



WORLD ANTI EXTREMISM
NETWORK
BUILDING A FREE WORLD

Jaish ul Adl

Profile and Post-Taliban Afghanistan Threats

Imtiaz Baloch

Jaish ul Adl **Profile and Post-Taliban Afghanistan Threats**

Imtiaz Baloch

Copyright © World Anti Extremism Network 2024

The content of this case study reflects the author's personal views and doesn't necessarily align with the official positions of WAEN or Atlas Network.

Editor: Omar Sadr

Email: hq@WorldAntiExtremism.org

Supported by



Table of content

About the Author.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Methods of study.....	5
Structure.....	5
Profile.....	7
Activities of Jaish.....	10
JuA's Relations with the Afghan Taliban.....	11
Policy Recommendation.....	13
Conclusion.....	14
Endnotes.....	15

About the Author

Imtiaz Baloch is a journalist and researcher affiliated with The Khorasan Diary, an Islamabad-based research platform monitoring militant groups in Asia. He has covered Baloch armed groups and Islamic Jihadist activities in Pakistan and the Iranian Sistan-Baluchistan province. He has been quoted in well-known news outlets about the recent exchange of airstrikes between Pakistan and Iran.

Introduction

Jiash ul Adl (the Army of Justice) is an anti-Iranian Salafi Baloch militant Islamist operating in Sistan and Balochistan, the south-eastern province of Iran, on the border with Pakistan and Afghanistan. Since the inception of the group in 2012, JuA has remained primarily responsible for major terrorist attacks in the province and a key challenging factor in Pakistan and Iran's bilateral relationship. In January this year, both countries exchanged tit-for-tat airstrikes saying that they targeted militants' sanctuaries in each other's territories.¹

JuA is a splinter faction of Jandullah, the group that carried out lethal attacks against the Iranian border guards, Police, Foraja forces, Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), and other officials over the past decade. It has been responsible for the abduction of Iranian security forces, Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attacks, sporadic guerrilla warfare, suicide bombings, and sniper attacks. Importantly, a paradigm shift was witnessed when the group recently launched a series of deadly near-simultaneous attacks in three Iranian cities, particularly Chabahar's local naval base headquarters, the headquarters of IRGC, and the intelligence department of police.² In April 2024, JuA claimed at least six attacks targeting military installations in the Rask, Sarbaz, and Chabahar cities of Sistan and Balochistan province simultaneously.³ Previously, the group also targeted the Zahedan police station in a suicide attack in July 2023 and the Rask city police headquarters in a gun and suicide attack in December 2023.



(Infographics about JuA attacks in Chabahar, Rask, and Sarbaz attacks; Source Telegram 2024)

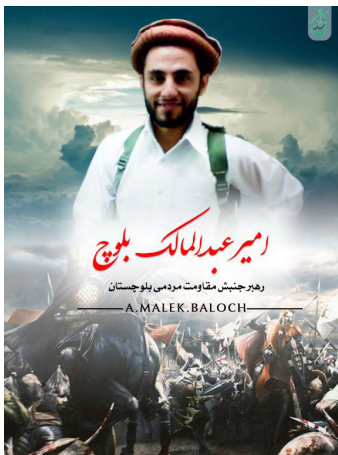
Claiming responsibility for the attacks, JuA warned China, Russia, and India to avoid any investment in the Shia state's sectarian Makuran coast project in their official statement.⁴ The new approach adopted by JuA shows that the group is preparing to target the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a regional economic initiative for the connectivity of roads, ships, and railways that connect India to Central Asia, Russia, Baltic, Nordic, and Arctic regions.⁵

This paper delves deep into the different aspects of JuA, which widely contributed to violence in the South-Central Asia region, and also examines the JuA presence and future threats to the region and the possibilities of violent escalation in regional instabilities.

Methods of study

For this paper, different research methods were considered, both quantitative and qualitative. This involved an in-field study in bordering areas of Pakistan and Iran during the conflict between both countries, in January this year. Moreover, the author analyzed the growing strategies of armed groups over many years in the adjacent areas of Pakistan and Iran. Lastly, interviews were conducted for this paper with renowned journalists and researchers in different languages including Balochi, Urdu, and English. Similarly, different excerpts of JuA statements were translated from the Persian language to explain the situation.

Structure



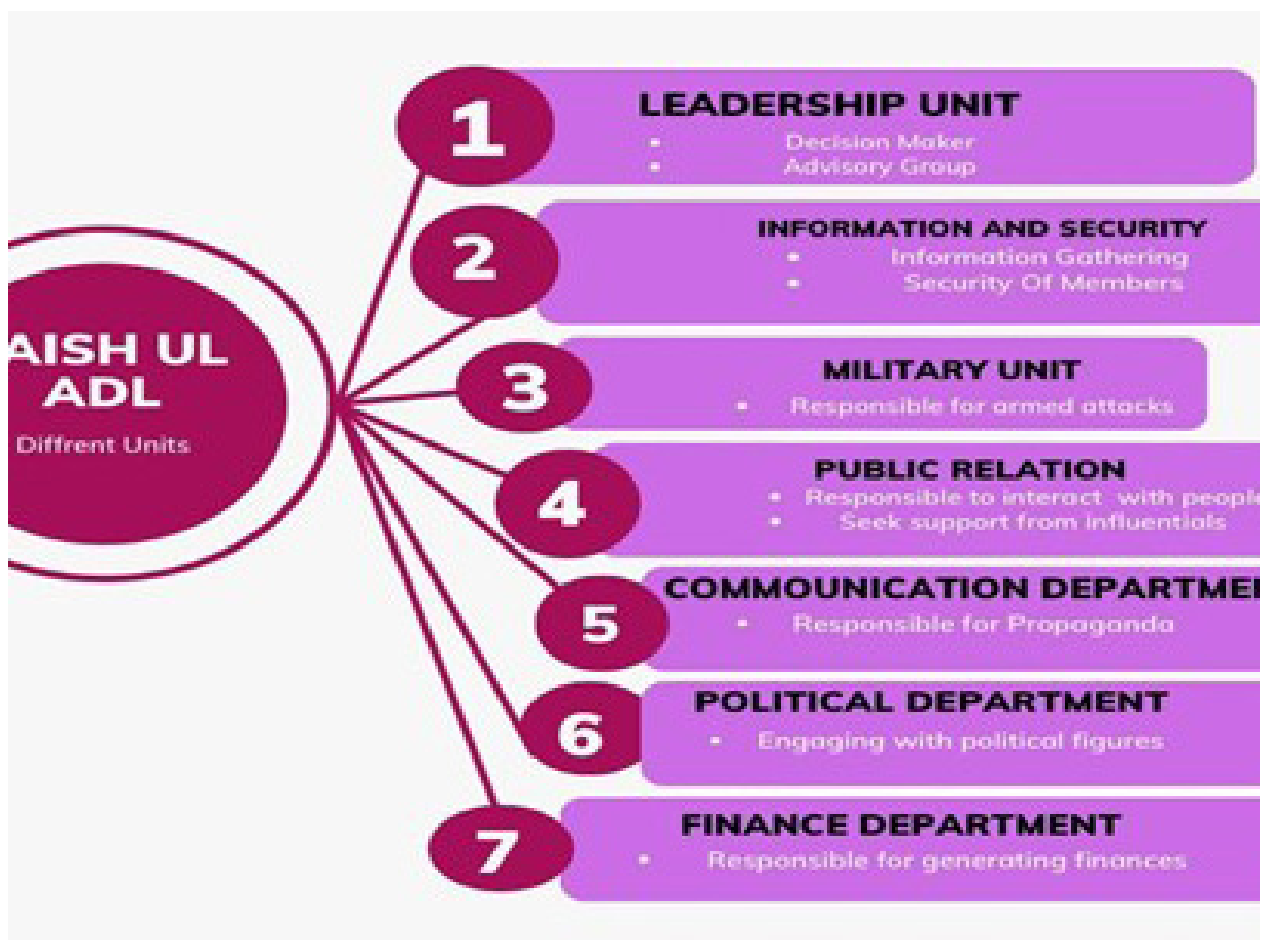
(Abdolmalek Rigi former leader of Jandallah executed by Iran; Picture Source JuA Telegram 2023)

JuA came to the surface against the Iranian state in 2012 when Iran arrested and executed Abdolmalek Rigi, the leader of Jandallah, the predecessor of Jaish ul Adl, with the help of the Pakistani state. With the weakening of Jandallah emerged Jaish ul-Adl.⁶

The recent high-profile, sophisticated attacks demonstrate the complex and organized structure of the group. The Jaish comprises seven different units including leadership

which is further divided into two sub-sections, particularly the decision-maker and advisory group. Other units included the information and security department which is responsible for information gathering and security of the group members. Another unit, the military department, is responsible for conducting armed attacks against Iranian security personnel in the province.⁷

Similarly, the group also formed a public relations department which is responsible for interacting with people and persuading influential people to support their cause. To maintain communication with the public, propagate their narrative, and counter anti-Jaish narratives among the public, the group established a communication department that handles queries and misunderstandings about the group. The group also has a political department for dealing with politicians and a finance department for managing financial matters.⁸



(Diagram generated by the author for this paper; Structure of JuA)

Profile



(Salaheddin Faroughi, leader of JuA; Source JuA Telegram 2024)

Salaheddin Faroughi, the current leader of JuA, was born in 1979 in the Sistan and Balochistan province's Rask city. Faroughi became the leader of JuA after Ragi's execution. Former fighters of Jandallah joined the group after the establishment of JuA. Faroughi played a vital role in the resurgence of the armed activities in the Sistan and Balochistan province.

JuA faced a major setback when Moulvi Abdulrauf Rigi, the brother of Abdolmalek Rigi, split up and formed his own group Jaish ul-Nasar after developing differences over the murder of a hostage by JuA in 2013. However, under the leadership of Faroughi, the group managed these disagreements.⁹

JuA mainly operates in the Baloch areas of Iran, particularly in Sistan and Balochistan province. However, the Iranian often claims that the group operates from the neighboring Pakistan's Balochistan province. Due to this reason, the Iranian state recently targeted the alleged hideouts of JuA in the bordering Panjgur district inside Pakistani territory. Both countries accused each other of providing safe havens to their proxies, particularly Baloch armed groups. Similarly, Pakistan often raises concern and accuses Iran of patronizing the Baloch ethno-separatist groups in its territory.¹⁰

| Ethno-Religious Factor

The ideology of JuA is mainly dependent on two structural points: sectarian and ethnic. Regarding the ethnic dimension, Iran's minority Baloch Sunni population has expressed dissatisfaction with the Iranian government accusing it of discrimination and atrocities, and limiting their autonomy over resources and wealth. Iran's population is approximately 90-95% Shia Muslims, while 5-10% are Sunni Muslims.¹¹ Baloch minorities seek greater recognition and respect for their cultural identity, better living conditions, and opportunities for economic development in the Baloch region of Iran.

The Iranian Baloch are recognized as an ethnic group with their own distinct culture, setting them apart from the Persian majority in Iran. These differences have led to numerous tensions between the Iranian government and the Baloch community and are at the core of the insurgencies in Sistan and Balochistan. In Iran, Persian ethnicity predominantly influences government and societal structures, with most of the population adhering to Shia Islam. Conversely, the Baloch Sunni community views itself as a separate cultural and religious entity, often facing discrimination from the Iranian government.¹² This structural discrimination particularly sectarianism, poverty, and lack of economic opportunities has instigated a sense of alienation among the people of Sistan and Balochistan.

Secondly, secular Baloch rights and separatist activists faced a severe crackdown after the Islamic revolution in 1979. As a result, the secular and progressive political activists fled the country creating a space for the Sunni religious actors to emerge. These factors played a crucial role in transforming ethno-religious ideologies into Salafi Jihadism among the residents of Sistan and Balochistan.

Militant Islamist groups like Ansar ul Furqan, Jandallah, Mazaran Gumnaam-e-Balochistan (Unknown Tigers of Baluchistan), Harakat Ansar Iran, and particularly Jaish ul-Adl (JuA) have been exploiting the alienated Iranian Balochs against the theocratic state.¹³

As per the sectarian lines, JuA rejects Velayat-al Faqih, the Shia political doctrine of governance developed by Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the Sistan and Balochistan provinces, Sunni people observed deliberate attempts by the government to promote Shi'ism and either close or demolish Sunni mosques and

seminaries. Estrangement and nervousness among Sunnis of Sistan and Balochistan coupled with deprivation of socio-economic rights forced people to send their children to seminaries for education as these are the only institutions providing free education, shelter, and food. Additionally, the religious sites are the primary venues of assembly for nationalist Baloch citizens throughout the province managed by Sunni religious scholars. Sunni madrasa networks and nationalist sentiments among the people of Sistan and Balochistan are breeding grounds for JuA against the Iranian state¹⁴.

Ideology: Salafi Jihadism

The vacuum left behind by Baloch secular nationalists in Sistan and Balochistan after Ayatollah Khomeini's takeover, and the rise of the Deobandi and Wahhabi madrasa networks in Pakistan under the military dictator Zia-ul-Haq, to counter the communist government in Afghanistan, is being witnessed on large scale. The rise of Shi'ism in Iran prompted a reaction in Pakistan, leading madrasa networks of Wahhabi and Deobandi schools of thought preaching against the Shias. The anti-Shia literature produced in Pakistan and militant organizations, particularly Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) and Sipah-e-Sahaba e Pakistan (SSP), became an important source for the Salafi-Jihadist groups and ethno-religious movement in Sistan and Balochistan. Baloch Sunnis from Iran after facing a severe crackdown, fled from the country, and some enrolled in these madrasas where they weaponized the anti-Shia narrative to gain support for their political cause against the Iranian state. The shift from secular nationalism to Salafi Jihadism among certain Iranian Baloch groups, influenced by the diaspora, led to significant implications for the future generation¹⁵.

Jandallah was considered to be influenced by the radical Salafi-Wahhabis of Pakistan. Abdul Malik Ragi, as a seminary student, got enrolled in the Pakistan Jamia Farooqi, also known as Jamia Bennuria, a most famous Deobandi seminary in Pakistan. Jamia Bennuri is the seminary institute that is said to be an influential religious school among the jihadis because many militant leaders graduated from there. Madrassas in many parts of Pakistan were used as safe havens and training institutions for the Sunni jihadists of Iran. Other than that, Ragi also has sought military training in Waziristan and other places¹⁶.

Activities of Jaish

JuA, in the last two years, carried out some sophisticated and coordinated attacks in the parts of Sistan and Baluchistan. In the span last, 9 months, JuA carried out 3 suicide bombing attacks in Zehadan and Rask. Independent data collected for this paper based on claims of the group shows that the group has carried out at least 21 attacks from 2021 to June 2024 claimed by JuA until compiling this paper in Sistan-and-Balochistan province and one in Karman province, respectively¹⁷.

JuA carries out various styles of attacks such as sniper shootings, [Improvised Explosive Devices] (IED) attacks, ambushes, and intelligence-based operations against the informants. The group mainly targets and abducts Iranian border guards as well as personnel from IRGC, the police force, Foraja forces, and members of the Iranian judiciary in Sistan and Balochistan.

The propaganda footage collected for this paper emphasizes a surge in the recruitment and operational capabilities of the group, allowing it to plan and execute large-scale attacks while exploiting the fragile security situation in the province. The group frequently releases videos through its mouthpiece portraying its weaponry, vehicles, manpower, and motorbikes illustrating the group's increasing financial status.¹⁸ The recent wave of terrorism in Sistan and Balochistan can be attributed to a multitude of factors, including executions of a large number of Baloch citizens and frequent murders of fuel-carrying truck drivers. Similarly, the heavy-handed response to peaceful protesters seeking justice for a minor rape victim at the hands of the Chabahar police chief on September 30, 2023, has heightened tensions. The protest led to a violent crackdown by authorities resulting in the loss of over a hundred lives, including protesters, bystanders, and worshippers. This incident, which the local people termed "Black Friday" further fueled militancy within the region, perpetuating a cycle of conflict and instability in the province.¹⁹

Due to anti-Shia tendencies, the group collects funds from real estate in the Punjab province of Pakistan, extorts money from illegal oil smugglers in the bordering areas of Pakistan-Iran, and collects a sum of money from drugs. Previously, the group allegedly was being funded by their Saudi supporters.²⁰

JuA's Relations with the Afghan Taliban

Alleged support of the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia was considered to be a distrustful link for the anti-Shia Baloch militant groups, particularly Jandullah and JuA among the Salafi jihadist groups in South Asia. Ragi after managing connections with the Pakistan-based Sipah-e-Sahaba, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, and Al-Qaeda's Abu Musab Al Zarqawi traveled to Afghanistan. However, the Afghan Taliban restricted him from entering as the Taliban were suspicious about his links with US intelligence.²¹

A week before the Afghan Taliban took over Kabul in August 2021, clashes erupted between armed men of JuA and the Taliban in the Nimruz province of Afghanistan, resulting in injuries to some of JuA's leaders. In retaliation, JuA killed five members of the Afghan Taliban. Before this incident, four members of JuA were abducted by the Afghan Taliban.²²⁻²³

However, the first province of Afghanistan, Nimroz which fell into the hands of the Taliban was considered to be backed by JuA fighters. Additionally, some sources also suggest that regardless of ideological differences between JuA and the Afghan Taliban, JuA sent more than 600 fighters to overthrow the Afghan government before 15 August 2021.²⁴

Regardless of the ideological differences, cooperation between the Taliban and JuA is possible. In case of any dispute between the Taliban Afghanistan and Iran, the Taliban might leverage JuA to pressure Iran. Similarly, the Taliban takeover of Kabul serves as an encouraging factor for the militant groups to overthrow a government, particularly for the groups operating in the neighboring countries. Importantly, the lethality of attacks carried out by the JuA has been more sophisticated and complex since the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban.²⁵

Similarly, in the past two years, despite its struggle for international recognition, the interim Taliban government has not taken any action against militant groups in Afghanistan except for the Islamic State (IS). Additionally, JuA has shown support for the Taliban Afghanistan over the border clashes between Iran and Afghanistan. The Tajik commander of the Taliban in Panjshir Abdul Hamid Khorasani also threatened Iran and praised JuA.²⁶

The remaining weapons of the American and North Atlantic Treaty Organization

(NATO) forces after their withdrawal from Afghanistan have fallen into the hands of various groups in the region and JuA as well through smugglers.²⁷

Iran's deputy chairman of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, Yaqoob Rezazadeh, asserted that the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan lack control over their frontiers, allowing arms smugglers to move freely across them.²⁸

Policy Recommendations

- Inclusivity between Sunni and Shia needs to be promoted by the Iranian state on a social level to address sectarianism. Additionally, the Balochi language and traditional customs should be honored and celebrated, and diversity should be embraced.
- Sectarian discrimination and the majoritarianism approach must be halted. Ethno-religious fanatics must be prevented from holding public offices, particularly in those areas where minority sects and ethnicities are present in large numbers. State-backed sectarianism including the abolition of the Mosque and other religious institutions including the punishing of the religious figure must be controlled.
- The unjust execution of Baloch citizens on false charges must come to an end, and those involved in dangerous activities such as oil smuggling and drug dealing for survival should be provided with alternative support and resources.
- Technical institutions, free trade, and economic opportunities need to be encouraged on the state level in the bordering areas of Sistan and Baluchistan.
- Iran and Pakistan need an effective way forward to create opportunities in this region, particularly formalizing border trade between both countries.
- Both countries for decades have used a kinetic approach to deal with Baloch which resulted in more violence. Therefore, this strategy needs to be shifted and these threats must be dealt with through dialogue and economic opportunities by consulting local people. In Baloch regions of both Iran and Pakistan Jihadism and secular terrorism are more linked to economic injustice and human rights for resolving these problems both countries require a political way to settle these issues.
- To counter ethnic violence among youth, the state has to initiate education projects, particularly engaging Baloch youth in the renewed Iranian institutions for higher education on a priority basis. Religious tolerance and respect for other sects and religions need to be taught at schools, colleges, universities, and religious institutions. Unregistered Salafi Madrasas of Pakistan need to document and the syllabus must be reformed.

Conclusion

JuA poses a significant threat to regional security, as evidenced by their recent attacks in Iran's strategically vital Chabahar port, aimed at disrupting the multinational development project INSTC. The group's shifting tactics, such as avoiding direct targeting of the Shia population while actively seeking to garner support from secular nationalists, highlight their anti-government stance and strategic maneuvering.

Moreover, the complex relationship between the Afghan Taliban and Iran can be described as a "marriage of inconvenience," characterized by a mix of diplomatic engagements and periodic confrontations, including border clashes over issues like the Helmand River water dispute. Such tensions can inadvertently fuel militancy, ultimately destabilizing the region.

The alleged presence of JuA bases in Pakistan, along with Baloch insurgents and Jihadi groups, further exacerbates diplomatic tensions between Iran and Pakistan. These tensions not only serve the interests of militant groups seeking regional destabilization but also raise security concerns for European interests due to their strategic connectivity through the region.

The alignment of JuA and Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K) with anti-Iran and anti-Shia ideologies could create a common ground for cooperation against the Iranian regime. This collaboration may lead to increased violence and instability in the region. Furthermore, any collaboration between the JuA and Islamic State might create hurdles for the interest of the United States and its allies in the region.

Moreover, the shared goal of sabotaging Chinese investments by JuA and its Baloch cousin in Pakistan could further exacerbate tensions and escalate conflicts.²⁹

End notes

- ¹ "Iran Targets Terror Outfit Jaish Al-Adl inside Pakistan." 2024. Voice of America. January 17, 2024. <https://www.voanews.com/a/iran-targets-terror-outfit-jaish-al-adl-inside-pakistan/7444873.html>.
- ² "Militia Leader Blacklisted by Iran Killed in Clashes with Taliban." n.d. Anadolu Agency. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/militia-leader-blacklisted-by-iran-killed-in-clashes-with-taliban/2329885>.
- ³ Diary2, The Khorasan. 2022. October 20, 2022. <https://x.com/khorasandiary/status/1583000129606684672>.
- ⁴ Jiaish ul-Adl. 2024. April 4, 2024.
- ⁵ Baloch, Imtiaz. 2024. Review of A Troubled Province: Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan Plagued by Protests and Violence. Edited by Iftikhar Firdous. The Khorasan Diary. April 4, 2024. <https://thekhorasandiary.com/en/2024/04/04/a-troubled-province-irans-sistan-and-baluchestan-plagued-by-protests-and-violence>.
- ⁶ Rohani, Wajid. 2023a. "What Is Jaish Al-Adl and What Does It Wants," Independent Persian. December 15, 2023. <https://www.independentpersian.com/node/377191>.
- ⁷ Garofalo, Dniele. 2023. December 2, 2023. <https://thekhorasandiary.com/en/2023/12/02/inside-jaysh-al-adl-armed-struggle-interview-with-the-spokesperson>.
- ⁸ Jaish ul Adl, statements calming responsibilities of armed attacks and in a similar its shows the different units of the group (Telegram 2023)
- ⁹ "Salaheddin Faroughi: A Profile of the Baloch Emir of Jaish-Al-Adl." 2024. Jamestown.org. 2024. <https://jamestown.org/program/salaheddin-faroughi-a-profile-of-the-baloch-emir-of-jaish-al-adl/>.
- ¹⁰ "What Is Jaish Al-Adl and What Does It Want." 2023. BBC Persian. December 15, 2023. <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/crgx515kxreo>.

¹¹ Office of International Religious Freedom. 2023. "Iran - United States Department of State." United States Department of State. May 15, 2023. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/iran/>.

¹² Elliott, Matthew, and Thomas Johnson. 2020. "Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, California Thesis Counterinsurgency In Sistan-Baluchistan: Evaluating Iranian Effectiveness In Countering Ethnic Insurgency." <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/trecms/pdf/AD1114184.pdf>.

¹³ Rehman, Zia, The Sistan, and Baluchistan Province. 2014. "Executive Summary the Baluch Insurgency: Linking Iran to Pakistan the Baluch in Iran and Pakistan: Historical Context." https://afpakwatch.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/the_baluch_insurgency_linking_iran_to_pa.pdf.

¹⁴ Rafiq, Arif. 2014. "Report: Sunni Deobandi-Shi'i Sectarian Violence in Pakistan." Middle East Institute. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/report-sunni-deobandi-shii-sectarian-violence-pakistan>.

¹⁵ Baloch, Kiyya. 2024a. "Trust Issues: Why Are Pakistan and Iran Up in Arms?" DAWN.COM. January 19, 2024. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1806777>.

¹⁶ Hoshang, Noraiee. 2015. "Sunni Militants in Iran: Activities, Ideological Sources and Political Strategies." International Research Journal of Social Sciences 4 (3): 79. <https://www.isca.me/IJSS/Archive/v4/i3/14.ISCA-IRJSS-2014-331.pdf>.

¹⁷ Jaish ul Adl, statements calming responsibilities of armed attacks and in a similar its shows the different units of the group (Telegram 2023).

¹⁸ "X.com." 2024. X (Formerly Twitter). 2024. <https://x.com/khorasandiary/status/1583000129606684672?s=46>.

¹⁹ 2024b. "Grievances Provoke Surge in Baloch Separatist Militancy on Both Sides of Pakistan–Iran Border." Jamestown.org. July 9, 2024. <https://jamestown.org/program/grievances-provoke-surge-in-baloch-separatist-militancy-on-both-sides-of-pakistan-iran-border/>.

²⁰ 2024b. Jaish ul Adl finance Interview by Fakhar Kakakhel.

²¹ Syed Saleem Shahzad. 2011. *Inside Al-Qaeda and the Taliban: Beyond Bin Laden and 9/11*. London: Pluto Press; New York.

²² Jaish ul Adl through its propaganda mouthpiece confirmed a clash of its fighter with TTA (2021)

²³ Dorson, Ahmed. 2021a. "Militia Leader Blacklisted by Iran Killed in Clashes with Taliban." [www.aa.com.tr](http://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/militia-leader-blacklisted-by-iran-killed-in-clashes-with-taliban/2329885). August 10, 2021. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/militia-leader-blacklisted-by-iran-killed-in-clashes-with-taliban/2329885>.

²⁴ "Former Afghan Intel Chief Links Taliban's 2021 Nimroz Takeover to Jaish Ul-Adl Support." 2023. *Afghanistan International*. December 15, 2023. <https://www.afintl.com/en/202312151306>.

²⁵ Subh, Hasht-E. 2023. "Iran and the Attacks of Jaish Ul-Adl: Where Does It Stem From?" *Hasht-e Subh*. December 18, 2023. <https://8am.media/eng/iran-and-the-attacks-of-jaish-ul-adl-where-does-it-stem-from/>.

²⁶ Rohani, Wajid. 2023a. "Jaish Al-Adl Threatens Iran: Former Taliban Collaborators in Afghanistan" *Independent Persian*. December 15, 2023. <https://www.independentpersian.com/node/377191>.

²⁷ Arooj. 2024. "Surprising Secrets Disclosed Regarding Taliban Cooperation with Jaish Al-Adl, Centcom." *Shia Waves*. April 13, 2024. <https://shiawaves.com/english/news/islam/afghanistan/103580-surprising-secrets-disclosed-regarding-taliban-cooperation-with-jaish-al-adl-centcom/>.

²⁸ News, Tolo. 2024. "Islamic Emirate: Security at Iran Border Ensured." July 2024. <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan-189829>.

²⁹ Rehman, Zia ur. 2024. "Why Did Pakistan and Iran Bomb Each Other and Then Become Friends Again?" *Middle East Eye*. January 23, 2024. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/why-did-pakistan-and-iran-bomb-each-other-and-then-become-friends-again>.



WORLD ANTI EXTREMISM
NETWORK
BUILDING A FREE WORLD

CONTACT US



World Anti Extremism Network



World Anti Extremism Network



WorldAEN



waenetwork



www.WorldAntiExtremism.org