such situations is to wage *jihad* against these people, according to him.

He further explained that *jihad* is a platform, which unites all the Muslims for a cause. It should be made obligatory for every young boy in the country and it should be fought in the whole wide world.

Later when asked about the role of *jihad* in Pakistan, he was of the opinion that *jihad* is in accordance with the policy framework of Pakistan and its Army. *Jihad* teaches discipline, ethics, morality, and a life with dignity. It is funded by the people of the country; they give donations and charity which help in this cause; the wealthy members of the

organizations contribute a lot in the form of donations to the organizations. *Jihad* is mandatory on every Muslim and it should continue to be a permanent feature because it is the basis for our safety in this world, in Saleem's opinion.



## Wrapping it up

The relentless march of time carries along in its flow countless stories: narratives of creation and of destruction, of achievement and failure, of war and peace. Much of what has been passed down to us as history has been the narrative of winners and survivors, their shibboleths taking root in posterity as perceived conventions of the ages. The farther one goes back in history, the more obscure the stories of the common folk and the more prominent the identification of the era with the ruler. The narrative has continued to shift gradually over time; though, from a centering within institutions of power to a sharing by outsiders. In today's age of mass media and mass communication, a lot more gets recorded and will survive. The freedom and reach of expression now presents new challenges to nations and indeed to the world civilization towards maintaining a *zeitgeist* emphasizing peace, prosperity, growth and freedom. "As force is always on the side of the governed – the governors have nothing to support them but opinion," observed David Hume, with a nod to democracy in terming force a matter of numbers, but also noting the burden on the state of needing to have public opinion behind it, even as it has to be molded into more helpful contours. For every Jefferson there is as eloquent a Bakunin. The calls for a new world order find support among most challenging the *status quo*, though many ideologies are not as clear on the modalities of the rebuilding as they are on the tearing down of present structures.

Viewed by all conceivable standards, our times are remarkable, not likely to be footnotes in history but prominent milestones. A superpower's might extends across the globe for the first time in almost a century and with far greater capability than ever before. On clear display yet, though, a lingering vulnerability to comparatively infinitesimally small organizations challenging the very edifice of modern socio-political structures, fueled by the zeal of members ready to die for their cause. The costs of countermeasures have been unacceptably high, the success against adversarial forces much less in evidence than proclaimed. This is a battle for hearts and minds as much as for dominion and resource, to be studied with interest by succeeding generations—this is indeed history in the making. We are part of a still-unfolding story of great importance.

Certainly prominent in the history of this region will be the militancy and radicalism in our generation's midst. Scholars, historians and philosophers will provide different rationales for the rooting of the radical mindset and its impact on society – perhaps through individuals

assuming outsize roles, themselves case studies in psychology and sociology. A possible part of the discourse will be the forwarding of solutions in the clarity of hindsight on how millions could have been saved. Nonetheless, until we have reached the point in time where all this is past, catalogued and filed away, our generation has to live with this, one of the major catastrophes of human history unfolding in the rise and impact of the extremist mindset.

The idea of extremism is neither new to the world nor is it being used in this region for the first time. It has been often been resorted to by different non-state actors in forcing state elements into compliance with their demands. Whatever the reasons, it has been condemned and will always be condemned throughout the world, notwithstanding bromides about one man's terrorist being another's freedom fighter.

Pakistan is confronted with a grave challenge. Militancy and the militant mindset apparently have support and nurturing within society. We have long crossed the Rubicon of passive debate on the genesis and birth of this radical mindset and the reasons behind the emergence of such groups. It is indeed a futile debate because in postponing remedies while doing so, we will be allowing these radicals to spread farther. We are already at the point where just punitive measures or even elimination of individuals within these radical groups will not put an end to militancy in the country. Injection of billions of dollars of aid into military weapons pipelines will not help defeat them.

The stories in this compilation prove the futility of planning for a reversal of militancy through a defeat in a direct conflict. This is not just asymmetric conflict in kinetic terms; this is a clash of interpretations regarding basic values, different readings of texts and historical narratives considered sacred by those involved on both sides. The application of overwhelming force produces an effect on the ranks of the radicals opposite to what was intended as justification for force. A totally new and fresh approach is needed to counter this militant mindset, which has penetrated our society with much celebrated force. Perhaps a better-informed and more comprehensive strategy is needed to address the roots of this tree, and possibly by pruning these roots we might be able to save ourselves from living under the shade of the tree.

The stories discussed have opened for us entirely new avenues of understanding meaningful in evaluating the causes of militancy in Pakistan. They indicate unambiguously that people adopting the path of violence are not just poverty-stricken individuals who join these militant

outfits for monetary assistance alone. All subjects of our research undertook this path because they felt it was the right path to choose above all alternatives before them. The debate here is not to analyze who is right and who is not; the issue is that there is a path available to them which is not only violent in its very nature but at the same time contains self-propagating attributes of violence and extremism in society. The result is a society that looks for solutions to its problems in violence, giving rise to a mentality that presumes the picking up of weapons and adoption of coercive measures the answer to all the questions. Living and surviving in such an environment, potentially pervasive in the coming years, should give pause to all.

This document does not put forth any solutions or remedies on how to counter such elements in society. It does lead to the understanding however that the basic assumptions placed before us thus far are no longer helpful in finding a cure for the disease we face. It should be acknowledged by now that we are not facing turban-wearing, Kalashnikov holding people; rather, we face a type, which may or may not physically resemble the stereotype but will have much better mental agility, capability and efficacy than did the early prototypes in the movement. Additionally, they have the ability to meld within the community seamlessly.

This compilation tries to point towards the gravity of the situation manifesting itself in the acceptance of these radicals within the mainstream of our society. It is surprising to see that society is no more afraid of such people and does not object to their presence or operation in any manner. Perhaps our society has become tolerant of them; perhaps it is naïve in its inability to comprehend the dangers such a segment of society puts forth.

Perhaps they should be reminded of the words of Fyodor Dostoyevsky: "Each of the active group, while proselytizing and spreading its side-branches to infinity, has as its task, by a systematic and denunciatory propaganda, ceaselessly to undermine the importance of the local powers, to produce bewilderment in communities, to engender cynicism and scandal, complete disbelief in anything whatsoever, a yearning for the better, and finally, acting by means of fires as a popular means par excellence, to plunge the country, at the prescribed moment, if need be, even into despair."

