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A year of secrecy, growing fears and deepening injustice

Amnesty International (19.09.2016) - <http://bit.ly/2cVXKsc> - A year on from the arrest of 14 high-ranking members of the opposition Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), in September 2015, Tajikistan's human rights landscape has worsened dramatically. They were all convicted following an unfair trial and sentenced to long-term imprisonment; scores of other individuals have since been criminally prosecuted in connection with the same events. Information relating to their prosecution is extremely sparse and patchy, and points to numerous human rights violations.

The prosecution of the 14 high-ranking IRPT members is linked to the violent unrest of September 2015 which the authorities reported as an armed attempt by the former Tajikistani Deputy Defence Minister Abdukhalim Nazarzoda and his supporters to seize power. Due to the authorities' near-total grip on news reporting in the country, there has been very little independent public scrutiny of the official account of these events. Virtually all vestiges of peaceful dissent have been suppressed in Tajikistan, and fear of reprisals for any form of criticism of the authorities has permeated Tajikistani society. In this context, discussing these events, and particularly their fallout in human rights terms, has become a taboo subject within the country.

Arrest and criminal prosecution of 14 IRPT members

The fourteen senior members of the IRPT were arrested in September 2015. The authorities accused them of being involved in organizing attacks on government buildings in the capital Dushanbe and the districts of Vakhdat and Rudaki (near Dushanbe) on 4 September 2015. According to the official narrative of these events, the attacks were led by the then Deputy Minister of Defence Abdukhalim Nazarzoda, previously a member of the United Tajik Opposition during the 1992-1997 civil war. Abdukhalim Nazarzoda himself was killed later in what was described as a security operation. Alternative accounts of these events have been put forward, in most cases anonymously on social networks and/or outside Tajikistan. In the absence of independent sources of reliable information within the country in relation to these events, Amnesty International has been unable to credibly verify neither the official version of events, nor any of the unofficial ones, some of which include arguments alleging an official plot intended to crush the remaining vestiges of political opposition and dissent in Tajikistan.

The arrest and criminal prosecution of 14 IRPT leaders has involved numerous violations of their right to fair trial, prompted concern that they were subjected to torture and other ill-treatment and strong suspicion that the charges were politically motivated. These were reinforced after independent lawyers representing IRPT members were not granted full access to their clients in detention, and particularly after criminal proceedings were opened against at least three of these lawyers themselves. Relatives of arrested IRPT members too, have been threatened and harassed by the law enforcement authorities.

The trial of the 14 IRPT leaders started in February 2016. The case was heard by five judges of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Tajikistan. The hearing was closed to the public and took place inside the pre-trial detention center (SIZO) of the Tajikistani State Committee for National Security. The trial ended in June 2016, and all 14 IRPT members were convicted and sentenced to long prison terms. Two deputy IRPT leaders, Umarali Khisainov (aka Saidumur Khusaini) and Makhmadali Khaitov (aka Mukhammadalii Hait), were sentenced to life imprisonment. Zarafo Khujaeva (Zarafo Rakhmoni), the only woman among the co-defendants in the case, was sentenced to two years in prison. She was released from prison on 5 September 2016 under presidential pardon, after she had addressed the president with a letter asking for pardon. Other sentences ranged from 14 to 28 years in prison.

The trial of the arrested IRPT leaders fell far short of international fair trial standards. Allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, used to obtain "confessions", have been repeatedly voiced by human rights defenders in exile and relatives of the arrested IRPT members. These have not been effectively investigated, similarly to allegations of torture of detainees by members of security forces in the past. The trial itself was conducted in secrecy, and the little public information relating to the prosecution and indictment of the IRPT leaders was quickly retracted, and later totally suppressed. Their defence lawyers were compelled to sign non-disclosure agreements regarding any information on the case and the legal proceedings. Even the charges against the defendants were a matter of official secrecy. According to media reports, they included terrorism, armed rebellion, murder, "public calls for violent change of the constitutional order", incitement to racial and religious hatred, and organization of a criminal group. However, official information on these charges is unavailable. Notably, the list of charges was initially circulated by the Prosecutor General's Office via the official news agency Khovar, but was later removed from the agency's website. Information about the criminal case against the IPRT leadership also appears to have been removed from the Prosecutor General's Office's official website. The verdict and official records of the court proceedings have never been officially released. However, on 4 August 2016, a document which appears to be a leaked copy of the Supreme Court's verdict was published online. This document, if genuine, confirms the above charges. The Prosecutor General's Office has refused to comment on the authenticity of the leaked document. Instead, criminal proceedings have been opened against Jamshed Yorov, one of the defence lawyers in the case, on charges of "divulging state secrets" (Article 311 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Tajikistan). He was arrested on 22 August 2016 and accused of leaking this document. On 26 August, Firdavsi District Court of Dushanbe ordered his remand in pre-trial detention. If convicted he is facing up to 10 years in prison.

As a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Tajikistan is legally obliged, among other things, to protect and respect the right of every criminal suspect to a fair trial, including, among others, to public hearings, to be provided with adequate time and facilities to prepare their defence and to examine witnesses. Tajikistan is also bound, both under that Covenant and under the UN Convention against torture, by the absolute prohibition on torture and other ill-treatment. After his March 2016 visit to Tajikistan, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Freedom of Opinion and Expression David Kaye expressed concern about the IRPT prosecutions and stated that "the drastic measures taken against IRPT represent a serious setback for an open political environment. The Government accuses the IRPT and its members of serious crimes but it has refused to give public access to the trial and evidence".

Harassment and imprisonment of defence lawyers

Lawyers who worked on the case of 14 IRPT members themselves faced harassment, intimidation and in some cases punitive arrest.

The UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers state that: "governments shall ensure that lawyers ... are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference" (principle 16), "lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions" (principle 18) and "governments shall recognize and respect that all communications and consultations between lawyers and their clients within their professional relationship are confidential" (principle 22).

Throughout the criminal proceedings against the 14 senior IRPT members, their access to legal defence was compromised. Buzurgmekhr Yorov, a lawyer representing several co-defendants in the case, was himself arrested in September 2015, initially on corruption charges, to which charges of "extremism" were later added. In October 2015, another lawyer representing some other co-defendants, Nuriddin Makhkamov, was arrested and charged with fraud. Their trial started on 3 May 2016 in Dushanbe City Court, and is still ongoing. A third defence lawyer working on the case of the 14 senior IRPT members who was arrested on 22 August 2016 and charged with "divulging state secrets" was Jamshed Yorov (see above), Buzurgmekhr Yorov's brother.

The cases against Buzurgmekhr Yorov, Jamshed Yorov and Nuriddin Makhkamov appear politically motivated and intended as reprisals for acting in defence of IRPT members.

History of harassment and persecution of IRPT members and other political opposition groups in Tajikistan

The Tajikistani authorities have alleged that during the violent unrest of September 2015, its leader Abdukhalim Nazarzoda had acted on the orders of Mukhiddin Kabiri, the exiled IRPT leader. Mukhiddin Kabiri denied any links to the violent events, and accused the authorities of fabricating evidence against himself and other IRPT members.

Members of the IRPT and other political opposition groups in Tajikistan and in exile have been subjected to increasing harassment by the Tajikistani authorities in recent years. Up until these violent events, the IRPT was a legally registered political party, and the only Islamist political party in the whole of Central Asia. From the late 1990s and until 2015, it had participated in elections, winning seats in the country's parliament. However, following the widely disputed 1 March 2015 parliamentary elections in Tajikistan, the party lost its two remaining parliamentary seats. On 28 August 2015, the IRPT received an order from the Ministry of Justice to cease its activities by 7 September on the basis that it "lacked sufficient popular support" to qualify as a registered party. On 29 September, following the violent unrest and the arrest of the party's leadership, the IRPT was designated a "terrorist organization" by the Supreme Court of Tajikistan, on the grounds that several of its members had long been involved in groups promoting "extremism", and that it had used the media, including its newspaper *Salvation*, to spread "extremist ideas" and promote religious hatred.

By the time the IRPT was banned, virtually all other vestiges of political dissent had been destroyed in Tajikistan, and most high-profile political activists prosecuted or exiled. On 5 March 2015, prominent Tajikistani opposition activist in exile, Umarali Kuvvatov, was assassinated in Istanbul. He and his family had previously told Amnesty International that he had received threats that there were "orders" to harm him, allegedly coming from the highest levels of Tajikistan's authorities. In February 2016, a Tajikistani man was convicted of Umarali Kuvvatov's killing by a court in Istanbul and sentenced to life imprisonment, while five other citizens of Tajikistan had been indicted and prosecuted in absentia in connection with this crime.

Human rights violations in Tajikistan should be immediately addressed

Tajikistan should fully respect its obligations under international human rights law, including by addressing immediately the violations outlined in this document. In particular, the IRPT members, and any other individuals who face or have faced grossly unfair trials, should be retried in independent courts in proceedings which meet international standards of fairness, as should their arrested lawyers who are currently standing trial. The Tajikistani authorities should also initiate prompt, effective, independent and impartial investigations into all allegations of torture and other ill-treatment. Where sufficient, admissible evidence is found, suspected perpetrators must be brought to justice in fair trials. The Tajikistani authorities should also respect the right to freedom of expression and association for all, and in particular end harassment and persecution of government critics, including political activists and other dissenting voices. Tajikistan's international partners should commit to monitoring and reporting human rights violations in the country, and ensure that concerns about Tajikistan's human rights record are considered at every opportunity where the Tajikistani authorities are represented in bilateral and multilateral fora.

The Islamist Renaissance Party of Tajikistan faces an uncertain future

HRWF (14.09.2016) - In August 2015, the Tajik government, headed by President Emomali Rahmonov, declared the *Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan* (IRPT) a terrorist organization and banned it. As a result, all party activities have been criminalized; moreover, its leaders and members have been subject to arrests and heavy prison sentences.

Following months of harassment of its members, the IRPT lost its two remaining seats in Parliament in the March 2015 elections. On 28 August, the Ministry of Justice ordered the IRPT to cease its activities by 7 September, claiming it lacked sufficient popular support to qualify as a registered party. In September, thirteen high-ranking members of the IRPT were arrested on charges of involvement in "criminal groups," linking them to violence that had erupted on 4 September, which the party's exiled leader, Mukhiddin Kabiri, refuted.

On 29 September 2015, the High Court classified the IRPT as a terrorist group, with the government alleging that the party, that had 40,000 supporters, was planning a coup. As a result, all of the Party's materials, including their official website and newspaper were closed.

After the ban of the IRPT, many members and leaders went into exile. Muhiddin Kabiri, IRPT's leader, was put on a wanted list, and, predicting a crackdown, he left Tajikistan to wait in self-imposed exile in Turkey. His whereabouts are currently unknown. Opponents to Rahmonov are nowhere safe in the world. On 5 March 2015, Umarali Kuvvatov, a founding member of a Tajikistan opposition group, was killed in Turkey. Other political activists received death threats, and there were attempted assassinations of dissenters from Tajikistan in foreign countries in recent years.

Lea Perekrests has analyzed for *Human Rights Without Frontiers* the history and the political philosophy of this party which since its inception has tried to reconcile Islam and democracy.

See her 30-page research paper "The Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan" at: <http://bit.ly/2cMubq2>

The quiet Tajik refugee crisis

A crackdown in Tajikistan has led to a little noticed surge in Tajik asylum seekers in Europe – particularly Poland.

By Yan Matusevich

The Diplomat (11.08.2016) - <http://bit.ly/2cnRhEu> - While the refugee crisis triggered by the Syrian conflict has gotten wall-to-wall news coverage in Europe, Poland has been barely a blip on the migration radar. Unlike other EU border states such as Greece, Hungary, and Italy, Poland has not seen a major spike in asylum seekers from places like Syria, Afghanistan, and Eritrea, due to a large extent to its geographical location away from the main migration routes.

Yet the comparatively low numbers of Syrians and Afghans arriving in Poland mask a rather dramatic and largely obscured development: the increase in the number of asylum seekers from Tajikistan.

In the first half of 2016, 660 Tajiks sought asylum in Poland, already surpassing the total of 527 Tajik asylum applicants in all of 2015. If the current arrival rate continues, the number of Tajik asylum seekers may well surpass the 1,000 mark by the end of the year. To put things in perspective, there were just 105 asylum seekers from Tajikistan in 2014 and they were virtually unheard of in years prior.

Within just a year and a half, Tajiks have overtaken Ukrainians as the second largest group of asylum seekers in Poland. The numbers would arguably be even higher given the fact that Polish border authorities prevented more than 3,000 Tajik nationals from entering the country in 2015. While Poland has been a traditional country of transit and destination for Chechen asylum seekers, who continue to comprise by far the largest refugee group in Poland, the surge in arrivals from Tajikistan is a new development.

Fleeing an unprecedented crackdown

The timing for the arrival of Tajik asylum seekers at Poland's borders coincides with Dushanbe's crackdown on the political opposition, which kicked into full gear in September 2015. There had already been signs of mounting repression in the month prior marked by the assassination of Umarali Kuvvatov, a prominent Tajik opposition leader in exile, on March 5, 2015 in Istanbul and the attempted extradition of Sobir Valiev, a member of the same Group 24 opposition group as Kuvvatov, in early August 2015, from Moldova to Tajikistan based on trumped up charges of extremism.

By September 2015 Tajikistan's leading opposition party, the Islamic Renaissance Party, had been shut down, followed by a flurry of arrests on September 16. The arrests targeted members of Tajikistan's civil society — from human rights activists to journalists and members of the opposition. Described by Steven Swerdlow of Human Rights Watch as the "worst political and religious crackdown since the end of the country's civil war," the Tajik government's repressive campaign has turned into a full-fledged human rights crisis with the prospect of imprisonment and torture hanging over alleged government critics and their families.

Tajik refugees headed to the Polish border

Since Tajiks can travel to Belarus and Russia without a visa, Poland is the closest EU member state within reach for those seeking to find protection as asylum seekers. A

large number of Tajiks have made their way to the Brest/Terespol border crossing, where they attempt to cross into Poland by train, following in the footsteps of the much more numerous Chechen refugees. Most Tajiks try to claim asylum at the border as few have managed to obtain Schengen visas given the absence of a Polish embassy in Dushanbe and many had to leave the country in a hurry, often after receiving a court summons, the precursor to a possible arrest.

Once at the Polish border, however, most Tajik asylum seekers never get the chance to ask for asylum. According to the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, Tajik refugees have been systematically prevented from applying for asylum at the border by Polish border guards who send Tajik asylum seekers back to Belarus on a daily basis, in violation of the 1951 Refugee Convention. As a result, Tajik asylum seekers try their luck multiple times, with some making upwards of 40-50 unsuccessful attempts to lodge their asylum claims at the border. A community of Tajik refugees has formed in the border town of Brest, staying in hotels and temporary apartments under the close watch of Belarusian security forces. Locals are profiting from their protracted stay at the border by renting out apartments at above-market prices.

Tajik refugees are anxious to leave Belarus, fearing the very real threat of being extradited back to Tajikistan. These fears are by no means unfounded: Shabnam Khudoydodova, a Tajik migrant living in Russia who made online posts critical of her country's government, was detained for eight months in Belarus awaiting extradition to Tajikistan after being pushed back by Polish border guards. Her eventual release in February 2016 occurred as a result of international outcry, spearhead by major human rights organizations.

Tajiks fleeing persecution are wary of seeking protection in Russia and other CIS countries given the precedent of extra-judicial extraditions, the close cooperation between Russian and Tajik security services, and the high levels of xenophobia toward Tajiks in Russia. In November 2014, Maksud Ibragimov — the leader of the Russian-based "Youth of Tajikistan for Revival" organization — was stabbed outside his Moscow home before being arrested by Russian authorities and subsequently smuggled out of the country and back to Dushanbe in the baggage hold of an aircraft — all this despite him being a Russian citizen. In Tajikistan, Ibragimov was sentenced to 17 years in prison for extremist activities.

Persecution at home, barriers in Poland

Those who do manage to cross into Poland — on average just two to three Tajik asylum seekers are let in per day, according to Polish NGOs — find themselves in a difficult and precarious situation. Poland has a very poor track record of granting protection; out of more than 6,000 asylum applicants since the beginning of 2016, only 45 were granted refugee status by Polish authorities. Out of the 541 Tajik asylum applicants in 2015, just one individual managed to obtain asylum.

Judging by Polish asylum statistics, a vast majority of Tajiks move on to countries in Western Europe after filing their asylum applications at the border. In 2015, over 92 percent of all asylum applications filed by Tajik citizens were withdrawn due to the absence of the applicant, presumably due to the refugees having migrated onward to Germany. Though some are sent back to Poland on the basis of the EU Dublin Convention — which prescribes for asylum seekers to be sent back to the country where they first filed their application — most end up slipping through the cracks, living as undocumented refugees in other EU countries rather than remaining in Poland.

With the election of a right-wing government in Poland in late 2015 boasting an openly anti-migrant platform, things are looking increasingly bleak for Tajik refugees headed to Europe. While the Polish Border Guard insists that it is merely upholding Schengen

regulations and "fighting illegal migration," Polish NGOs and human rights organizations accuse the Polish authorities of engaging in illegal push-backs of Tajik asylum seekers in particular in the buffer zone between the Polish and Belarusian checkpoints, away from the eyes of UNHCR and other outside observers. In an open letter to the European Ombudsman and a number of international agencies, the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights called on the international community to "pressure the Polish government to act in accordance with its international obligations" and allow asylum seekers to file their claims in accordance with the law.

Despite the dramatic increase in their numbers, the plight of Tajik asylum seekers on the Polish border remains on the margins of the broader European refugee crisis. Poland may be witnessing an unprecedented spike in arrivals, but the Tajik influx is overshadowed by the much larger flows fleeing violence and persecution in Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East. There is also little evidence to suggest that Tajik migration to Poland may turn into a broader exodus from Central Asia as the numbers of asylum seekers from neighboring countries has been close to zero. Should the type of political crackdown seen in Tajikistan emerge in other Central Asian countries, we could well see more Central Asian refugees making their way to the Polish border. For the time being, Tajik refugees are stuck in limbo between persecution from an authoritarian government at home and the unwillingness of Polish authorities to provide them the protection they are so desperately searching for.

Young Tajik Muslims banned from hajj

Interfax (14.04.2015) - From now on, Tajik Muslims will be able to perform a pilgrimage to the sacred cities of Mecca and Medina only after they turn 35, the Tajik government's committee for religious affairs said in a press release on Tuesday.

"Only people 35 years old and above will have a right to perform such a pilgrimage," it said.

"The goal of our decision is to allow elderly people to observe the annual pilgrimage and make their long-time dream come true," the committee said.

Every year Tajikistan's committee for religious affairs compiles lists of citizens willing to observe the annual hajj to the sacred Muslim cities of Mecca and Medina, located in Saudi Arabia, which annually issues the hajj quotas for foreign and domestic pilgrims.

In previous years, up to 8,000 citizens of Tajikistan, which has a population of around eight million people, completed the hajj. However, Saudi Arabia, seeking to counter the hajj stampede, decided to reduce these quotas this year.

"This year, only 6,300 quotas have been issued by Saudi Arabia to Tajikistan," the committee said.

Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon earlier called on citizens of his country, where the annual hajj has become very popular in recent years, to focus on helping the poor instead of "getting into debt or paying the last money to make such a trip."

"Jundallah" in Tajikistan?

By Ruslan Khalilov

Centrasia (11.10.2014) - <http://www.centrasia.ru/> - The Islamist group "Jundallah" (Soldiers of Allah) claimed responsibility for an attack carried out on 2nd November in the Wagah border crossing area, near the India-Pakistan border. The attack killed 60 people and wounded over 100.

Before this attack, in the second half of October, the Tajik Ministry of Interior Affairs announced the arrest of suspected terrorists who were preparing a major terrorist attacks with members of "Jundallah". This is the second time members of "Jundallah" were caught in this country since first being identified in 2013.

What kind of organization it is that is trying to destabilise Tajikistan? Its name comes across the web quite often, but to understand what it represents is very difficult because there are variety of terrorist groups under this "brand".

14 suspects

On 18th October, the Tajik Avesta news agency reported that the agents of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Tajikistan in Sughd and some of their colleagues from Spitamen detained 14 alleged members of the "Jundallah". One of those detained was the leader of the cell, 36 year old Mansoor Boboerov from the city of Panjakent.

According to investigators, before arriving in Tajikistan, Boboerov was a leader in his community located in the Sverdlovsk region of Russia. "He was involved in recruiting Tajik migrant workers to the terrorist organization. Boboerov undertook the same action in Ufa, the capital of Bashkortostan."

According to the source, Boboer and his accomplices were planning to carry out a series of terrorist attacks in Sughd. In particular, they were going to attack the military unit in Pendjikent and local OMVD to capture weapons.

The most important outcome is that during the interrogations, the terrorists announced their intention to arrange explosions in two road tunnels, the "Istiklol" and "Shahristan" connecting the center and the south of Tajikistan Sughd region.

On 20th October, the head of the press center of the Ministry of Interior Affairs, Jaloliddin Sadriddinov, confirmed that the terrorists had planned to carry out the explosions. He also said that in the course of the preliminary investigation, it was established that the terrorists had been trained at terrorist training camps in Syria.

Representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs did not explain the reasons why the terrorists wanted to blow up the strategic tunnels and damage the country.

According to security officials, groups engaged in preparing various attacks have been detained many times this year. There were plans to carry out explosions in the buildings of the capital's security agencies and undermine the symbolic gate-arch leading to Dushanbe from four directions. Other attacks were also planned such as an attack on a Tajik aluminium plant in Tursunzade, the city administration, the prosecutor's office, the police department, and the House of Culture. The motives behind planning these attacks were not revealed.

First conviction

The first appearance of members of the "Jundallah" in Tajikistan was in July 2013. The prosecutor of the Sughd region, Major General Justice Sharif Kurbanov, said at a press conference that the court in Asht sentenced two villagers, 27-year-old Adham Abdulloeva and 20-year-old Sodik Turobova, to long prison terms after they were found to belong to the organization.

They were convicted of "organizing a criminal group", "the organization of an extremist community", and "participation in extremist organizations." Abdulloev received 20 years of imprisonment and Turobov received 15 years of imprisonment.

The prosecutor said that the young people were in Russia (obviously on earnings - AsiaTerra) initially joining IM, and then "Jundallah." They were arrested when they returned home in 2013. The investigation revealed that they were engaged in promoting the ideas of the community and calling for jihad. Moreover, Abdullayev received special training in Waziristan.

Numerous "Jundallah"

When "Jundallah" was founded in Tajikistan and Russia, its goals were unclear. Tajik officials said the organization was simply a "criminal" or "terrorist" organisation without an explanation of its goals, ideology, or anything differentiating it from other organisations.

Russian websites state that "Jundallah" is an organization of Sunni Baluch in the border area between Iran and Pakistan. They are sometimes called the "Jundallah True" or "the Pakistani militant group" but without any clarifications or details.

In fact, organizations with such a name appear in the world frequently. The name itself is popular, so it is adopted by different groups operating independently of each other.

"In the English-speaking media there are different spellings of the word - Jundallah, Jandallah, Jandullah, Jundullah, in Russian editions there are even more - "Jundullah", "Jundullah", "Jundullah", "Dzhundulloh" etc."

The most famous of the organization with the same name is operating on the territory of the so-called Balochistan, that is, the distribution range of the Baluch, covering the southern part of Pakistan and Afghanistan and the southeastern Iranian province of Sistan and Baluchestan. The group's leaders say they are struggling with "Shiite oppression" (about 90 percent of Iran's population - the Shiites).

It regularly takes responsibility for major terrorist attacks which are usually directed against local security forces and religious minorities (Christians and Shiites).

Since neither Malaysians nor the Iranian-Pakistani Balochs had anything to do with the attack in Tajikistan, we assume that if the Tajik security forces are right, the persons arrested and convicted in the past year were citizens of this country and a local group, or, more likely, had something to do with "Jundallah" from Pakistan.

Rolling Symbol

There are some other groups registered with the same name. A 2007 article written by an Indian researcher, a recognized expert on counter-terrorism Bahatkumbi Ramana, describes them in detail.

According to him, the name came into use during the war that the Muslims of Bosnia and Kosovo, with the support of the United States, waged against the Serbs in the 1990s. Its foreign participants, mostly Pakistanis and Arabs as well as an Indian Muslim living in Saudi Arabia, called themselves "Jundallah."

From there, the name has penetrated into Chechnya. Many organizations and individuals have joined the Chechen jihad against the Russian presence in the territory and define themselves as a "Brigade Jundallah". A number of press statements were signed by persons calling themselves representatives of the "Jundallah".

When Chechen jihadists began their second jihad against the Russians in September 1999, they made another statement announcing the appointment of Supyan Abdullayev as a commander of the "Islamic Brigades Jundallah". "Later, he became vice-president of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria."

8th November 2001, the Russian government issued a statement in which Adam Umalatov, one of the closest associates of Shamil Basayev who fought with him in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and during the first Chechen campaign, was named head of the so-called 'Islamic brigades Jundallah'."

B.Raman indicates that later, this phenomenon moved simultaneously to republics of Central Asia and Indonesia. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan opened the propaganda department, called "The Jundallah Productions ". In Indonesia, even before the attacks on the US in September 2001, Muslim extremists attacked Christians many times. Some of the offenders stated their affiliation with "Jundallah" or "Lashkar Jundallah".

Initially it was thought that "Lashkar Jundallah", established in September 2000 in the southern part of the island of Sulawesi (Malaysia), was the military wing of the Committee for the Implementation of Islamic law (Komite Penegakan Syariat Islam). However, the International Crisis Group says in its report on "the Asian" December 11, 2002, stated that the name "Jundallah" leads to confusion because many Islamic groups operating out of Central Java, the Moluccas and Sulawesi called themselves by the same name, meaning "Army of Allah".

The expert writes that later the recognizable name spread in Pakistan and Egypt. In 2003, Egyptian authorities arrested 43 people who were brought before a military court on charges of creating a clandestine group called the "Jundallah" and of planning attacks on "Western targets" in Egypt.

In Pakistan, the participants of the failed assassination attempt on Lieutenant General Ahsan Saleem Hayat, at that time the commander of an army corps in Karachi in early 2004, described themselves as followers of "Jundallah" trained by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Later on, members of the "Jundallah" were responsible for a bombing near the US consulate in Karachi in March 2006 which resulted with the death of a US diplomat. The explosion took place before the visit of George W. Bush in Pakistan.

In January 2004, two months before the bombings in Madrid and eighteen months before the London bombings, Hossam el-Hamalawy, an Egyptian journalist, drew attention to the phenomenon of "freelance" jihadists (individual Muslims who do not belong to any organization) participating in the jihad against the US and Israel because of their policies. His paper was titled "The Crusaders against the soldiers of Allah".

Translation Russian-English by Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l
