

While pursuing terrorists, the administration should also engage with civil society in J&K

The killings of seven civilians in Srinagar in six days mark a grim turn in the situation in the Kashmir Valley. This vicious, mindless violence against commoners, owned up by a group that calls itself the Resistance Front — believed to be a shadow organisation of the Pakistan-based LeT — is yet another reminder of the pathological hatred transnational radical Islamism inspires. The victims include local Muslims who were branded traitors, but the targeting of the Hindu Pandit and Sikh minority communities is unmistakable.

Srinagar's prominent Kashmiri Pandit chemist, Makhan Lal Bindroo, whose decision to stay on through the violent 1990s was seen as a positive omen by the displaced community, was gunned down. The killers used epithets such as 'RSS stooge', 'police informer' and 'traitor' for the victims. Majid Ahmad Gojri and Mohammad Shafi Dar were killed on October 2.

On October 7, a Sikh principal and a Kashmir Pandit who had returned to the Valley after taking up a job under the Prime Minister's special job package for migrant Pandits, were gunned down. Islamist terrorists have sought an ethnic cleansing of the Valley for long. The Pandits had to leave in large numbers in 1990 following violence. After 1994, attacks on minorities became episodic, but not without periodical outrages such as the Wandhama massacre, when 23 Pandits were shot dead in January 1998 and the Chittisinghpura massacre, in which 35 Sikhs were killed in Anantnag in March 2000.

The wave of violence is taking place against the backdrop of an uptick in tourist inflow to the Valley and the Centre's push to promote a raft of development schemes. The administration is also encouraging the Pandits to return. A nine-week-long outreach of the Centre in J&K where Union Ministers are visiting remote districts, including those closer to the LoC, is under way. Union Home Minister Amit Shah could make a visit later this month. Strict directives were issued to unfurl the national flag in all government buildings, including schools, on August 15. There is also a higher level

of intolerance by the administration, which does not spare even the political activities of mainstream parties. There is an aggressive drive too to punish government staff suspected to be separatist sympathisers.

Civilians are soft targets for the terrorists in this milieu. According to police figures, J&K saw 28 civilian killings, surpassing the 22 casualties of security personnel so far this year. Of the 28 killings, four were local Hindus, one Sikh, two non-local Hindu labourers and 21 local Muslims; 23 were political workers, with most from the BJP.

No society can tolerate such violence. But while pursuing terrorists, the administration should also engage with political parties and civil society organisations.

Expected Questions (Prelims Exams)

Q. Which of the following code(s) is/are correctly matched?

1. Vandhama murder case- 1998
2. Chittisinghpura Massacre- 2000
3. Displacement of Kashmiri Pandits - 1990

Code-

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Expected Questions (Mains Exams)

Q. Violence on civilians is increasing in Jammu and Kashmir even after the political & policy level solutions taken in the last 2 years, in such a situation what other steps according to you the government should take to stop this violence?

(250 Words)

Note: - The question of the main examination given for practice is designed keeping in mind the upcoming UPSC main examination. Therefore, to get an answer to this question, you can take the help of this source as well as other sources related to this topic.