

Data | Claims of peace in J&K, amid continuing terror-related deaths

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Empty bullets near a house where two militants were hiding and later killed during an encounter in Srinagar on May 27, 2022. | Photo Credit: NISSAR AHMAD

A month ago, on July 10, the Centre filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court which said that since 2019, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has been witnessing an “unprecedented era of peace, progress and prosperity” after the dilution of Article 370. The affidavit quoted some numbers to back this claim. A table showed the number of “terrorist initiated instances” had come down, from 228 in 2018 to 125 in 2022. Neither the source of data nor the definition of “terrorist initiated instances”

was mentioned in the affidavit. There was no mention of the number of civilian or militant deaths in the affidavit. Rather, data of “organised stone-throwing incidents connected with terrorism-separatist agenda”, were cited. The affidavit also quoted the number of bandh/hartals in support of the claim. Last Saturday marked four years since Jammu and Kashmir’s special status was revoked by the Centre. On that day, Former J&K Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti and other leaders of her party were put under house arrest. J&K National Conference spokesperson Imran Nabi Dar said the party office was sealed.

Moreover, in just the first week of August, three militants and three security personnel had died in terrorism-related incidents. In fact, data from South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), which sources fatalities data from credible news agencies and dailies, show that the number of militant deaths has remained high since the major inflection point in 2016 when Hizbul Mujahideen commander Burhan Wani was killed.

Chart 1 | *The chart shows terrorism-related incidents of killing and deaths of civilians, militants and security forces between 2009 and 2022*

Chart appears incomplete? Click to remove AMP mode.

The number of militant deaths, in the post-dilution period, is nearly double that of the relatively calmer years of 2011 to 2015 and similar to the 2016-2018 levels which saw Kashmir on the boil again.

While the number of civilian deaths in terror incidents is trending downwards since the peak in 2018, 30 people still died in 2022, a number that is higher than in 2012 (19 civilian deaths), 2013 (19), 2014 (28), 2015 (19) and 2016 (14). In 2021, 36 civilians died, while in 2020, 33 such fatalities were recorded. In 2021, 45 security personnel died, and 30 in 2022. In 2011 and 2012, the corresponding numbers were 31 and 1, respectively. SATP data also show that there were 51 attacks on the Central Reserve Police Force, between August 2019 and December 2022, as against 22 attacks between August 2012 and December 2015.

Chart 2 | *The chart shows the number of Internet shutdowns between 2012 and 2022*

In fact, the number of forced Internet shutdowns in J&K, which ranged between three and five per year, between 2012 and 2015, peaked at 116 in 2020 (Chart 2). In 2021, 79 Internet shutdowns were recorded, the second highest in the past decade. In 2022, there were 43 such shutdowns. The shutdowns were executed by the government as a response to disturbances.

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Chart 3 | *The chart depicts each district's share in terrorism-related fatalities in the 2009-2023 period*

Notably, post-dilution, relatively peaceful districts such as Poonch and Rajouri in the Jammu region, have also seen sharp spikes in terrorism-related deaths. The first half of 2023 has seen a dramatic shift, with these two districts recording around 50% of all such deaths, similar to the levels seen back in 2000 to 2003 (Chart 3). The Forum for Human Rights in Jammu and Kashmir, in a recent report, mentions the resurgence of militancy in the Jammu region. It said: "Security analysts have warned over the past two years that, after decades of relative peace, Jammu division is once again providing loci of militancy, with a rising graph of armed attacks in Poonch and Rajouri districts."

Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal, the Software Freedom Law Center, India and the report 'Five Years Without an Elected Administration' (published by the Forum of Human Rights in Jammu and Kashmir, August 2022 - July 2023)

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