

## Anil Nauriya: Targeting Kashmir's leaders (2005)

<https://dilipsimeon.blogspot.com/2016/08/anil-nauriya-targeting-kashmirs-leaders.html>

**NB:** An article posted today on the NDTV portal by Nazir Masoodi is entitled: [As A Kashmiri, Let Me Explain How We Got To Where We Are Today](#). The Indian state has committed horrible human rights violations in Kashmir. (See [Kashmir HR Report 2010](#); and [The new language of rage](#) ). The Pakistani state has also been active in the area, via its proxies. Among its first targets were Kashmiri communists & democrats. (See: [Mansoor Anwar on Comrade Abdul Sattar Ranjoor](#) 1917-1990). Of the hundreds of NC cadres killed in the period 1989-2002 not one obtained even an obituary in the national press. On the one side was the virulent anti-Muslim propaganda by the [Sangh Parivar](#); on the other the hatred directed at the moderate political cadre by the separatists. As Anil observes, "all talk of the 'wishes of the Kashmiri people' will come to naught if the traditional Muslim political leadership of Kashmir is physically eliminated. What meaning would a "free and fair poll" have then?". The issue of 'self-determination' is not as straightforward as might appear to some of us. Over and above this, the [targeting of innocents](#) by the militants, including poor wage labourers is scarcely remembered today; but forgetting material facts does not help us understand the situation. Here is some additional material on 'how we got here'. **DS**

THERE has been a spate of politically motivated assassinations in Kashmir. On May 1 the Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed's nephew, Atiqullah was shot at in Anantnag and died later. On May 3 Mohammad Ramzan Mian, Congressman and chairman of the Pattan Municipal Committee, was killed. On May 7 Abdul Rahim, a Congress Block President was killed at Tangmarg.

The targeting of the traditional political leadership of Kashmir since 1989 has not been adequately analysed. Indian public opinion has been divided mainly between those whose chief focus is on the fate of the Hindu, that is mainly the Kashmiri Pandits, and those who draw attention primarily to persons killed at the hands of the security forces. These were legitimate concerns. But the annihilation of the traditional Kashmiri Muslim leadership by terrorists did not fall in either category and went by default. Ironically, with the rise of the Hindutva movement since 1989, large sections of the minorities in the rest of India, especially in Modi-ruled Gujarat, were being labelled as anti-national. On the other hand, the traditional Kashmiri Muslim leadership was being eliminated by terrorists in J& K for the opposite reason: it was considered too pro-India.

Had this contrast been adequately reported and presented it could have compelled the Hindutva forces to question and reassess their own assumptions about the labelling of large sections of minorities in India as anti-national. After the PDP-Congress government assumed power in 2002, the PDP cadres became a prime target as well though NC workers did not cease to be targeted.

A rough estimate by this writer suggests that the killings of NC, PDP and Congress cadres have been under-reported in the Press. In a recent month three incidents were missed by newspapers before one got reported. In the pre-2002 elections period for diverse reasons those concerned with public affairs did not highlight such killings, then largely of NC cadres. It is instructive to examine if similar reasons apply in the case of reports on PDP killings in the post-2002 period. The media had written off the NC as corrupt and often virtually ignored the killings of its cadres.

Here it failed to distinguish politics from the political process. The loosely-hurled corruption charge, even if true, could provide reason to vote a party out, but could not possibly justify journalistic nonchalance at the physical annihilation of partymen. Besides, the killings of the NC cadres had little to do with their alleged corruption or their alleged inattention to developmental issues. The killers were not participating in an anti-corruption movement.

The upshot was that of the hundreds of NC cadres killed in the period 1989-2002 not one obtained even an obituary in the national press. Many of them were popular leaders. Another reason given to explain either the NC killings themselves or why these did not receive adequate national attention was that the party lost sympathy after it aligned itself with the BJP.

This was untenable as the BJP-NC alliance was of relatively recent vintage while the terrorist targeting of NC cadres had been going on even prior to the NDA regime at the Centre. And neither the past nor the subsequent allies of the NC had taken much notice of or publicly empathised with the NC in relation to its political bereavements. The matter was seldom taken up in Parliament. In any case, the “wrong company” reasoning can hardly apply now to the killings of PDP cadres.

Significantly, Hurriyat, which seeks involvement in Indo-Pakistan negotiations, seldom condemned the killings of NC or PDP cadres. It has seemed indifferent unless the terrorist target was a member of the Hurriyat alliance itself. A week after Musharraf’s famous speech on January 12, 2002, one Hurriyat leader approvingly said “The boys with the gun have done their duty. They have done the job by highlighting the movement. Now it is for the politicians to capitalise on it.”

The real reason for the targeting of the NC and now of the PDP is that these parties represent traditional Kashmiri Muslims who have stood for a *modus vivendi* within a composite India. Individual annihilation as a method of politics must not be allowed to gain ground. By eliminating the traditional Kashmiri Muslim leadership, they simply seek to manufacture consent for some undefined dispensation.

The notion of militancy implies the existence of a popular movement within which there is a militant section working for an object similar to that of the movement. However, these assassinations do not have such an appearance. It is doubtful if popular opinion in Kashmir could ever empathise with the annihilation of the traditional Kashmiri Muslim leadership in the state. This aspect of the Kashmir scene needs to be emphasised not only in India but also abroad, including the Islamic countries.

#### **Prominent PDP workers killed**

*Abdul Aziz Mir, MLA from Pampore, 20.12.02;*  
*Abdul Razaq Rather, Kulgam. 9.4.03;*  
*Abdul Hamid Mir, Pulwama, 20.5.03;*  
*Mohd Abdullah, Anantnag, 8.7.03;*  
*Ghulam Mohd Ganai of Frestabal, 3.11.03.*  
*Zulfikar Ali, Anantnag, 6.11.03;*  
*Haider Ali, abducted from Malganipora; body recovered 7.11.03;*  
*Ghulam Rasool Wagoora, Awantipora 9.11.03;*  
*Mohammad Ismail Khanday, Anantnag, 16.11.03;*  
*Ghulam Rasool Hajam, 22.12.03;*  
*Mohammad Yousuf Bhat, body recovered, Pulwama, mid-February 2004.*  
*Ghulam Mohd Dar, Budgam, 16.2.04;*  
*Ali Mohd Bhat, Budgam, 16.2.04;*  
*Assadullah Bhat, Anantnag, 11.4.04;*  
*Ghulam Qadir, Sopore, 10.5.04;*  
*Ghulam Mohiuddin Nigroo, Anantnag, 2.6.04.*  
*Abdul Rehman Mir and Sonaullah Paddar, Anantnag, 4.6.04;*  
*Shamim Ahmed Bhat, Anantnag, 15.6.04;*  
*Saifullah Khan, Anantnag, 6.7.04;*  
*Hilal Ahmed Khan, Anantnag, 21.7.04.*  
*Nazir Ahmed Lone, Budgam, 8.9.04;*  
*Ghulam Mohiuddin Chechoo, 1.10.04;*  
*Nazir Ahmad Raina, 3.11.04;*  
*Abdul Gani Wani, 18.12.04;*  
*Ghulam Rasool Khan 4.1.05;*  
*Ghulam Mohiuddin Mir, 8.2.05;*  
*Muzaffar Ahmed Wani, Anantnag, April 2005; and*  
*CM’s nephew Atiqullah Shah, Anantnag, 2.5.05.*  
<http://www.tribuneindia.com/2005/20050514/edit.htm#6>

## NOT A MUSLIM VERSUS THE REST ISSUE: The Destruction of a Historic Party : Understanding Kashmir and the National Conference Experience

By Anil Nauriya (2002) *Mainstream*, 17 August 2002.

Terrorist Killings in Kashmir Till 2002: [ABSTRACT: This is an abstract of the accompanying article by Anil Nauriya on the killings by terrorists of those Kashmiri Muslims who are opposed to the separatist line on Kashmir. Elections in the state of Jammu & Kashmir began on September 16, 2002, were conducted in phases and concluded on October 8, 2002. The Kashmir Muslims killed by terrorists belong mostly to the National Conference Party in (Indian) Kashmir. The article also contains an appendix on killings by terrorists of Kashmiri Muslims belonging to some other political parties, ie non-National Conference, as well. A larger circle of people should learn of the facts here set out particularly in the light of killings by terrorists in the run up to the 2002 polls. The point of the article below is this:

It seems necessary to highlight some aspects of the Kashmir problem which have not been sufficiently noticed by the media in the last few years. It is necessary especially to stress the following points:

*(a) Hindu sectarian and communal organisations like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Pakistani ruling clique were and are both wrong to see Kashmir exclusively as a Muslim vs Hindu issue.*

*(b) Reportage in the last few decades years by the Indian and world media has not focused sufficiently on the killings of the Muslim, especially National Conference, leadership in Jammu & Kashmir at the hands of the terrorists. Such killings have been carried out by the militants to manufacture consent for themselves. Generally attention has been focused either on the fate of the(Hindu) Kashmiri Pandits OR on the excesses of the Indian security forces.National Conference cadres do not figure in either category of victims who have received attention.*

*(c) The killings of the National Conference cadres by the terrorists could certainly have an impact on the poll due in September- October.*

*(d) There is a significant point of view within Kashmir which, while not necessarily denying the legitimacy of and justification for dissatisfaction with the Indian government, would nevertheless be happy to arrive at a settlement within the framework of the Constitution of India. The terrorists are keen to ensure that this point of view should not find expression and that those who adopt it ought to be eliminated. This complicates the Kashmir problem and makes it more difficult to arrive at a solution.*

*(e) Such events and element are preventing a proper focus on the day-to-day problems of the people of Kashmir, their basic needs and issues concerning development, education and justice.*

The State of Jammu & Kashmir has been the subject of a long-standing dispute between India and Pakistan. On the Indian side of Kashmir, the National Conference (NC) is the political party which, for all its flip-flops, mistakes and inadequacies, has historically expressed the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. It is a commentary on our times that international opinion, including the media, till recently virtually ignored the large-scale physical elimination of National Conference cadres at the hands of post-1989 militancy in the state. This oversight has also reinforced the stereotypical view in which the crisis in Kashmir is seen wholly and simplistically in terms of Muslim versus Hindu (or the rest).

The recent demand by the Hindu sectarian organisation, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), that the (Indian side of ) Jammu & Kashmir be trifurcated reflects precisely this mindset. The RSS "solution" therefore is to remove the non-Muslim dominated areas from the realm of controversy as the organization sees it. This mindset has historically prevented the erstwhile Jana Sangh (the precursor of the Bharatiya Janata Party which now leads the Central Government in New Delhi) and some other RSS-related organisations from making constructive interventions on the subject. This is not to deny that there have, from time to time, been differences of approach among these organisations

However, the insensitive attitude towards the fate of the National Conference cadres is not confined to these organisations although it is , of course, an accident of contemporary politics that the National Conference finds itself in an RSS-backed Bharatiya Janata Party-led Central government in New Delhi.

The autonomy proposals which the National Conference had put forward sometime ago were dealt with in a summary manner by New Delhi. The National Conference too, for its part, failed to realise, that if the Indian Government, regardless of the party in power, made its maximal concessions to the National Conference, New Delhi would be left with little to offer in negotiations with the groups which have so far defined their politics on the basis of the demand to separate Jammu & Kashmir from India.

This is a dilemma, made still more cruel by the current circumstances of National Conference workers. There is, however, a need for greater appreciation and respect for the ordinary workers of the National Conference and for their historical commitment to a secular Jammu & Kashmir. World, or even Indian, opinion at large does not have a full appreciation of what the National Conference workers have been through, especially in the last twelve years.

For all the mistakes that India may have made in Kashmir in the last 50 years, there is a significant point of view within Kashmiri Muslim opinion which, while accepting the legitimacy of and justification for, dissatisfaction with the Indian government, is willing to come to a peaceful settlement through dialogue within the framework of the Indian Constitution. The terrorists are keen to ensure that this does not happen and that those who express this point of view be physically eliminated, and those who support them sufficiently intimidated. This complicates possibilities of a solution to the Kashmir problem.

Although there is widespread invocation of the "wishes of the Kashmiri people", the fact is that the political groups which have traditionally represented political opinion in Kashmir have been systematically targetted in terrorist violence. Of these, the primary target has been the National Conference. Because of the fascination of sections of the media with the separatist All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), the plight of the National Conference rank and file has been little noticed.

The National Conference is one of the oldest political parties in India. This political formation in Jammu & Kashmir today faces the prospect of physical destruction, not necessarily at the hustings, but in the form of the elimination of its cadres who have been subjected to political assassination on a scale whose enormity the average Indian is hardly aware of. In a real sense Indian national opinion has failed this great party. Few political scientists in the country have bothered about its fate. Few historians have cared to document its history. And when its cadres started being killed by terrorists, it would either not be reported or be relegated to the small print or wrapped up in such rigmarole that the massive scale of destruction of this party was seldom brought home to the reader in the country as a whole.

Indian public opinion has been divided into two main groups. One group focusses chiefly on the fate of the Hindus, that is, the Kashmiri Pandits. Another group concentrates mainly on the excesses of the Indian security forces. Both these are legitimate areas of concern. But the fate of National Conference workers fits into neither of these groups, categories or primary concerns.

The attempt on the life of Dr Farooq Abdullah, the National Conference Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, on June 15, 2002 was the second such in the last 18 months. It followed in a long line of killings of National Conference leaders since 1989. These killings were an attempt on the part of the terrorists to silence political voices opposed to them and, by default, to manufacture consent for themselves in the Kashmir Valley.

The terrorists have chosen the National Conference for special attention, though leaders from other parties like the Janata Dal, Congress (I), the two major Communist parties (the CPI and the CPI(M)) and Awami National Conference, among others, have also been killed. In the case of the National Conference the terrorists have tried to eliminate its organisational structure. The Block and Zonal Presidents of the National Conference have in particular been targeted. This deserves to be set out in some detail for the benefit of those who incorrectly see the current discontents chiefly and even exclusively in a Muslim-versus-Hindu frame.

The targeting started in the early stages of the disturbances. Sheikh Abdul Jabar, a freedom fighter and leading figure in the National Conference (NC) was shot dead on April 18, 1990. Mohd Subhan Bhat, a former state legislator who was Zonal President of the National Conference for Tral, Pulwama was killed by militants on April 9, 1991. Wali Mohd Yattoo who had been Speaker of the Jammu & Kashmir assembly was killed on March 18, 1994 in Jammu. Ghulam Qadir Mir, an eminent National Conference leader and a former state legislator was shot dead on April 11, 1994.

Haji Mohd Jamal, a very popular National Conference leader was killed by militants on May 25, 1995 at the Tengpora Bye Pass, Srinagar. Ghulam Rasool Bhat, a former state legislator and a leading figure in the National Conference was killed by militants in Nowpora, Baramulla on March 3, 1997. His brother was also killed. On June 4/5 1997. Abdul Ghani Lone of Freswar Badgaon was gunned down. He was the National Conference Halqa President of his area. A few weeks later on August 20/21 1997 Abdul Rehman Bhat who was the Noorabad Block President of the National Conference was shot dead.

Within days on September 6, 1997 the militants shot dead Ghulam Mohi-Ud-Din Waza who was the NC Srigufwara Block President. In the following month, on 27/28 October, 1997, the NC Behama Block President Habib-ulla Parray was killed by militants. The local people protested against his killing by observing a complete hartal in Ganderbal on October 28, 1997. After a gap in the winter months the killings resumed with the return of summer. Ghulam Hassan Mir of Baramullah who was a senior leader of the National Conference and was the NC Vice President of Khag Block, was shot dead by militants on May 13, 1998. He was a mass leader whose funeral was attended by at least seven thousand people.

Ghulam Nabi Rather who was the National Conference Block President in Harwan was shot in the head on September 27, 1998. He died in hospital as a result of the injuries. Ghulam Mohiuddin Dar, another staunch follower of the National Conference who was the Block President in Sumbal was killed on September 12, 1998. Ghulam Hassan Mir an active party worker of the National Conference who was very influential in the area around Saloosa Pattan was shot dead on October 24, 1998.

Haji Abdul Aziz Bhat who was the Block President of the Noor Bagh National Conference was shot dead on November 18, 1998. Ghulam Nabi Malik who was the Block President in Wailoo was shot dead by militants eight days later, on November 26, 1998. Mohd Ramzan Tantray was the Halqa President of the Baghat Kanipora National Conference. Militants took his life on December 12 1998.

Ghulam Nabi Riyaz was the General Secretary of the Rajouri District National Conference. The militants killed him exactly a week later -- on December 19, 1998. There seems to have been a lull for about four months so far as the National Conference was concerned. And then the killings resumed. Ghulam Hassan Bhat was the District President of the National Conference, Pulwama. He was shot dead by militants outside his house on May 5, 1999. Ghulam Hassan Bhat was extremely popular with the Kashmiri people. Earlier, in December 1998, his brother in law, Nisar Ahmed Dar was killed by militants in his village.

Another National Conference activist, Ghulam Mohi-ud-din Qazi, was a well known personality of Kishtwar. The militants killed him nine days after they had despatched Ghulam Hassan Bhat - on May 14, 1999. On the very next day they got at the elderly Abdul Ahad Wani (also known as Ahad Kar). Wani was a National Conference MLA from Langate constituency.

Before the month was over, on May 31, 1999, the terrorists eliminated Abdul Aziz Bhat who was the Block President of the Pinglana National Conference. In the following month two more National Conference personalities were killed. First, on June 14, 1999, the terrorists killed Abdul Aziz Malik who was the Vice President of the National Conference in Kupwara district. There was widespread popular protest in Kashmir over the killing of Malik, again an elderly gentleman of 60 years of age. On June 15, 1999 there was a hartal in Kupwara over his killing.

Second, Mohd Shafi Sofi, who was the Halqa President of the Habakadal National Conference was eliminated by militants on June 28, 1999. Five days later, on July 2/3 1999, Haji Mohd Abdulla, a follower of the late Sheikh Abdullah, and manager of the Auqaf at Budgam was killed by militants. Another five days passed and on July 7, 1999, the militants eliminated Khazir Mohd Bhat the National Conference Block President in Sopore. In the following month, on August 23, 1999, the terrorists murdered Mohammed Akbar who was the Halqa President of the National Conference for Arizal, Budgam.

On October 11, 1999 Ghulam Nabi Dar, the National Conference Block President for Soura was eliminated. Abdul Aziz Bhat was the Block President of the Kharbag Botwani National Conference. He was killed by terrorists on November 21, 1999. Eight days later, on November 29, 1999, yet another National Conference Block President - Abdul Ahad Bhat - was killed by militants. He was the NC Block President for Kralapora. The New Year started with one more NC Block President being assassinated. Mohd Yousuf Ganai, Block President of the National Conference, Ramnagri, was killed by terrorists in Shopian on January 6, 2000. Less than a fortnight later yet another NC Block President was eliminated. Abdul Karim Bhat, the National Conference Block President of Beerwah was killed by terrorists on January 19, 2000.

Again there was a four month lull. Then it started again. On May 15, 2000 Ghulam Hassan Bhat a National Conference MLA from Dooru and Parliamentary Secretary was killed in a mine blast set off by militants. Another NC party worker was killed with him as were his driver and two personal security officers. On June 12, 2000 one more National Conference Block President - Ghulam Mohd Reshi - was gunned down. He had been Block President for Tangmarg.

Nine days later, on June 21, 2000, the terrorists struck again at the National Conference party structure. This time Mohd Rajab Bhat, Block President of the National Conference, Nadihal was assassinated. The following month it happened again. On July 15, 2000 Munshi Qadratulla, the District President of the National Conference in Doda was shot dead. On October 9, 2000 Ghulam Mohd Mir who was Block President of the Youth National Conference Awoora was eliminated. Another National Conference activist, Mohd Akbar Wani who was also involved in a Srinagar auqaf and other community activities was assassinated on January 8, 2001.

Ghulam Mohd Ganai, a senior National Conference activist, who was the NC Block President Khan Sahib Budgam was murdered on March 17, 2001. An earlier attempt by militants to kill him on July 26/27, 1999 had failed. Mohd Abdullah Najar, who was the Vice President of the National Conference, Pulwama district, was silenced on October 4, 2001. Mehrajuddin Farash, a senior National Conference leader who was also the NC Block President Amira Kadal was murdered by militants on October 25, 2001. This happened after he attended a meeting of NC Block Presidents at Srinagar. Farash had been on the terrorists' hit list since at least 1996 when they first tried to kill him.

More recently there have been further killings. The National Conference leader Abdul Rashid Dar was shot dead in his home at Telbal near Srinagar on the night of February 25 2002. Dar had recently been appointed the party's Hazratbal Block President. He had refused to shift to the "fortified" Hotel Sunshine where many political activists now live.

Public opinion even within India itself does not now fully appreciate what the National Conference workers have faced. In fact the Kashmir issue in the last 12 years has often been erroneously seen by the public in India and by world opinion almost exclusively in Muslim-versus-Hindu terms. The RSS and other Hindu-oriented organisations have also contributed to this by their near exclusive focus on the plight of the Kashmiri Pandits, unfortunate though their circumstances have been.

The Pakistan-backed Hurriyat Conference, or some of its members share, at the minimum, moral responsibility for these events. To their credit they realise the connection between such activities and their own politics. Thus a week after Pakistan President General Musharraf's January 12, 2002 speech eschewing terrorism, the Hurriyat Conference Chairman Abdul Ghani Bhat said: *"The boys with the gun have done their duty. They have done the job by highlighting the movement. Now it is for the politicians to capitalise on it."* The statement has been quoted with some appreciation even in the Indian media!

But once you mount a tiger it is difficult to dismount. Killings of National Conference workers at the hands of terrorists have continued regardless. Abdul Rashid Dar and Ghulam Mohiuddin Wani, mentioned above, were killed even after the Musharraf and Ghani Bhat statements, as indeed was Abdul Ghani Lone of the Hurriyat Conference itself.

**The pre-election scenario:** These events are continually diverting attention and energies from issues that need addressing: the day-to-day problems of the people of Kashmir, their basic needs and issues concerning development, education and justice. These issues, however, could not have been absent from the mind of the Kashmiri voter in the elections that have just concluded.

Elections were held in the (Indian side of) Jammu & Kashmir in phases in September and October 2002. In the pre-election scenario in the state, the assassinations of National Conference leaders in Jammu & Kashmir at the hands of terrorists have become even more frequent. Everyday brought news of more such killings. Gradually the so-called national press, which virtually ignored these killings in the last 12

years, is waking up to what has been going on. And what has been going on is nothing less than an attempt by the Pakistan-backed terrorists to determine the outcome of the forthcoming elections by physically eliminating the traditional Muslim leadership of Kashmir and intimidating their supporters.

All talk of the "wishes of the Kashmiri people" will come to naught if the traditional Muslim political leadership of Kashmir is physically eliminated. What meaning would a "free and fair poll" have then?

Ironically, international quarters which would have been happy formally to be involved in the poll process itself have had little to say on the murder of National Conference cadres over the last 12 years or even in the last couple of months. Did not these killings affect adversely the fairness of the election which they universally said they desired?

The silence of the international media on the killing of National Conference cadres is deafening but understandable. It is in keeping with the traditional cold war era Anglo-American view which implicitly placed the onus for making concessions upon India and did not adequately recognise the significance of the non-separatist point of view within Kashmir. Even though it was obvious that these killings would affect the fairness of the poll process, Western opinion and media have largely ignored these goings-on.

But Indian opinion itself has not taken sufficient note of the happenings. The Indian media has not cared to follow up on these deaths with detailed accounts of those killed so that the Indian people and the world at large become aware of those who have died for a composite secular and pluralist Indian nation. The murders have continued unabated. Meanwhile RSS-type Hindu sectarian organisations add insult to injury by asking for a trifurcation of the state. European Union-based observers and other commentators and visitors to Jammu & Kashmir also continue, like the Hindu-sectarian RSS, to ignore the killings of the Kashmiri Muslim leadership at the hands of militants.

A National Conference worker Ghulam Mohiuddin Wani, was shot dead by militants at his Qazipora-Watpora residence in Baramulla district on July 2. The indifference of the media at least until very recently, is illustrated by the fact that on the next day (July 3) many Delhi papers did not even care to report the event. After I drew the attention of one newspaper to this on July 3, it carried a story by its correspondent on July 4, saying in passing that the "NC activist who was shot dead on July 2 was the sixth party worker to be killed since Omar Abdullah's 'coronation' on May 23". (Omar Abdullah recently took over as the head of the National Conference). What was not explained by the newspaper was why, since this was the case, it had not reported the killings earlier.

The frequency of the killings has been increasing as the September-October elections in Jammu & Kashmir draw near. On July 21 Mohammad Afzal, a National Conference leader and panch was killed by militants. Then again on July 25/26 a Block President of the National Conference and two other NC leaders were killed by militants. Mohammad Sultan Bhat, Block President of the National Conference, was killed on July 25 when he came out of a mosque after offering prayers Kanth Bagh in Budgam. Militants also killed Sonallah Khan and Wali Mohammed Khan, both National Conference activists, at Bachipora in Budgam district on the same night.

On July 28 a National Conference activist, Mohammad Amin Kathloo, numberdar, was shot dead at Peth Gathi Baba in the Tangmarg area of Baramulla district. On July 31 three persons, including one National Conference worker, were killed by militants in Pulwama. Among those killed was Fayaz Ahmad Bhat who was considered the likely NC candidate for Tral (Pulwama) in the forthcoming state assembly elections.

On August 2, the terrorists got at yet another Block President of the National Conference. They shot dead Ali Mohammad Dar, Sarpanch and Block President at Koochipora, Qazigund in Anantnag District.

An attempt was made on the same day on the life of yet another NC Block President, Ghulam Hasan Bhat when militants intruded into his house in Babapora Shopian. Thankfully he managed to escape. On August 7 the terrorists killed Ghulam Hassan in Pulwama. He was expected to be a National Conference candidate from the area. On August 27 Jaffar Khan of the National Conference was killed by terrorists at Chogal, Handwara. On the next day, August 28, an attempt was made on the life of Ghulam Nabi Kachroo who is the National Conference candidate from Baramula constituency. Two days later, on August 30, the terrorists shot dead the National Conference leader Mohammad Muzaffar at Handwara. On the same day an NC activist, Gulzar Ahmad Sofi, was killed by terrorists in Budgam District. He was also a member of the Khadi & Village Industries Board.

September has been even more bloody. September 11 was marked in Jammu & Kashmir with the assassination by terrorists of Mushtaq Ahmad Lone who was the Law minister in the National Conference Government in the state. He was killed at an election rally in Lolab constituency of Kupwara district. The militant organisation Lashkar-e-Toiba claimed responsibility for the attack in which six others were also shot dead. On the same day the house of Ms Sakina Ittoo, Tourism Minister in the National Conference Government, was attacked by militants with grenades. These attacks now seem to be directed increasingly at women as well. On the same day, Mehra Begum, a National Conference women's wing district president, was shot dead by militants in Baramulla district. Even Mushtaq Lone's funeral on the next day became an occasion for a terrorist attack. Leaders from other parties participating in the elections have also been attacked by terrorists.

September 2 proved a particularly bad day. Two more National Conference activists were killed around September 2. Ghulam Hassan Bhat an NC activist in Bandipora, Baramula district was first abducted by terrorists and then killed. His beheaded body was recovered from near his village, Ayatmullah, early on September 2. In the early hours of the same day terrorists entered the house of Ali Mohammad Dar, an NC activist, in Anantnag District and shot him dead. Also on the same day, yet another NC activist, Habibullah Gojri, was reportedly shot and critically wounded by terrorists in Sopore, Baramula district. This is not all. There was also an attempt on the life of Sheikh Mustafa Kamal, Jammu & Kashmir minister of Industries (a brother of Farooq Abdullah) on September 2. Terrorists fired indiscriminately at his motorcade at Khepora. Mr Kamal is an NC candidate from Gulmarg and had just addressed an election rally.

Another National Conference activist, Farooq Ahmed Lone, was injured when the window panes of his vehicle were broken. On September 4 four NC activists were attacked and injured in Kupwara when terrorists hurled a grenade at their vehicle. The four activists were Nazir Ahmad Mir, Mohammad Ashraf, Ghulam Hassan War and Feroze Ahmad War. Mir is understood to have been very seriously injured.

On the same day, militants shot dead a National Conference worker, Mohammad Mustafa Lone in the Kunzar area of Baramula. On September 6 there was an attempt on the life of Mohammad Yusuf Bhat the National Conference candidate Sangrama constituency, Baramulla. On the following day, September 7, terrorists entered the house of Ghulam Mohiuddin Malik, an NC worker, at Sonmullah Vilgam and shot him dead. And on September 8 another NC activist, Mushtaq Ahmed Khan, who was an employee in a silk factory, was shot dead at Tengpora Bypass. Ghulam Mohd Dar was killed in Handwara on September 9.

On the next day, Hakeem Ghulam Nabi, who recently joined the People's Democratic Party, but was a former Block President of the National Conference, was fired at by militants from point blank range and killed on the spot near his house in Pulwama District. Militants also the motorcade of the state Industries Minister and National Conference candidate from Gulmarg constituency, Sheikh Mustafa Kamaal, at Naidergund-Tangmarg who they had tried to kill a few days earlier.

The incidents of September 11 which claimed the life of the state law minister and also of a woman activist of the National Conference have already been mentioned. Estimates of the number of National Conference members killed by terrorists in the last 13 years vary. But there is consensus that these are in hundreds, if not in four figures.

On September 13 terrorists shot Nazir Hussain, a National Conference leader, in Poonch district. On the following day, two days before the polling in Rajouri and Poonch districts, Haji Mohamad Riyaz was murdered by militants in his house in Shadra Sharif. Riyaz was a Sarpanch and an NC leader in the Poonch and Rajouri districts.

On September 15, the day before the first phase of elections in the state was to begin, another attempt was made by terrorists on the life of Ms Sakina Itoo, the state tourism minister. Her cavalcade was ambushed in Anantnag district. She is a candidate from the Noorabad seat. While she escaped unhurt two securitymen were killed and three persons were injured in the attack. The state agriculture minister, Chaudhary Mohammad Ramzan's house was attacked on the same day.

Late at night the terrorists opened fire also on the house of a National Conference candidate, Javid Hussain Shah in Bandipora. Shah, a member of the Legislative Council, was at home but escaped without injury. The firing was repeated on the night of September 17.

On September 18 two National Conference workers, Ali Mohammed Dar and Ghulam Rasool Mir were shot dead by terrorists. The outfit, Al Arifeen, a "shadow group" of the Lashkar-e-Taiba has claimed responsibility for the killings. Two days later militants first abducted and then killed National Conference leader Moulvi Ghulam Mohammad Hussain. This happened in Brah village, Anantnag district. Hussain was a member of the Gujjar Bakerwal Advisory Board. Another National Conference leader, Azad Ahmed Khan, was killed in the Renipora area. On September 21 a National Conference activist, Abdur Rehman Daka was killed in the Kokernag area of Anantnag district. Also assassinated was Haji Ghulam Mohammad Parray, a National Conference activist in Beerwah, Budgam district. On the same day there was yet another attempt on the life of the state Tourism minister, Ms Sakina Itoo. Again terrorists tried to blow up her motorcade. Interestingly, Ms Sakina is the daughter of Wali Mohammad Itoo, a former Speaker of the Jammu & Kashmir Assembly was gunned down by terrorists six years ago.

This information on the targeting of the National Conference is not exhaustive; it consists only of what I could readily place my hands on. Many hundred more NC party workers have been killed by terrorists than I have been able to list.

It bears repetition that it is the traditional Kashmiri Muslim political leadership that is being killed. It is being killed because it stands for a composite and secular India. How long will groups like the Hindu sectarian RSS (and also the Pakistan ruling clique) continue to see the Kashmir problem only in a Muslim versus Hindu frame?

**Appendix** *Terrorist Killings of political figures other than those belonging to the National Conference.* I have set out information about some of the more prominent NC leaders who have been killed by terrorists in the years since 1989. I want also to mention some of the J&K Muslim leaders of other political persuasion who have been killed by terrorists.

Among the first to be killed was [Abdul Sattar Ranjoor](#) of the CPI. He was the General Secretary of the state CPI. He was killed on March 23, 1990. Ghulam Nabi Shah, District President of the Janata Dal, Kupwara was shot dead by militants at Kupwara on March 16, 1995.

A veteran leader, Ghulam Hassan Mir, was the Congress (I) district President in Pulwama. This seventy year old man was dragged out of his house and shot dead on April 9, 1996.

Abdul Hamid Bhat, a CPM activist, was shot dead by militants at his home in Kulgam, Anantnag on November 2, 1997.

Ashraf Ali Beigh, the Panthers Party candidate from Batmaloo constituency in the 1996 elections. He was shot dead by militants at Wanganpora, Batmaloo on May 14, 1999 because of his participation in the parliamentary elections.

Haji Abdul Gani was the Congress(I) Block President in Hari Poonch. He was killed in the night of July 2/3 1999.

Mohd Amin Bhat of the CPI(M) was killed by militants on July 8, 1999.

Abdul Hamid Sheikh was the Block President of the Awami League, Chandilora. He was assassinated on July 18, 1999.

Ghulam Hyder Shah (also known as Noorani) who had been in the CPI(M) and Janata Dal but was contesting the Lok Sabha elections from Anantnag as a BJP candidate was killed by militants on September 7, 1999.

Mohd Anwar Sheikh of the Awami League was killed along with his wife, daughter and personal security officers when they were attacked by militants on October 27, 1999.

Aijaz Ahmed Mir who was the Block President of the BJP, Bhagwa was killed by militants on October 28, 1999.

Abdul Rashid Bhat was a former Block President of the Awami National Conference. He was assassinated by militants on Nov 1, 1999. The attack took place in broad daylight at his Maisuma shop.

A very senior leader of the Congress(I), Aga Syed Medhi was killed by terrorists in a mine blast at Mazhama Magam on the Tangmarg road. He had contested the Lok Sabha and assembly elections in 1996.

Molvi Ahmad Din was assassinated by militants on March 3, 2000. He was the District Vice President of the BJP in Rajouri.

A lawyer, Ghulam Jeelani, belonging to the Peoples Democratic Party was shot dead at Pattan Baramulla on July 24, 2000.

**Non-NC political personalities killed in the run-up to the forthcoming elections:**

On the morning of September 5 2002 militants gunned down Pir Mohammad Amin Shah, a worker belonging to the People's Democratic Party (PDP). He was killed when militants attacked the home of PDP leader Mohammad Abbas Khan at Wanibal near Srinagar. Some papers in Delhi reported only the PDP allegation that the NC was responsible for this killing. A CPM worker, Mohammad Ibrahim, was also shot dead on the same day in his house in Kulgam, Anantnag District.

On September 6 an independent candidate, Sheikh Abdul Rahman, was killed when militants fired upon his vehicle at Wadipora near Handwara.

His nephew, Nazir Ahmad, their driver, Ghulam Mohiuddin, and the Sheikh's political supporter, Abdul Aziz, were also killed. On the same day, four supporters of the Janata Dal(U) candidate in Handwara constituency were also injured when militants fired upon their vehicle in Kupwara district.

On September 10, Hakeem Ghulam Nabi of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) was shot dead in Pulwama district. He had earlier been a National Conference Block President.

On the next day, September 11, an election meeting of the People's Democratic Party was attacked by militants in Surankote, Poonch. Hand grenades were hurled at the gathering. Indiscriminate firing was also resorted to. Around a dozen persons were killed on the spot and 14 others injured.

An attempt was also made on the same day by terrorists on the life of Tariq Mohiuddin, A Congress candidate from Khansahib constituency, and a grenade was thrown at his motorcade which was also fired upon.

On the night of September 20 Zahoor Ahmed and Abdul Rahman, two workers of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) were killed by terrorists at Okai in the Kulgam area of Anantnag district. On the next day, September 21, a grenade attack was made by terrorists when the senior Vice President of the state Congress, Peerzada Mohammad Sayeed, was addressing an election meeting at Kokernag. On the next day terrorists made a grenade attack on the house of Mohammad Shafi Banday, the Congress candidate from Shopian, Pulwama district.

**Targeting Innocents:**

There have been numerous incidents when militants have killed innocent women and children for no fault of theirs. One of the most gory incidents in Kashmir's history took place on 26 January 1998 when militants killed 23 Kashmiri Pandits in Wandhama, Ganderbal. Several militants, dressed in police uniforms, had come to the village and asked the people to assemble. They were then lined up and shot dead. In another incident on 18 April 1998, militants massacred 26 Hindus belonging to 4 families at Parankot, Udhampur. The militants also killed the numbardar (headman) of the village for providing his house to be used as a polling station during the 1998 Lok Sabha elections. Militants have often targeted innocent men and women during festivities. In one such incident on 19 June 1998, militants killed 26 Hindus who were part of a marriage party in Chapnari, Banihal in Doda district. Migrant labourers from outside the State have also become a key target for the militant outfits. Even though these labourers are in no way linked to the Kashmir issue, militants routinely target them in order to strike fear among the

non-Kashmiri population as well as deter tourists from visiting the picturesque state. The migrant labourers are a critical part of the state's economy as they contribute significantly to the exchequer.

On 29 June 1999, militants killed 15 Hindu brick kiln workers from Rampur (UP) and Bilaspur (MP) while they were sleeping after a hard days' work. The labourers were part of a larger group which had migrated to Sandu, 9 km from Anantnag district. On 12 June 2006, militants lined up and killed 8 Nepali Hindus and 1 Bihari labourer at Budroo village near Yaripora in Anantnag district. A group of armed militants, numbering between 15-18, swooped down on the village and herded out a group of around 15 Nepali labourers from a brick kiln where they were working. Forcing them to line up between two Chinar trees the militants coolly shot them. While five labourers died on the spot during the 10 minutes of firing, four others succumbed to their injuries on their way to the hospital.

Analysts say that militant outfits have particularly carried out attacks against minorities and non-Kashmiris whenever there is a positive development in the peace process between India and Pakistan. The militant outfits under the direct influence and control of the ISI have always resorted to ruthless killings in order to derail the peace efforts. One of the first instances in this context is peace initiatives undertaken in the wake of the unilateral ceasefire announced by the Hizbul Mujahideen on 24 July 2000. On the intervening night of 1/2 August 2000, militant outfits killed as many as 70 innocent Hindus. The breakup of those killed included 23 Amarnath Yatris at Pahalgam, 20 brick kiln labourers at Village Kadran Qazigund, 7 Brick kiln labourers at Sandoo, Achhabal, all in Anantnag District, 8 Hindus at Village Kiyar, P.S. Madwah, Doda and 12 Hindus at Kunda, P.S. Banihal, Doda. These targeted killings were clearly intended to derail any steps towards peace in Kashmir.

One of the worst-ever attack took place on 14 May 2002 when militants lobbed grenades and fired indiscriminately on the KP Lines family quarters in the Kaluchak Army cantonment in Jammu. The attack left 32 people, mostly members of families of army personnel, dead and over 60 others wounded. A group of five militants in Army fatigue boarded a Pathankot-Jammu passenger bus near Vijaypur, 30 km south of Jammu. They alighted from the bus between Kaluchak and Ratnuchak Army area where they killed seven unsuspecting passengers after asking them to disembark from the bus. Following the attack the militants sneaked into the cantonment where they killed many more people. In another attack on the Hindu community, militants belonging to Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) killed 30 Hindus on 13 July 2002.