

Army Public School attack Peshawar 2014



Date: December 16, 2014

Location: Pakistan Peshawar **Participants:** Taliban Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan

On the web: BBC News - Viewpoint: How Peshawar massacre changed Pakistan (May 16, 2025)

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Army Public School attack Peshawar 2014 title can be described as a (APS) attack in Peshawar, Pakistan, on December 16, 2014, was one of the deadliest terrorist attacks in the country's history.

Peshawar school massacre, terrorist attack in which seven heavily armed Taliban fighters stormed an army-run primary and secondary school in Peshawar, Pakistan, on December 16, 2014, killing 150 people, of whom at least 134 were students. At the time of the incident, the Army Public School held more than 1,000 staff members and students; many of the pupils were children of military personnel. The terrorists began their attack in mid-morning when they accessed the large compound by scaling a wall. According to some reports, they bombed their own vehicle to create a distraction for school guards. Entering the main assembly hall, where a large group of students was taking a lesson in first aid, they proceeded to shoot indiscriminately. The attackers, who were armed with grenades and automatic rifles, then went to the classrooms, where they concentrated their fire on teachers and older children. According to official sources, they sought only to kill and made no attempt to take hostages.

Commandos from the Special Services Group of the Pakistani army arrived at some point and at length succeeded in cornering the attackers, all of whom were wearing suicide vests lined with explosives. The attackers died in the confrontation, and some of the soldiers were injured by shrapnel from the vests. The attack was estimated to have lasted about eight hours. Even as it continued, alarmed parents gathered at the gates of the school compound. According to various reports, 150 people were killed by the gunmen, and more than 100 were injured. Responsibility for the massacre was claimed by Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Pakistani branch of the Taliban, a militant Islamic movement. TTP leaders sought to justify the massacre as retribution for violent government attacks on its members. In the view of knowledgeable observers, the most probable provocation was Operation Zarb-e-Azb, a government anti-militant offensive in North Waziristan, one of Pakistan's tribal regions. The massacre aroused worldwide condemnation. In response, Pakistan reinstated the death penalty after a six-year moratorium and executed many suspected Taliban militants.

Attack

Army Public School is located at Warsak Road near the Peshawar Cantt, and is a part of Army Public Schools and College Systems that runs 146 schools across Pakistan. On the day of the attack, a total of 1,099 students and staff were registered in the school. The attack began at around 10:30 a.m., when seven gunmen wearing explosive belts entered the school after having scaled the walls. Before entering the school, the gunmen set fire to the Suzuki Bolan ST41 van in which they had arrived. The terrorists, bearing automatic weapons and grenades, moved straight toward the auditorium located at the centre of the complex and opened fire indiscriminately on the children who were gathered there for an assembly on first aid training.

According to the Director General of the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) and public relations department of the Pakistani military, Major-General Asim Bajwa, the terrorists did not intend to take any hostages but instead wanted to kill as many people as they could. As the terrorists opened fire, many of the people ran toward the two exits on the other side of the auditorium; many others were gunned down in the garden. Reports also surfaced that pupils were forced to watch teachers be killed in front of them. This included principal Tahira Qazi, who was burned to death in front of her students. Within 15 minutes, the SSG teams had stormed the school and entered the premises from two sides in their heavy armoured vehicles and trucks. Immediately, the SSG personnel engaged the terrorists, preventing them from going after and killing other remaining teaching staff and students.

Meanwhile, the SSG commandos had reached the area and surrounded the administration block. Most of the operation took place in the attempt to clear this block and rescue the hostages taken by the gunmen. Special teams of snipers and their spotters pinpointed the terrorists. One of the six attackers was killed by the snipers from the windows and air vents, while the other three were killed when the commandos stormed the building and rescued the remaining hostages in the process. Seven commandos, including two officers, were injured in the battle. A search and clearance operation was started immediately to defuse any IEDs planted by the gunmen within the school premises or in the suicide vests that the terrorists were wearing. The terrorists were in contact with their handlers during the attack, but soon after the SSG had moved in, the security forces intercepted the terrorists' communications.

Victims

An estimated total of 1,099 people and teaching staff were present on the school premises. Responding forces were successful in rescuing approximately 960, though 139 were injured. 149 people were killed, including 132 children and 9 school staff members.[24] The provincial Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa announced PKR 3,164,000 (US\$11,300 approx.) as compensation to the kin of each of the deceased in the terror attack and PKR 200,000 (US\$1,130 approx.) to the seriously injured.

Responsibility

The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the attack, describing it as revenge for Operation Zarb-e-Azb, the Pakistani military's offensive in North Waziristan that started in summer 2014. TTP spokesman Muhammad Omar Khorasani said that "we targeted the school because the Army targets our families. We want them to feel our pain.", "Our six fighters successfully entered the Army school and we are giving them instructions from outside," said Khorasani by phone.[according to whom?] During the massacre, Khorasani also said, "Our suicide bombers have entered the school, they have instructions not to harm the children, but to target the Army personnel. It's a revenge attack for the Army offensive in North Waziristan." Later though the Taliban claimed contrary by putting out a statement saying, "More than 50 sons of important army officers were killed after being identified." The attacks were mainly coordinated by TTP

leaders operating in Afghanistan. Moustafa Seyan Sediqyar was later killed in a drone strike in Afghanistan on 9 July 2016.

Reactions

The attack sparked widespread reactions in Pakistan, receiving condemnations from public, government, political and religious entities, journalists, and other members of Pakistani society. Pakistani media reacted strongly to the event, with major newspapers, news channels and many commentators calling for renewed and strong action against militants, especially against the TTP. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif condemned the attack, calling it a national tragedy and announced a three-day mourning period during which the national flag would fly at half mast. President Mamnoon Hussain and chief ministers of four provinces reacted strongly to the attack and condemned it.

Major Pakistani political entities denounced and heavily condemned the attack on innocent children, calling for a strong reaction against the militants. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Imran Khan called off the ongoing Azadi March protest in respect for the victims. Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai condemned the attack, saying in a statement: "I am heartbroken by this senseless and cold-blooded act of terror in Peshawar that is unfolding before us". Her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai said his "heart is bleeding" and his family is "traumatized" over the Peshawar school massacre.

Aftermath

Many international media organizations referred to the attack as Pakistan's "9/11". The popular opinion was one of anger against the TTP soon after the attacks. Pakistan's Government and its Armed Forces showed immediate reaction to the incident. According to the Iranian-American scholar, Vali Nasr, "the Taliban may be trying to slacken the resolve of the military by suggesting that there could be a tremendous human costs to the military offensive and create public pressure on the military to back off from this offensive, but it may actually ricochet on them." ISPR released the songs "Bara Dushman Bana Phirta Hai" and "Mujhe Dushman Ke Bachon Ko Parhana Hai", to pay tribute to the victims. In 2015, Pakistan renamed 107 schools after school children killed during the massacre in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region. Artists from around the world also expressed their concern and sadness. Pakistani artist and singer Shehzad Roy sang a new song for the victims of the Peshawar attack, which is now the official song on the National TV channel of Pakistan, PTV.

Reopening

The Army Public School Peshawar was reopened on 12 January 2015 under the guard of Pakistan's security forces. To uplift the morale and spirit of the students and victims of the school, the Chief of Army Staff, General Raheel Sharif, personally attended the morning assembly of the school and confirmed to them that no such incident will ever occur in Pakistan again as they will break the backbone of the Taliban.

Anniversaries and memorials

Yearly anniversary tributes are held in Peshawar, Pakistan with prayers, memorials and candlelight vigils. The main ceremony is held at the Peshawar Army Public School, with the parents of victims and Pakistani army officers in attendance, with portraits of victims displayed in

the school and along the road into the city. From the first anniversary of the massacre, Pakistan Children's Day was moved to 16 December.

Conclusion

The Army Public School attack on December 16, 2014, was a brutal and tragic act of terrorism carried out by the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), resulting in the deaths of 149 people, including 132 innocent schoolchildren. Targeting the children of military personnel, the attackers aimed to inflict maximum psychological and emotional damage. This horrific incident shook the entire nation and marked a turning point in Pakistan's fight against terrorism. It led to the implementation of the National Action Plan, lifting of the death penalty moratorium, establishment of military courts, and intensified military operations like Zarb-e-Azb and Radd-ul-Fasaad. The APS attack is remembered as one of the darkest days in Pakistan's history, but also as a moment of national unity and resolve against extremism. The victims are commemorated annually, and their sacrifice continues to inspire efforts toward peace and security in the country.