

Tootak Military Operation:
THE CRY OF PAIN

DETAILED REPORT BY PAANK



THE CRY OF PAIN

Historical Context :

The military operations in Balochistan are part of a long-standing conflict with historical roots. It's crucial to understand this context to appreciate the ongoing struggles faced by the Baloch people.

The primary objective of a military operation typically involves clearing an area or restoring normalcy. However, the military operations in Balochistan appear to be geared towards suppressing the local population through oppression and brutality.

International Response :

Despite the gravity of the situation, international organizations and countries have been slow to respond to the human rights violations in Balochistan. Their lack of action has emboldened those responsible for these atrocities.

There have been no reported terrorist incidents in this region. The ongoing armed conflict in Balochistan differs significantly from terrorist activities. As of today, no country or international organization has labelled it as a terrorist conflict. Crucially, Baloch fighters conduct guerrilla warfare from their rugged and challenging mountainous terrain in Balochistan, which they call home. They do not use civilian populations as refuge and employ a "hit and run" strategy.

The Suffering of Tootak :

The incursion of Pakistani military forces into civilian areas under the pretext of military operations has become an everyday occurrence. This has given rise to stories of aggression and cruelty, affecting almost every region, town, or village in Balochistan. Tootak is one such community.

Tootak is situated in the Khuzdar District within the Kalat Division, approximately 300 kilometers away from Quetta, the capital of Balochistan. While the Khuzdar district has a population exceeding one million, Tootak is a village inhabited by around six to eight thousand residents. Virtually all aspects of life in Tootak, including educational institutions, are under the control of the military or individuals with close ties to the military, such as Shafiq Mengal. The Khuzdar district has witnessed a range of atrocities, from enforced disappearances and mutilated bodies to collective punishment and mass graves. Despite ongoing protests by the people of Khuzdar against this brutality, their voices often go unheard. Tragically, Tootak has become a symbol of sorrow and suffering.

Tootak Military Operation :

February 18, 2011, was a tragic day for the people of Tootak. In the early morning hours, as residents were just beginning their day, the deafening sound of gunfire shattered the calm in Tootak. Before the inhabitants could fully grasp the gravity of the situation, the village and its surrounding mountains fell under a military siege. Soldiers conducted door-to-door searches, subjecting the populace to mass violence. During this operation, the Pakistani army brutally killed two Baloch youths, Yahya Qalandrani and Naeem Baloch, right before the horrified eyes of the villagers. Furthermore, they forcibly disappeared seventeen individuals, including an 80-year-old man named Muhammad Rahim. These victims ranged from the elderly to the young. Astonishingly, 80-year-old Mohammad Rahim and others remain in the unlawful custody of the

army even today, despite the significant passage of time. Tootak not only witnessed a gruesome military operation resulting in the deaths of two youths and the forced disappearance of seventeen individuals in broad daylight but also served as the headquarters for a death squad for the next three agonizing years.

These death squads are state-formed entities, and their numbers have significantly increased in Balochistan. In Tootak, a death squad was established under the notorious leadership of Shafiq Mengal.

Vanishing in Silence :

Here are the details of the individuals who were forcibly disappeared during the Tootak military operation:

- Muhammad Rahim Baloch, son of Juma Khan
- Aftab Baloch, son of Mushtaq Ahmed
- Nisar Baloch, son of Yaqub Khan
- Asif Baloch, son of Juma Khan
- Nadeem Baloch, son of Abdul Hakeem
- Ateeq Baloch, son of Sardar Ali Muhammad
- Khalil Baloch, son of Sardar Ali Muhammad
- Waseem Baloch, son of Sardar Ali Muhammad
- Irshad Baloch, son of Nawab Khan
- Fida Baloch, son of Abdullah
- Zafar Baloch, son of Noor Ahmed
- Mustafa Baloch, son of Abdul Ghani
- Imtiaz Baloch, son of Abdul Hakeem
- Ziaullah Baloch, son of Abdullah
- Imran Baloch, son of Gamar Khan
- Dr. Muhammad Tahir, son of Muhammad Rahim Khan
- Maqsood Baloch, son of Sher Muhammad (mutilated body recovered)
- Abdul Wahab, son of Muhammad Usman

TOOTAK OPERATION

February 18, 2011

Martyrs Of Tootak



Martyr
Yahya Baloch



Martyr
Naem Baloch

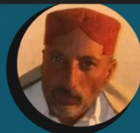


Martyr
Maqsood Baloch

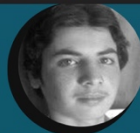
Enforced Disappearances of Tootak



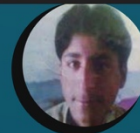
Aftab Baloch



Nisar Baloch



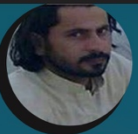
Asif Baloch



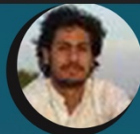
Nadeem Baloch



Atiq Baloch



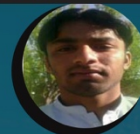
Khalil Baloch



Wasim Baloch



Irshad Baloch



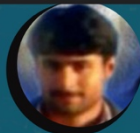
Fida Baloch



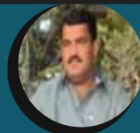
Zafar Baloch



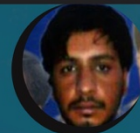
Mustafa Baloch



Imtiaz Baloch



Zai Ullah Baloch



Imran Baloch



M. Tahir Baloch



M. Raheem
Baloch

Note:

Martyr Maqsood's date of martyrdom isn't 18th feb and some of these person weren't picked up on this day. But these all belong to Tootak.



Thousands of people who were forcibly disappeared in Balochistan remain in the shadows after many years and have not appeared in any court. Unfortunately, many of these missing persons are left in a half-dead state after enduring severe torture. Most of them either succumb to their ordeal, are coerced into committing suicide, or spend the rest of their lives as mental patients. Some of those subjected to enforced disappearances are killed in staged fake encounters, falsely labelled as terrorists. The Pakistani forces and their established death squads have brought immense suffering to the Baloch people. Despite committing grave human rights violations, the Pakistani state institutions in Balochistan consider themselves immune from being held accountable by any international human rights organization.

Tootak Mass Graves :

Tootak has been marred by tragic events. Following the wave of enforced disappearances, a heart-wrenching chapter unfolded with the grim discovery of mass graves. Shockingly, these mass graves in Balochistan have largely escaped the attention of both Pakistani and a few international media outlets.

On the fateful morning of January 25, 2014, a Baloch shepherd arrived at Tootak Muzhi with his flock and stumbled upon the remains of several deceased individuals. The area had endured a continuous military siege for three years following the 2011 military operation. In this region, a state-affiliated figure named Shafiq Mengal had established his own clandestine prison. Life for the local populace changed dramatically after the operation. An organized network of state-sponsored death squads, under the leadership of Shafiq-ur-Rehman Mengal, operated in Tootak. They abducted individuals, making them vanish without a trace. Their makeshift prisons were constructed in the nearby mountainous areas, where victims faced brutal executions and their mutilated bodies were buried.

The Pakistani authorities attempted to conceal this discovery. The local shepherd, who found the mass graves, innocently informed the local Levies force in Balochistan. When the matter was reported to the Deputy Commissioner in Khuzdar, the official tally of bodies was inexplicably reduced to six or seven.

According to reports from Voice for Baloch Missing Persons (VBMP) and other human rights organizations in Pakistan, as well as independent media outlets, around 169 bodies, most of them bearing signs of mutilation, were recovered from Mazhi in Tootak. Tragically, only two of these bodies could be identified as belonging to individuals from Awaran. Concerns were raised by the relatives of thousands of individuals who had been forcibly disappeared in Balochistan. They feared that these bodies might be linked to their missing loved ones, who were either abducted directly by Pakistani forces or through their associated death squads.

A judicial commission, led by Justice Noor Muhammad Miskanzai and appointed by the provincial government of Balochistan, was tasked with investigating the mass graves issue. However, this commission's findings, regrettably, absolved state forces and institutions without conducting a transparent investigation or taking appropriate action.

The Tootak incident stands as a dark stain on Pakistan's reputation, drawing global attention to the issues of Baloch genocide, military aggression, and state-sponsored death squads. The discovery of "mass graves" in Tootak was a chilling first. According to eyewitnesses, an estimated 169 people were buried in this mass grave. Locals also pointed out the existence of similar graves, but military authorities swiftly cordoned off the entire area, denying access to ordinary citizens. To this day, the true number of individuals interred in these other mass graves remains shrouded in uncertainty. Despite vehement protests by Baloch pro-independence parties and organizations, the international community largely turned a blind eye to the issue. This silence not only perpetuates the Baloch genocide but also grants Pakistan impunity to evade accountability.

Who is Shafiq ur Rehman Mengal ?



Shafiq Mengal is a state operative who leads an organized group of death squads operating under the command of the Pakistani military. His father, Naseer Mengal, has held prominent positions in Pakistan, serving as a Senator in the Upper House of Pakistan, Minister of Petroleum in the Federal Cabinet, and Caretaker Chief Minister of Balochistan. Shafiq-ur-Rehman Mengal has been at the forefront alongside armed operatives in the mountainous regions of Tootak and Wadh in the outskirts of Khuzdar for many years.

As a significant figure, Shafiq Mengal has also acted as a proxy for the Pakistani army in the Kashmir conflict, recruiting individuals and sending them to Kashmir under the banner of jihad. His ideology is marked by extreme religious beliefs. There is substantial evidence to suggest that Shafiq Mengal has established training camps in Tootak and Wadh Badri. In these camps, recruits are prepared for various extremist groups, including Daesh, Ansar-e-Islamiya, and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, and are trained in terrorist activities.

Shafiq Mengal is a key player developed under the policies of the Pakistani Deep State and its jihadi proxies. In addition to his involvement in the enforced disappearances and targeted killings of Baloch political activists, Shafiq Mengal has played a role in attacks against the Shia community, holy shrines, and journalists. This has been explicitly revealed by investigative agencies in Pakistan through numerous reports.

Renowned Pakistani journalist Hamid Mir has reported that Shafiq Mengal issued a hit list of journalists in Balochistan, particularly in Khuzdar, resulting in the targeting and killing of many journalists. Among the victims are Munir Shakir, Abdul Haq, Muhammad Khan Sasoli, and two sons of the well-known journalist Nadeem Gurnadi.

Shafiq Mengal is the main accused in a Police report filed on May 26, 2014, in Wadh Tehsil. The FIR was lodged following an attack on a Levies check post in Wadh, during which eight Levies personnel were killed and three others were injured. Furthermore, the team tasked with collecting DNA samples from bodies recovered from the mass graves in Tootak was also targeted by Shafiq Mengal to hinder the forensic investigation.

Multiple reports from Pakistani investigative agencies have revealed that Shafiq Mengal provided training, explosives, and suicide jackets used in terrorist attacks. This support was channeled from a camp established under his patronage. A report by the international journal Reuters on August 7, 2017, and another by Pakistan's leading English newspaper Dawn on March 2, 2018, unveiled official statements from Pakistani investigative agencies implicating Shafiq Mengal in bomb attack on Ismaili Shia communities.

Suspects and facilitators arrested in connection with the community bus attack and a failed attack on a Shia synagogue in Shikarpur admitted during the investigation that they had received

training under Shafiq Mengal's supervision in the Wadh area of Balochistan. Facilitators were also dispatched from his camp to various locations. A suicide bomber named Usman, arrested in the attempted suicide attack in Shikarpur, revealed that he received a suicide jacket from an individual named Ali Mehsud, alias Muaz, residing in Wadh. Hafeez Brohi, an accused in the Sehwan Sharif attack, is designated as the main culprit and is currently at large, having been sentenced to death in absentia by the court.

According to Dawn newspaper's report, Ahsan Mehsud, a facilitator of the Safura Ghot attack associated with Al-Qaeda in South Asia, informed Karachi police that his brother, Ali Mehsud, alias Muaz, operates a jihadist training camp in Wadh. Reuters has highlighted Shafiq Mengal as the primary suspect based on investigative reports.

Victims of Operation Tootak :

The aftermath of Operation Tootak in Balochistan left a haunting impact on the lives of countless individuals and families. In an interview conducted by PAANK's representative, Obaidullah, the elder son of Mohammad Rahim Khan, sheds light on the enduring suffering of the victims and their families. As an eyewitness to the operation, Obaidullah provides valuable insights into the profound impact this tragic event has had on their lives.

Interview Transcript :

Question : What is the current condition of the victims of the Tootak operation?

Obaidullah : Currently, I live as a refugee, bearing witness to the harrowing aftermath of the Tootak operation. Tootak was once a joyful and prosperous area, where villagers led content lives, and children received education in good schools. However, this operation shattered our existence. After the operation, Tootak transformed into a place of sorrow and despair. What the Pakistani army did to us was akin to what Yazid did to Imam Hussain. We experienced the enforced disappearance of seventeen members of the same family, and the brutal killing of two individuals. Only we can truly comprehend the anguish we endure. The horrors didn't end with the operation; for three long years, our village was at the mercy of the "Death Squad." The cycle of atrocities persisted. Thirteen years after the Tootak operation, we still count the moments, waiting for our loved ones. Many of our relatives passed away during this prolonged wait and suffering. For example, Zia Baloch and Fida, young men forcibly disappeared by the army, lost their father, Haji Abdullah, while awaiting their return. Similarly, Irshad Baloch's father, Mir Nawab Khan, Nadeem and Imtiaz Ahmed's father, Abdul Hakeem, Asif Baloch's father, Juma Khan, and Imran Baloch's father, Gamar Khan, also departed. Most family members suffer from severe mental illnesses, diagnosed as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) by psychiatrists. Many were compelled to migrate, while some still reside in the area.

Question : What is the relationship between the missing and the deceased martyred individuals?

Obaidullah : All the missing and deceased individuals are part of my family, connected by blood ties. My father, Muhammad Rahim Khan, the son of Haji Juma Khan, was forcibly disappeared and tops the list. He was 75 years old at the time of his abduction and is now 87 years old. Naeem, who was martyred, was my younger brother, and Yahya, the son of Haji Noorullah, was my cousin's son. After some time, we discovered the mutilated body of Maqsood, the son of

Sher Muhammad, who had been forcibly disappeared; he too was my cousin. Dr. Muhammad Tahir, who is still missing, is my brother. Khalil, Ateeq, and Waseem are the grandsons of Muhammad Rahim Khan. Zia, Imtiaz Ahmed, and Fida are the sons of my father's cousins. Similarly, Aftab, Nisar Ahmed, Irshad, Imran, Zafar, and Mustafa are close relatives of my father. In June of the same year, Abdul Wahab, the son of Muhammad Usman and a cousin of Muhammad Rahim Khan, was forcibly disappeared by the army from Khuzdar. To this day, we have no information about his whereabouts.

Question : Was Muhammad Rahim involved in politics?

Obaidullah : No, Muhammad Rahim Khan had no association with any political party. He was quite elderly and spent most of his time in the mosque, tending to the land. We led peaceful lives, but after this operation, nothing was left for us—neither relatives, nor businesses, nor sources of livelihood. Even our homeland was taken from us.

Question : What were the effects on the family?

Obaidullah : Most of the family members are in forced exile, while the rest were compelled to migrate. Migration itself is a form of torment. As mentioned earlier, most of the family members have fallen victim to depression. During this painful 13-year wait, many individuals couldn't bear the agony of waiting and passed away.

Question : How many family members migrated?

Obaidullah : Three sons of Muhammad Rahim Khan—myself and my two younger brothers—along with our mother, sisters, and brother-in-law, were forced to migrate.

Question : What hardships did you encounter during migration?

Obaidullah : We once led prosperous lives in our area, lacking nothing. However, circumstances turned us into refugees. Here, we have no homes, no employment, and no educational opportunities for our children. They are living in extremely challenging conditions. As we continue our lives, we worry about the future of our children, devoid of education and employment in this exile. This is a significant concern.

Question : Do you have a message for human rights organizations?

Obaidullah : Our only plea to human rights organizations is to assist us in reuniting with our loved ones and to amplify our voices. Only we can truly understand the miserable existence we lead. Major global organizations dedicated to human rights should exert pressure on Pakistan to locate my 87-year-old father and other relatives. This is our most urgent demand.

Conclusion :

The harrowing account of the Tootak Military Operation and its aftermath sheds light on the grave human rights violations and suffering endured by the Baloch people in Balochistan. This tragic episode, emblematic of the larger conflict in the region, serves as a reminder of the urgent need for international attention and action.

The Baloch people have faced a prolonged struggle marked by enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and the discovery of mass graves. Despite the horrors they have endured, their voices often go unheard on the global stage, and accountability remains elusive.

The international community must not remain indifferent to the cries of pain emanating from Tootak and Balochistan as a whole. Human rights organizations, governments, and global institutions should intensify their efforts to investigate and address these violations, ensuring that those responsible are held accountable.

Moreover, the plight of the victims and their families, as vividly conveyed by Obaidullah, underscores the urgency of reuniting loved ones and providing the necessary support to those affected. Balochistan's suffering should not be forgotten or ignored.

In the face of these challenges, it is essential to amplify the voices of the Baloch people and advocate for justice, transparency, and peace in the region. The international community must stand together to bring an end to the cycle of violence and to help heal the wounds of Tootak and Balochistan as a whole. Only then can we hope to bring about a brighter and more peaceful future for the Baloch people and their homeland.

