POLICY WIRE

INSIGHT. ANALYSIS. PERSPECTIVE.

VOLUME 02

JULY 2026 EDITION

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NOT A LEAK, A BETRAYAL

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POLICY WIRE EXCLUSIVE


POLICY WIRE EXCLUSIVE

PHOTO ESSAY SOCIETY & JUSTICE

How The Neet Scandal And The Crackdown On Jantar Mantar Broke Gen Z's Faith In Narendra Modi's BJP



POLICY WIRE EXCLUSIVE


POLICY WIRE EXCLUSIVE

INVESTIGATION SOCIETY & JUSTICE

THE COCKROACHES WON

How a joke about "parasites" grew into the biggest check on Modi's government in a decade

On May 15, 2026, the Chief Justice of India, Surya Kant, was hearing a case about fraudulent professional credentials when he reached for a comparison. There are young people, he said, like cockroaches, who can't find work or a place in their profession, so they go into media, social media, or activism instead, and start attacking everyone. It was a throwaway line about a narrow legal issue. India's youth heard something else: an insult from the country's most powerful judge, aimed at everyone struggling to find a job in an economy that keeps telling them growth is coming.

Abhijeet Dipke, a 30-year-old political strategist, answered it the next day. He launched a platform for "all the cockroaches out there" on the social media platform X, with eligibility requirements written as a dare: be unemployed, be lazy, be chronically online, be able to rant professionally. He called it the Cockroach Janta Party, a name that mocked the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party down to its own initials. Within days it had 350,000 sign-ups. Within weeks its Instagram following passed 20 million, more than double the ruling party's own.

This is the fact CJP built its entire movement around, and the one the government could never make disappear no matter how it managed the news cycle: a national testing system had failed the people it exists to serve, and children had died because of it.

The joke had real grief underneath it. India's medical entrance exam had been sat by two million students on May 3. On May 12, the National Testing Agency cancelled it after reports that the paper had leaked, and ordered a re-examination. For students who had spent years and their families' savings preparing for a single date, the news wasn't an inconvenience, it was their future being taken back. At least a dozen medical exam aspirants died by suicide in the days that followed, families citing the stress of watching their preparation erased overnight. A parallel scandal, over the school board's own error-ridden screen-marking system, left thousands more students in limbo over results they couldn't trust either.

By June 7, protests organized by the Cockroach Janta Party had planted themselves at Jantar Mantar, the historic square by Parliament that has hosted Indian dissent for generations. The demands were specific: the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, the scrapping of the National Testing Agency, and accountability for the leak. On June 28, the Ladakhi engineer and education reformer Sonam Wangchuk, already a national figure for his climate and education activism, joined six students from the All India Students Association and began an indefinite hunger strike in solidarity. He called himself an "honorary cockroach." He kept fasting through July. By day 19 he had lost over nine kilograms, lost muscle mass, and could no longer stand without help. He didn't stop.



INVESTIGATION SOCIETY & JUSTICE

THE CRACKDOWN

On July 20, tens of thousands of protesters tried to march from Jantar Mantar toward Parliament under the banner "let's go to Parliament." They went anyway, despite police bans, road barricades, internet shutdowns near the protest site, and a heavy security presence built to stop them from moving at all. Delhi Police, which answers directly to the Bharatiya Janata Party-led central government, met the march with baton charges and tear gas. Officers in plainclothes were seen operating alongside uniformed police. Protesters alleged pellet guns had been used against them; Delhi Police called the claim completely false. What isn't disputed is the scale of it: nearly 180 people injured by the police's own count, tents at the protest site torn down overnight. What is disputed is who was hurt and why, Delhi Police maintains most of the injured were its own officers and that no permission had ever been granted for the march; protesters and rights groups described a peaceful crowd met with disproportionate force. Demonstrators rebuilt their camp in the rain and rubble the next morning anyway.

Wangchuk himself was forcibly removed from the protest site by police around day 20 of his fast and taken to hospital. He refused to end it. From his hospital bed, his fast became the story the crackdown couldn't overshadow.

The day after the crackdown, the confrontation stopped being about students and became a direct clash with the country's opposition. Delhi Police detained Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav outside Modi's residence.

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra told reporters as she was led away that the government was acting out of fear, not strength. Amnesty International India went further than most rights organizations do against a sitting government, accusing Delhi Police of using unnecessary and excessive force and of suspending metro and mobile internet access to choke the protest's momentum, and calling on police to show restraint and stop unlawful force against peaceful assembly immediately. A legal petition was later filed in Delhi's High Court alleging police had subjected protesters to constant surveillance and filming, creating what the filing called an atmosphere of intimidation. Parliament itself was disrupted for days running as opposition lawmakers demanded the government answer for the crackdown. Under that pressure, on July 23, the central government finally gave Wangchuk what he'd been asking for in writing: no legal or punitive action against any protester, a parliamentary debate on preventing future leaks, and consideration of compensation for the families of students who had died. He ended his 26-day fast that night at Medanta Hospital in Gurgaon. The next day, the National Testing Agency dismissed 47 officials in what the ministry called the first phase of a full overhaul, with computer-based testing and tougher anti-leak law promised to follow.



INVESTIGATION SOCIETY & JUSTICE

RESIGNATION OF PRADHAN

On July 25, Dharmendra Pradhan resigned. In a letter posted online, he wrote of his respect for the aspirations of the country's youth and framed his exit as a matter of moral resolve, warning, without naming who he meant, against the students' anger being exploited by "anti-national forces." He did not apologize for the leak itself.

At Jantar Mantar, Dipke fell to his knees when the news reached him, then stood and shouted into the microphone that they had done it. The crowd, according to those there, simply erupted, hooting and screaming into the evening. A 27-year-old doctoral student named Prerna Vats put the whole arc of the previous month into a single thought afterward: the government had bet that tear gas would thin the crowds, and instead the crowds kept growing. Thirty-six days after one social media post, a satirical party with no registration, no seats, and no single leader with an office to lose had taken down a minister widely described as one of the prime minister's closest confidants.

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The Cockroach Janta Party called off its nationwide protests the day of the resignation, but it didn't declare the fight over. Reports of detained protesters kept surfacing in Assam, West Bengal and Bihar in the days after, and the movement said publicly that any failure to release them or drop the cases would be a breach of public trust. By July 28, India's Supreme Court ordered the release of every minor arrested during the protests, and Bihar, Assam, Delhi, West Bengal and Maharashtra had all begun winding down their own cases against demonstrators. The movement's own count put the number still arrested at more than 100 even after Pradhan's resignation, a reminder that the victory arrived alongside a bill still being paid by the people who won it.

Regional chapters of the movement, born out of accounts banned and rebuilt under the line "cockroaches don't die," are still active on social media today, organizing beyond the single demand that started it all. Whatever comes next for Indian youth politics, the shape of it was set in these ten weeks: a joke that refused to become harmless, and a government that had to answer to it.



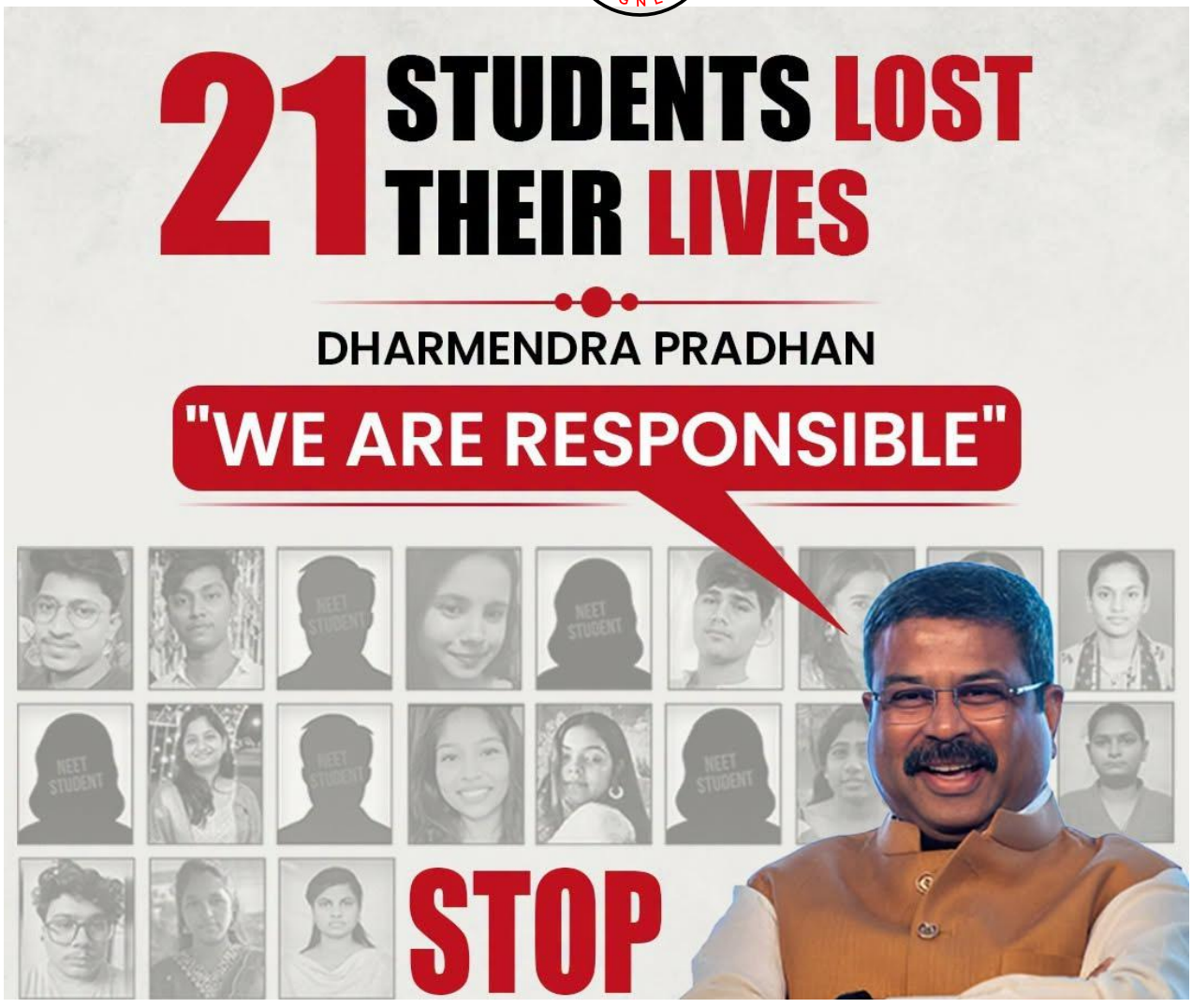
INVESTIGATION SOCIETY & JUSTICE

PRADHAN RESIGNED





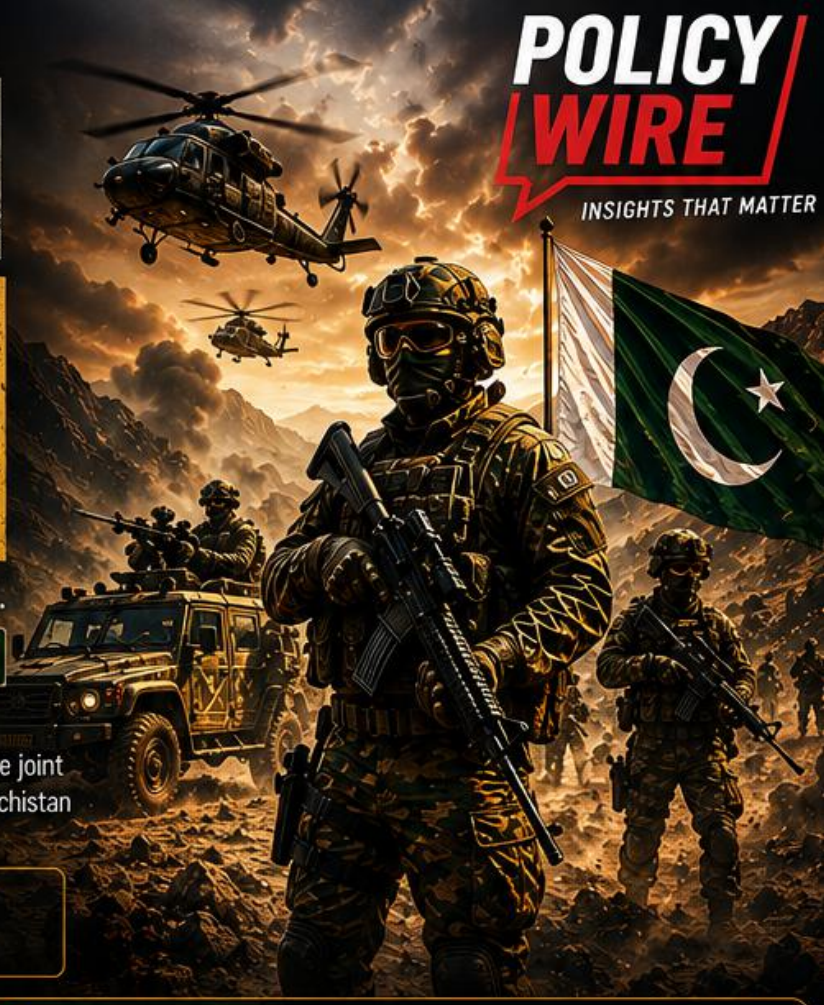




POLICY WIRE
INSIGHTS THAT MATTER

OPERATION AL-AZM

RELENTLESS. RESOLUTE. VICTORIOUS.



STRIKING AT THE NEXUS OF INDIAN SPONSORED TERRORISM

In continuation of security forces operations against the terrorists nexus of **Indian sponsored Fitna al Khwarij** and **Fitna al Hindustan**, comprehensive joint operations are being carried in different parts of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa & Balochistan to weed out terrorists and their facilitators.

In **last 24 hours** security forces have successfully eliminated **thirty two terrorists** of these Indian proxies.

SECURITY FORCES ELIMINATED 32 TERRORISTS IN LAST 24 HOURS

- COMPREHENSIVE JOINT OPERATIONS ACROSS KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA & BALOCHISTAN
- INDIAN SPONSORED PROXIES FITNA AL KHWARIJ & FITNA AL HINDUSTAN

KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

DISTRICT KHYBER

JULY 28/29 NIGHT

Multiple intelligence-based area sanitization and targeted operations were conducted.

24 TERRORISTS ELIMINATED
BELONGING TO FITNA AL KHWARIJ

BALOCHISTAN

DISTRICT NUSHKI

Multiple intelligence-based operations were conducted where after an intense engagement,

8 TERRORISTS ELIMINATED
BELONGING TO FITNA AL HINDUSTAN

RECOVERED & DESTROYED DURING OPERATIONS



WEAPONS



AMMUNITION



IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES (IEDs)

Weapons, ammunition and improvised explosive devices used by terrorists were also recovered and destroyed during operations.

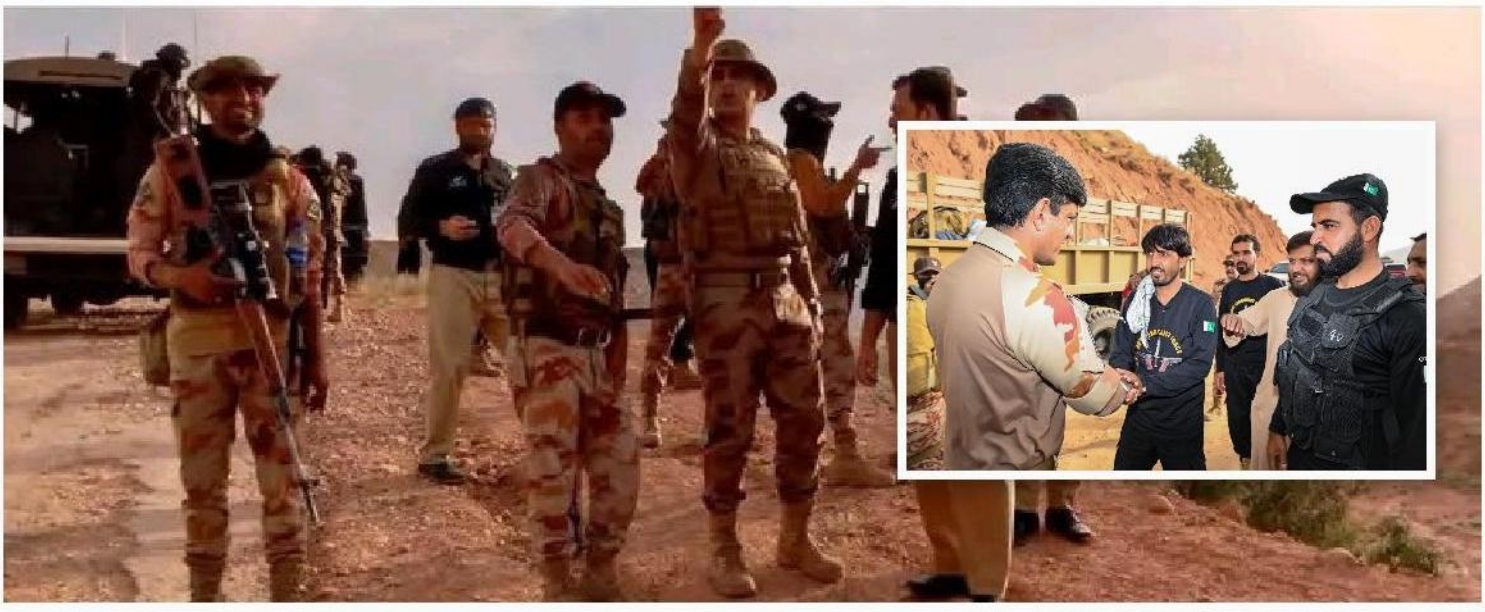
SPECIAL REPORT DEFENCE & SECURITY

OPERATION SHABAN

Inside Pakistan's Response in Balochistan

More than 132 terrorists killed in Balochistan since the July 5, 2026 operation began.





On the ground: *Army, Frontier Corps and police commanders coordinate at a security post in Balochistan as Operation Shaban continues.*

SPECIAL REPORT DEFENCE & SECURITY

Operation Shaban: BALOCHISTAN – TWENTY DAYS IN

How a single deadly morning in Ziarat turned into Pakistan's biggest counterterrorism push of the year



MISSION OVERVIEW

Operation Shaban is a province-wide counterterrorism campaign launched on 5 July 2026 following the attack on the Mangi Dam police checkpost in Ziarat.

The operation combines intelligence-based operations, search and sanitization missions, area domination, and security patrols conducted jointly by the Pakistan Army, Frontier Corps Balochistan and Balochistan Police.

MISSION STATUS

Launch Date	:	5 July 2026
Current Phase	:	Intelligence-Based Operations
Lead Agencies	:	Pakistan Army Frontier Corps Balochistan Police
Operational Environment	:	Mountainous terrain, valleys, remote settlements

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Intelligence-Based Operations (IBOs)
- Search & Sanitization Missions
- Area Domination
- Protection of Critical Infrastructure
- Border Security
- Recovery of Weapons, Ammunition & Explosives
- Security of Highways
- Civilian Protection

OPERATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Multi-agency Coordination
Joint operations and close coordination among security agencies.

Intelligence-led Operations
Actions driven by intelligence to target terrorist networks.

Search & Clearance
Continuous search and clearance of hideouts and vulnerable areas.



SPECIAL REPORT DEFENCE & SECURITY

TIMELINE OF OPERATION SHABAN

02 · TIMELINE OF OPERATION SHABAN

Key developments over the last twenty days

JULY 5
Attack and Operation Launched
Militants attack police checkpost at Mangi Dam pumping station in Ziarat. 27 police personnel martyred.
Joint operation by Pakistan Army, FC and Balochistan Police launched the same day.

JULY 10
Operation Shaban tally at 39; overall count at 75
Security sources report 39 terrorists killed in Operation Shaban; cumulative figure since July 5 reaches 75.

JULY 11
Operation tally at 64; overall count at 102
Steady progress in intelligence-based operations across multiple districts.

JULY 12
Overall count at 109
Three more terrorists killed; same day, five laborers from Punjab killed in Mashkel in a separate attack.

JULY 13
Commander 'Dilgi' arrested; overall count at 117
Key commander linked to Fitna al Khawarij arrested. Large cache of weapons and ammunition recovered.

JULY 14
Overall count stands at 121
Operations continue across mountainous terrain and remote areas.

JULY 15
Overall count climbs to 126
Security forces vow to continue the campaign until the last terrorist is eliminated.

JULY 16 – 17
Overall count crosses 129
Cumulative figure crosses 129, according to security sources and state media.

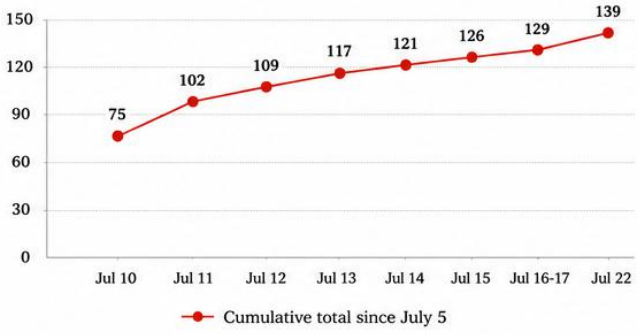
JULY 22
New milestone: overall count at 139
ISPR reports 10 terrorists killed. Two female suicide bombers and a facilitator apprehended. Overall count since July 5 reaches 139.



Pakistani Army troops conduct a search operation in the mountainous terrain of Balochistan as

CUMULATIVE TERRORIST FATALITIES

Reported by Pakistani security sources since July 5, 2026



139
TERRORISTS KILLED
Since July 5, 2026

20
DAYS INTO
Operation Shaban

2
FEMALE SUICIDE BOMBERS
Apprehended on



MULTI-AGENCY EFFORT
Pakistan Army, Frontier Corps & Balochistan Police working jointly across the province.

INTELLIGENCE-BASED OPERATIONS
Multiple IBOs conducted across districts on actionable intelligence to dismantle terrorist networks.

WEAPONS & EXPLOSIVES RECOVERY
Large quantities of weapons, ammunition and explosives recovered during operations.

SEARCH & SANITIZATION
Search operations in mountains, caves, settlements and vulnerable areas to eliminate threats.

CHECKPOST & AREA SECURITY
Additional checkpoints established; surveillance and area domination increased across key routes.

MOUNTAIN CLEARANCE OPERATIONS
Specialized troops conducting clearance operations in rugged and high-terrain areas.

EXPLOSIVE DISPOSAL
IEDs and explosive devices located and safely disposed of by bomb disposal teams.

COMMUNICATION & NETWORK DISRUPTION
Communication equipment seized and terrorist networks disrupted through technical operations.

SPECIAL REPORT DEFENCE & SECURITY

OPERATION SHABAN MAP & DISTRICTS OVERVIEW



DISTRICTS COVERED

Ziarat
Site of July 5 attack on Mangi Dam police checkpost. Major operations continuing.

Quetta
Operations in and around the provincial capital and surrounding areas.

Bela
Security operations along coastal belt and adjoining areas.

Mashkel (Awaran)
Search operations ongoing after attack on civilians and recovery missions.

Khuzdar
Intelligence-based operations and area domination in district.

Barkhan
Security forces conducting IBOs and clearance operations.

Nushki
Operations along key routes and bordering areas.

Kharan
Search and surveillance operations in desert belt.

Awaran
Multiple IBOs and sanitization operations.

Panjgur
Search operations in remote and high terrain areas.

Chagai
Bordering district under surveillance and clearance operations.

CUMULATIVE TERRORISTS KILLED SINCE JULY 5, BY REPORTING DATE

OPERATION SHABAN – BALOCHISTAN OPERATIONS



SPECIAL REPORT DEFENCE & SECURITY

OPERATION SHABAN SUMMARY



Now in its twentieth day, Operation Shaban stands as the largest counterterrorism campaign Balochistan has seen this year, and by the official count released by Pakistan's security establishment, the results keep growing.

The operation traces back to a single, brutal morning. On July 5, 2026, militants stormed a police checkpost guarding the Mangi Dam pumping station in Ziarat district, killing 27 police personnel, part of a wider wave of violence that also struck areas near Quetta and Bela in the days before and after. The scale of the attacks pushed a swift and decisive response to the top of the national agenda.

Within hours, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif convened a high-level meeting of the Provincial Apex Committee in Quetta, joined by Field Marshal General Asim Munir. The two authorized a joint offensive by the Pakistan Army, the Frontier Corps and the Balochistan Police, launched on July 5 as security forces moved decisively against terrorist networks across multiple districts. The results came quickly. By July 10, ISPR reported that Operation Shaban alone had eliminated 39 terrorists, while the broader campaign, folding in other intelligence-based operations across the province since July 5, had reached 75. Prime Minister Sharif told a gathering of officials that Pakistan would "uproot terrorism from the country once and for all."

The following days brought a steady stream of confirmed gains. By July 11, the operation's total reached 64, with 102 eliminated overall since July 5. On July 12, three more were added, pushing the combined figure to 109. July 13 saw the arrest of a commander identified as Dilgi, described by officials as a key figure in Fitna al-Khawarij, alongside confirmation that the overall tally had passed 117 and that large quantities of weapons and ammunition had been recovered.

By July 14, the count stood at 121. A day later it climbed to 126, with security sources vowing the campaign would continue "**until the last terrorist was eliminated.**" Through the middle of July the momentum held, with the cumulative figure crossing 129 by July 16 and 17, according to ISPR and state media.

The most recent milestone came on July 22, when ISPR reported that ten terrorists had been killed and two female suicide bombers, along with a facilitator, had been apprehended in multiple operations across the province. That brought the official overall figure since July 5 to 139, the highest cumulative count confirmed so far.

Throughout, Pakistan's civil and military leadership has kept up a steady drumbeat of public statements underscoring the campaign's resolve. Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defense Forces, said terrorism "**emanating from across the borders will be crushed with full might of the state.**" Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi called the joint effort by the Army, the Frontier Corps and the police a campaign that "has achieved remarkable successes."

Twenty days on, Operation Shaban has become one of the most sustained and, by the official record, most successful military campaigns Balochistan has seen in years, with the Army, Frontier Corps and Police leadership showing no sign of easing the pace.

ANALYSIS DEFENCE & SECURITY

Pakistan Built a Defense Industry & Now It Needs a Stock Ticker

Global investors are pouring billions into defense technologyn ames like Anduril and Aselsan. Pakistan has the exports, the order book and the combat record to match, but not a single listed defense pure play on its own stock exchange.



On the line: Technicians work on a JF-17 Block III at Pakistan Aeronautical Complex, Kamra. Export orders and delegation visits have surged since the type's combat debut, but public investors still have no direct way to buy into that growth.

$13B
SIGNED&DISCUSSED EXPORT PIPELINE

85+
FIRMSINTHE INDUSTRIAL BASE

0
LISTED DEFENSE PURE PLAYS ON THE PSX

THE LISTING PARADOX

Every defence industry can be owned — except Pakistan's.

TÜRKIYE	SOUTH KOREE	INDIA	PAKISTAN
✓ Listed state-built defence champions	✓ Listed state-built defence champions	✓ Listed state-built defence champions	✗ Zero pure-play defence stocks on PSX. Only micro-cap Wah Nobel Chemicals has any defence lineage.

PAKISTAN HAS THE TOOLS. CONTROL ISN'T THE ISSUE.

We can list without ceding control.

- Ownership caps (like banking) can apply
- Partial floats with State majority control
- Golden shares to protect national interest
- Disclosure limited to what is legally permissible

GIDS is the natural flagship candidate, alongside carve-outs like KSEW's commercial arm and NRTC.

THE WINDOW IS OPEN. DON'T MISS IT.

With the PSX in its strongest IPO phase in years, and exports growing from ~$400M realised toward a $13B pipeline, the window for a first mover Pakistani defence listing to capture a valuation premium is open now — and it may not stay that way indefinitely.



★ SECURE THE NATION. BUILD WEALTH. LEAD GLOBALLY.
Pakistan's defence industry is ready. Now it's time for investors to join the mission.

ANALYSIS DEFENCE & SECURITY

Arming For Growth, Can Pakistan's Defence Industry Win Over Global Investors?

Global defence spending has risen sharply since the Russia Ukraine war began in 2022. The United States has raised its defence spending by 153 billion dollars since 2021, and members of NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, have pledged to lift defence spending to five per cent of GDP, Gross Domestic Product, roughly 2.8 trillion dollars, up from 1.18 trillion dollars in 2021. That surge has fuelled a wave of initial public offerings, venture capital and private equity deals in defence technology worldwide, and Pakistan should be paying close attention.

Pakistan has what buyers from the Gulf, Africa and Asia increasingly want, affordable, reliable, politically unconditional equipment. Its defence industrial base of more than 85 companies, roughly 54 state owned and 31 private, produces the 4.5 generation JF-17 Thunder fighter jet, the K-8 trainer, the Shahpar family of drones, Fatah guided rockets and Pakistan Ordnance Factories (POF) ammunition, all priced at 40 to 70 per cent of Western equivalents. The core state complex includes Global Industrial & Defense Solutions (GIDS), the export umbrella for 12 factories and over 200 products, Heavy Industries Taxila (HIT), maker of the Al-Khalid and new Haider tanks, the Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAC) in Kamra, which builds the JF-17 Block III, Karachi Shipyard & Engineering Works (KSEW), the National Engineering and Scientific Commission (NESCOM), design authority for missiles and drones, and the National Radio and Telecommunication Corporation (NRTC), which supplies secure communications and electronic warfare (EW) systems.

A private tier is scaling alongside this state complex, firms like Shibli, Pakistan's first private thermal imager manufacturer, and Daudsons Armoury, known as Dawood Sons, a private manufacturer supplying armoured and defence equipment to the Ministry of Defence Production catalogue, alongside Integrated Dynamics and SATUMA in drones. Growth of this scale needs capital, and government support is essential if the private sector is to scale alongside the state owned complex, through easier access to foreign exchange, streamlined export licensing and incentives for research and development.

What defines Pakistan's approach is that it blends technologies from multiple sources, Chinese, domestic and other partner technology, into platforms configured to its own peculiar operational requirements, rather than depending on a single supplier, allowing it to field combat credible systems at a fraction of Western cost.



JF 17 THUNDER BLOCK III



JF 17 THUNDER BLOCK III

> ***Turkiye's Aselsan trades around 48 times earnings and carries a market capitalization near $34 billion. Pakistan's only entry on this list is a micro-cap the market still prices as a chemicals company.***

ANALYSIS DEFENCE & SECURITY

Pakistan's Defence Industry Growth: Can It Win Over Global Investors?

Delegations from Azerbaijan, Nigeria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Kenya have since engaged with GIDS and NESCOM, and Pakistan's defence industry has come under intense global focus. But most of that commentary has centred on Pakistan's use of Chinese origin technology, when it deserves far greater emphasis for the indigenous design, integration and manufacturing capacity behind these platforms, the NESCOM linked avionics houses, NRTC's electronic warfare systems, and PAC Kamra's radar integration on the JF-17. Telling that story matters commercially, buyers pay a premium for genuinely sovereign, transferable technology rather than a repackaged foreign system.

Formal exports remain small, just 12.5 million dollars in the 2025 fiscal year, dominated by cartridge parts and sold mostly to the United Arab Emirates and France. But broader government to government (G2G) platform deals put real annual defence exports at 300 to 500 million dollars, and the pipeline is far larger, about 1.3 billion dollars exported between the 2022 and 2024 editions of IDEAS, the International Defence Exhibition and Seminar, 82 memoranda of understanding (MoUs) signed in 2024 alone with an indicated long term potential of 30 billion dollars, and roughly 10 to 13 billion dollars in reported contract activity, over 60 per cent of the central bank's foreign exchange reserves. Landmark deals include Azerbaijan's order, worth 4.6 billion dollars, for 40 JF-17 Block IIIs, and Türkiye's purchase of 52 Super Mushshak trainers. If Pakistan converts even 40 to 60 per cent of the pipeline, annual exports could plausibly reach 2 to 5 billion dollars by 2035.

Beyond the JF-17, the real opportunity sits in drones and counter drone systems, led by NESCOM's Shahpar family of drones and the Spider counter drone system, Pakistan's fastest growing export niche, alongside missiles such as Fatah-I and Fatah-II, POF's munitions output, defence electronics and avionics, maintenance and overhaul work tied to the growing exported fleet, cybersecurity, led by the listed firm Supernet, and space and satellite work through SUPARCO.

> ***With the PSX in its strongest IPO phase in years, and exports growing from roughly 400 million dollars realised toward a pipeline worth 13 billion dollars, the window for a first mover Pakistani defence listing to capture a valuation premium is open now, and it may not stay that way indefinitely.***

Globally, capital is pouring into private defence tech firms, Anduril Industries valued at 61 billion dollars, Germany's Quantum Systems at 8 billion dollars, Europe's Helsing at up to 18 billion dollars. Listed defence primes trade at premium price to earnings multiples too, from around 20 times for Northrop Grumman to 144 times for Palantir, with emerging market peers such as India's defence sector, median 50.5 times, and Turkey's Aselsan, 48.3 times, the closest comparison for what Pakistani issuers would list into.

And yet every defence industry can be owned except Pakistan's. Türkiye, South Korea and India have all listed state built defence champions, while Pakistan has zero pure play defence stocks on the PSX, only the micro cap Wah Nobel Chemicals carries any defence lineage. Pakistan already has the legal tools to list without ceding control, the same ownership caps used in banking could apply here, alongside partial floats, with the state keeping majority control, golden shares, and disclosure limited to what is legally permissible. GIDS is the natural flagship candidate, alongside carve outs such as KSEW's commercial arm and NRTC.

ANALYSIS DEFENCE & SECURITY

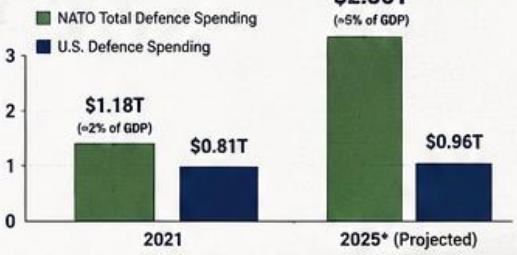
ARMING FOR GROWTH

Can Pakistan's Defence Industry Win Over Global Investors?

Global defence spending has risen sharply since the Russia Ukraine war began in 2022. The United States has raised its defence spending by $1S3 billion since 2021, and members of NATO have pledged to lift defence spending to 5% of GDP, roughly $2.8 trillion, up from $1.18 trillion in 2021. That surge has fuelled a wave of IPOs, venture capital and private equity deals in defence technology worldwide, and Pakistan should be paying close attention.

GLOBAL DEFENCE SPENDING SURGE

In Trillion USD



Sources: SIPRI (2024), NATO (June 2024), U.S. Department of Defense (2024) *Projection

+$153B
U.S. increase since 2021

Global investors are backing defence tech like never before.



PAKISTAN HAS WHAT THE WORLD WANTS

Affordable, reliable, politically unconditional equipment for buyers in the Gulf, Africa and Asia.



JF-17 THUNDER
4.5 Generation Multirole Fighter



K-8 KARAKORAM
Advanced Trainer Aircraft



SHAHPAR FAMILY
Drones (Reconnaissance & Strike)



FATAH SERIES
Guided Rockets & Missiles



POF AMMUNITION
Wide Range of Ammunition

40–70% LOWER COST than Western equivalents

PAKISTAN'S DEFENCE INDUSTRIAL BASE

>85	~54	~31
Companies	State Owned	Private

THE CORE STATE COMPLEX – THE BACKBONE OF CAPABILITY

GIDS — GLOBAL INDUSTRIAL & DEFENSE SOLUTIONS
Export umbrella for 12 factories and over 200 products.

HIT — HEAVY INDUSTRIES TAXILA
Maker of Al-Khalid tanks and new Haider tanks.

PAC — PAKISTAN AERONAUTICAL COMPLEX, KAMRA
Builds JF-17 Block III fighters.

KSEW — KARACHI SHIPYARD & ENGINEERING WORKS
Shipbuilding and marine engineering solutions.

NESCOM — NATIONAL ENGINEERING & SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION
Design authority for missiles, drones and advanced systems.

NRTC — NATIONAL RADIO & TELECOM CORPORATION
Secure communications, electronic warfare (EW) systems.

Growth of this scale needs capital and government support — easier access to foreign exchange, streamlined export licensing and incentives for research & development are critical to scale the private sector alongside the state complex.

PRIVATE SECTOR: RISING FAST

A dynamic private tier is scaling alongside the state complex.

Shibli	Pakistan's first private thermal imager manufacturer.
DAUDSONS ARMOURY	Private manufacturer of armoured and defence equipment, enlisted in MoDP catalogue.
INTEGRATED DYNAMICS	Drones and unmanned systems.
SATUMA	High-performance UAV solutions.

A DISTINCTLY PAKISTANI APPROACH

Pakistan blends technologies from multiple sources — Chinese, domestic and other partners — into platforms configured to its own operational requirements, not tied to a single supplier. This enables combat credible systems at a fraction of Western cost.

MAY 2025 CONFLICT: A LIVE DEMONSTRATION

- ✓ JF-17 paired with China's PL-15 missile
- ✓ Fatah rockets and drones in action
- ✓ Widely reported destruction of a Russian-made **S-400 air defence system**



GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT. INTENSE FOCUS.

Delegations from Azerbaijan, Nigeria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and **Kenya** have engaged with GIDS and NESCOM.

AZERBAIJAN · NIGERIA · IRAQ · SAUDI ARABIA · KENYA

The world must recognise Pakistan's indigenous design, integration and manufacturing capacity — from **NESCOM's** avionics houses and NRTC's EW systems to PAC Kamra's radar integration on the JF-17.

Buyers pay a premium for genuinely sovereign, transferable technology — not a repackaged foreign system.

EXPORTS TODAY. PIPELINE TOMORROW.

FORMAL EXPORTS REMAIN SMALL

Just $12.5 million in FY2025, dominated by cartridge parts and sold mostly to **UAE and France.**

UAE · FRANCE

THE BIGGER PICTURE

$300–500M
Annual defence exports (G2G deals)

$1.3B
Exported between IDEAS 2022–2024

82
MoUs signed in 2024 alone

$30B
Indicated long-term potential

$10–13B
Reported contract activity (>60% of SBP's FX reserves)

LANDMARK DEALS

AZERBAIJAN
$4.6 Billion order for 40 JF-17 Block IIIs

TÜRKİYE
Purchase of 52 Super Mushshak trainers

IF PAKISTAN CONVERTS 40–60% OF THE PIPELINE, ANNUAL EXPORTS COULD REACH $2–5 BILLION BY 2035.

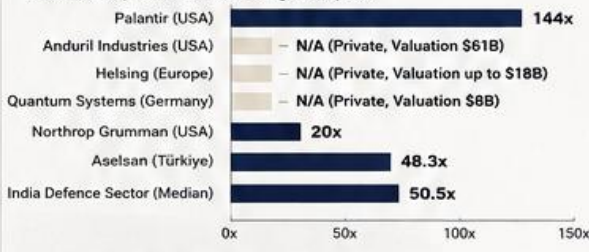
WHERE THE REAL OPPORTUNITY LIES

Beyond the JF-17, Pakistan's export edge spans multiple high-demand areas.

- **DRONES & COUNTER-DRONES** — NESCOM's Shahpar family & Spider C-UAS systems
- **MISSILES** — Fatah-I, Fatah-II and future variants
- **MUNITIONS** — POF's wide range of ammunition
- **DEFENCE ELECTRONICS & AVIONICS** — Indigenous design and integration strength
- **MRO (MAINTENANCE, REPAIR & OVERHAUL)** — Support for growing exported platforms
- **CYBERSECURITY** — Supernet (listed) – cyber defence solutions
- **SPACE & SATELLITES** — SUPARCO – satellite and space technologies

GLOBAL CAPITAL IS POURING INTO DEFENCE TECH

Valuation Snapshot (Price to Earnings Multiples)



Sources: Market data (May 2025), Company filings, Industry reports

CULTURE / CENSORSHIP SOCIETY & JUSTICE

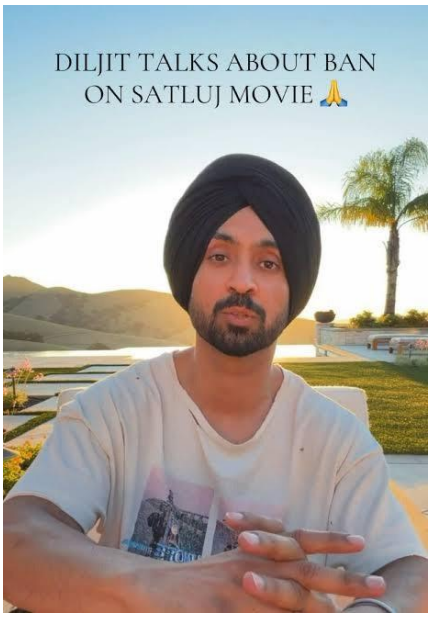
WHY SATLUJ WAS BANNED

Diljit Dosanjh's Film and the Khalra Story

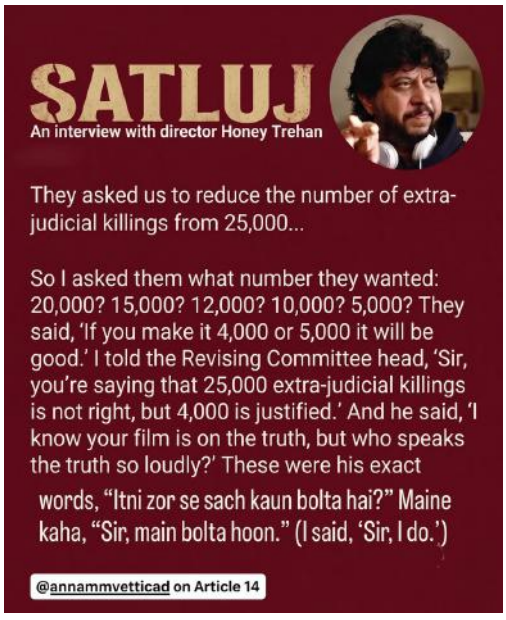
Pulled from ZEE5 within 48 hours of release, with no factual objection ever named,the fight over a true story India's censors spent three years trying to keep off screens.



On set: Diljit Dosanjh, who plays Jaswant Singh Khalra, with director Honey Trehan and crew during production of Satluj, originally titled Punjab '95.







CULTURE / CENSORSHIP SOCIETY & JUSTICE

Censorship or Propaganda?

Somewhere in Punjab this month, a village hall or a gurdwara courtyard was quietly turned into a cinema. Neighbors brought homemade lassi. Someone rigged a projector to a bedsheet. And a community sat together to watch a film their own government has decided they should not be allowed to see. That image, more than any statement from a censor board, captures what is actually happening with Satluj, and what is wrong with the decision to ban it.

The Diljit Dosanjh's film tells the story of Jaswant Singh Khalra, a bank employee in Amritsar who set out to find one missing friend and uncovered evidence of thousands of disappearances during the government's crackdown on Punjab's separatist movement in the 1980s and 1990s. Khalra alleged that police secretly cremated nearly twenty five thousand unidentified bodies without informing families or keeping records. For telling that truth, he was taken from outside his home in September 1995 and never seen again. Five police officials are now serving life sentences for his murder. This is not a contested legend. It is a matter of settled criminal conviction.

And yet the film that simply dramatizes this record spent three years fighting India's censor board before its makers finally gave up seeking a theatrical release and put it on ZEE5 instead. Within forty eight hours, it was pulled. Officials have offered no specific factual objection, no claim that any scene misrepresents events. A government review committee is reported to have concluded only that the film runs against India's sovereignty, a phrase so broad it explains nothing while foreclosing everything. When a government cannot name what is inaccurate about a true story, and objects instead to the fact that the story is being told at all, it has stopped making an argument and started issuing an order.

This is censorship aimed not at fiction but at memory. Khalra's widow, Paramjit Kaur, spent years forcing a reluctant state to investigate her husband's killing. That fight produced convictions in court. It has not produced a country willing to let its citizens watch a film about what those convictions were for. The government that once conceded, under enormous pressure, that its own police murdered Khalra now appears determined to ensure as few people as possible ever see that story rendered whole.

The ban has already failed, and its failure is instructive. The film is circulating anyway, reposted across video platforms faster than links can be removed. Sikh communities in London, New York and Toronto have organized their own screenings, refusing to let a government's discomfort dictate what their diaspora remembers. In Gurdaspur, one viewer described the film simply as a horror show made of reality, not invention. That is the real threat officials seem to fear: not falsehood, but recognition. A public that watches Satluj does not learn something new about Punjab's past so much as it is finally handed permission to grieve it openly.

There is a wider pattern worth naming plainly. Under the current government, independent films willing to question police and state conduct have repeatedly faced censor board delays, mandated cuts, or outright bans, while films flattering to the ruling party have moved through the same system with little resistance, often receiving tax exemptions and enthusiastic official promotion along the way. Satluj is not an isolated casualty. It is the latest and clearest example of a system that treats inconvenient history as a security threat and convenient propaganda as harmless entertainment, one that decides which version of the past deserves a screen and which one deserves to be quietly disappeared, much like the families Khalra spent his life trying to find.

To be fair to the other side of this argument, officials would say Punjab's insurgency years remain a genuinely sensitive wound, that separatist sentiment has not fully disappeared, and that a widely viewed film revisiting that period carries some real risk of reigniting old grievances or unrest. That is a claim a government is entitled to make and citizens are entitled to weigh for themselves. But a democracy confident in its own institutions should be strong enough to let its citizens watch a film about a man its own courts agreed was murdered for telling the truth. Banning Satluj has not erased Khalra's story. It has only proven, once again, exactly why he thought that story was worth dying to tell.

PHOTO ESSAY SOCIETY & JUSTICE

A COUNTRY KEEPS PROTESTING

From Dadri to Delhi, demonstrators have repeatedly demanded the accountability the data on the following pages shows rarely arrives



Demonstrators hold placards protesting the 2015 lynching of Mohammad Akhlaq in Dadri, Uttar Pradesh.



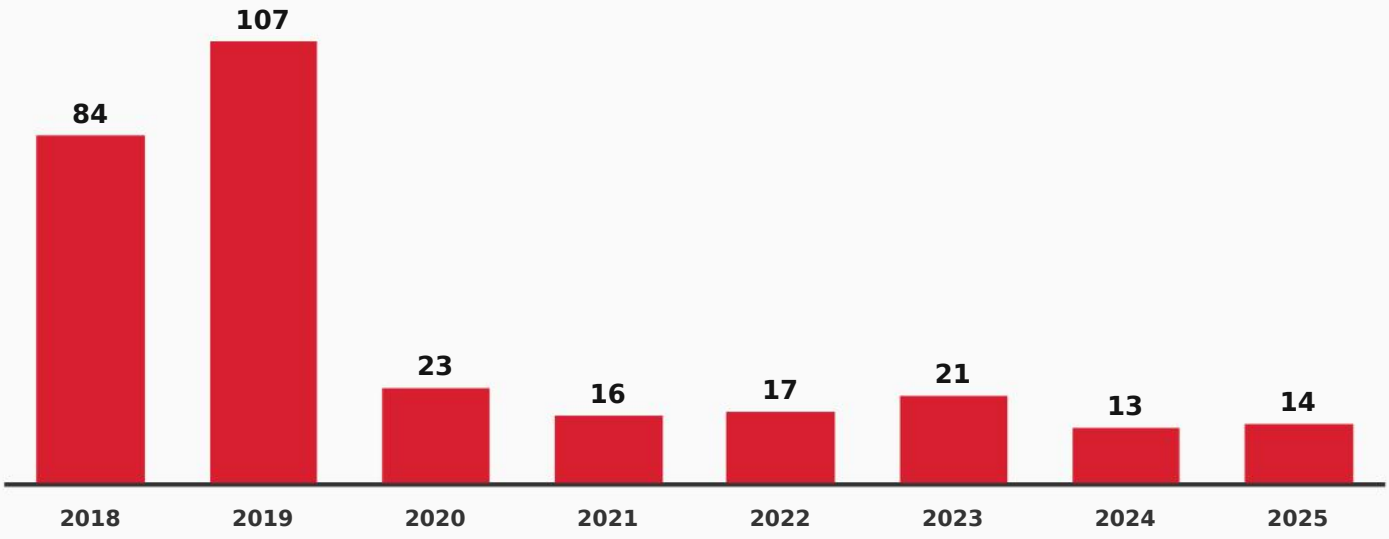
INVESTIGATION SOCIETY & JUSTICE

MOB LYNCHING IN INDIA

Cow Vigilantism, Hindutva Politics- What the Data Actually Shows

India's federal government has never published an official count of mob lynchings. Eight years of independent monitoring, now extending into a live case from this July, show a pattern that successive parliamentary replies have avoided putting on the record.

Reported Mob Lynching Incidents in India, 2018–2025



Source: Centre for Study of Society and Secularism (CSSS), based on monitoring of five national newspapers (The Hindu, Times of India, Indian Express, Sahafat, Inquilab). 2025 figure from CSSS's report released January 2026. Figures reflect media-reported incidents, not official government statistics — the National Crime Records Bureau does not maintain a separate mob-lynching category. A full-year 2026 count is not yet available; CSSS typically publishes each year's tally the following January.

9 of 11
2024 LYNCHING DEATHS WERE MUSLIM VICTIMS (CSSS)

8 of 8
2025 LYNCHING DEATHS WERE MUSLIM VICTIMS (CSSS)

1 in 5
HINDU-ON-MUSLIM ATTACKS, 2019-24, TIED TO COW VIGILANTISM (ACLED)

95%
2025 LYNCHING CASES OCCURRING IN BJP-RULED STATES (CSSS)

0
SEPARATE MOB-LYNCHING CATEGORY IN OFFICIAL NCRB CRIME DATA

2017
YEAR NATIONAL CRIME RECORDS BUREAU BEGAN, THEN STOPPED COLLECTING LYNCHING-SPECIFIC DATA

INVESTIGATION SOCIETY & JUSTICE

A DECADE OF DATA, NO OFFICIAL COUNT

What eight years of independent monitoring reveal about who gets lynched in India, and why the state has ne ver had to explain it.

In September 2015, a mob in Dadri, Uttar Pradesh, dragged 52 year old Mohammad Akhlaq from his home over rumors that his family had slaughtered a cow and stored beef in their refrigerator. He was beaten to death outside his own front door. Seven years later, in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha, a minister of state for home affairs told Parliament plainly that
India's National Crime Records Bureau keeps no separate category for mob lynching at all. Between those two facts sits the entire story, a form of violence common enough to have a name, a pattern and a body count, and rare enough in official statistics to functionally not exist.

to a continuous public record that exists. It shows 84 incidents in 2018 and a further spike to 107 in 2019, before a sharp drop to 23 in 2020, a decline researchers mostly attribute to COVID 19 lockdowns rather than any change in policy. The numbers crept back up only slightly after that, 16 in 2021, 17 in 2022, 21 in 2023, 13 in 2024, and 14 in 2025. The trend line understates the more consistent finding underneath it, who the victims are. Of the 13 incidents recorded in 2024, seven were tied directly to accusations of cow slaughter or beef possession. Of the 11 people killed that year, nine were Muslim, one was Hindu, and one was Christian. In 2025, all eight lynching deaths CSSS recorded were Muslim. That imbalance is not a one year anomaly. Research by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project found that more than one in five recorded attacks by Hindus on Muslim civilians between June 2019 and March 2024 were motivated specifically by cow vigilantism, suspicion of slaughtering cows or possessing beef, an act legal for Muslims under India's constitution but treated as sacrilege under Hindu tradition and banned outright in several states.

> *"A form of violence common enough to have a name, a pattern and a body count, and rare enough in official statistics to functionally not exist."*

Geography follows a pattern too. Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Bihar, the so called cow belt, have accounted for a disproportionate share of incidents in nearly every year CSSS has tracked, and by 2025 roughly 95 percent of recorded cases occurred in BJP ruled states. Cases like that of Pehlu Khan, beaten by a highway mob in Haryana in 2017 while transporting cattle he had legally purchased, or Tabrez Ansari, lynched in Jharkhand in 2019 while his attackers filmed themselves forcing him to chant religious slogans, were not fringe events, they became reference points precisely because the pattern kept repeating with different names attached, most recently in a case from this July detailed on page 12. The state's response has been narrower than the problem. Beyond the Supreme Court's 2018 directions, prosecutions remain slow and conviction rates low, and several states have paired that inaction with laws, anti conversion statutes marketed as measures against "love jihad," for instance, that critics argue legitimize the same suspicions driving vigilante violence. The federal government's position, stated in Parliament rather than in policy, is that this is a state law and order matter, not a category requiring its own data, a position laid out in full, next page.

INVESTIGATION SOCIETY & JUSTICE

THE GOVERNMENT ON THE RECORD

A decade of parliamentary answers on mob lynching, 2014–2026, what was said, and when it stopped being said

2014–17 In a **March 2018 written reply to the Lok Sabha**, the government gave its only specific national tally to date: **45 people killed in 40 incidents** of mob violence across 21 states and union territories — while 14 states and UTs supplied no data at all. Independent trackers counted higher: IndiaSpend's cow-vigilante database logged roughly 80–85 incidents and 34–41 deaths over the same stretch, and The Quint's broader hate-crime count found 219 cases and 113 deaths between 2015 and 2019.

2017 NCRB collects a category for mob lynching and hate-crime murders for the first time, as part of its "Crime in India" data-gathering.

Jul 2018 Four months after the specific Lok Sabha figure, the Minister of State for Home Affairs tells the **Rajya Sabha** that the National Crime Records Bureau does not maintain lynching specific data at all, and that state governments are competent to handle such offences under existing law.

Dec 2018 The same "no separate data" position is repeated in the Lok Sabha.

2019 National Crime Records Bureau 2017 crime report is finally published, a year later than scheduled. The mob- lynching and religiously-motivated murder categories it had compiled are withheld from the release; officials later call the underlying data "unreliable."

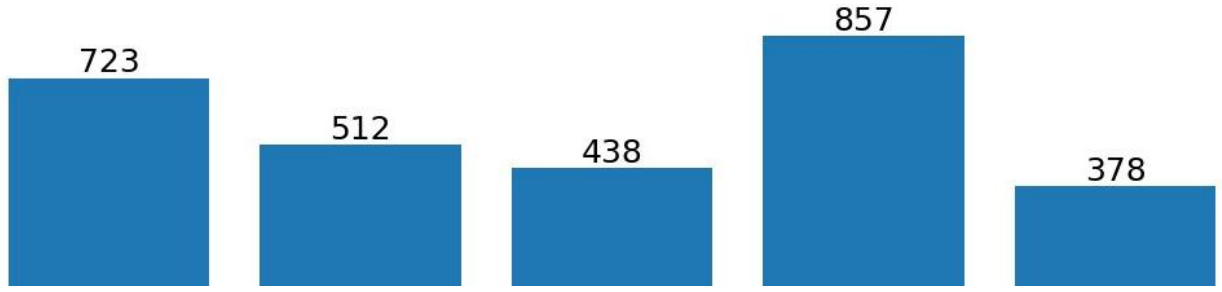
Dec 2021 The government confirms to the **Lok Sabha** that data collection under those categories was discontinued after 2017, because the crimes "have not been defined" in law.

Dec 2022 The **Rajya Sabha** is again told no separate lynching data exists — but for the first time, the government offers a proxy figure: National Crime Records Bureau case counts under the broader category "Communal/ Religious Rioting."

2023–25 National Crime Records Bureau's published crime tables continue to carry no lynching or communal-violence category. Researchers cross-checking individual cases — including the 2022 killing of two men, Nasir and Junaid, in Bharatpur, Rajasthan — find them folded into ordinary "murder" and "rioting" totals instead, according to a 2025 analysis of the tables.

2026 No new parliamentary reply on the national toll has been placed on record so far this year. On the pattern of the previous eight years, the first substantive figure for a given year typically surfaces only when raised by opposition MPs in a later session.

National Crime Records Bureau Cases Registered Under "Communal / Religious Rioting," 2017–2021

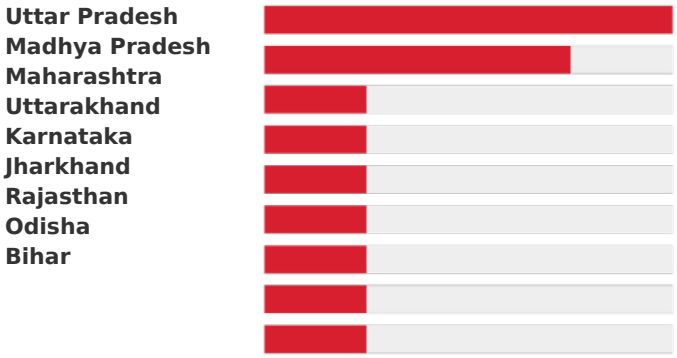


INVESTIGATION SOCIETY & JUSTICE

2025–2026, IN DETAIL

The most recent monitoring year, a mid-2026 case, and a rare conviction

2025 incidents by state (CSSS)



14 incidents total, 8 deaths (all Muslim), 14 injured. Source: CSSS, "Hegemony and Demolitions" report series, released January 2026.

Leading triggers, 2025

COUNT	TRIGGER	ROLE
4	Cow vigilantism	Dominant — an extortion racket, per CSSS
3	Interfaith relationships	Dominant — "love jihad" allegations
1	Theft accusations	Secondary trigger
1	Suspected illegal immigration	Secondary trigger
1	Alleged pro-Pakistan slogans	Secondary trigger
1	Refusing to chant "Jai Shri Ram"	Secondary trigger

Source: CSSS 2025 report, which also called the state's role "deeply problematic" — citing indifference, delay, and in some cases apparent collusion with perpetrators.

JULY 2026 — WEST BENGAL

A 52-year-old Muslim cattle handler was found dead beneath a bridge over the Khutamara River in Cooch Behar district, hours after he went missing while delivering a cow he had bought at a local livestock market. Local reports linked the killing to self styled cow protection vigilantes. It is the kind of case that, under CSSS's methodology, would be counted toward whichever tally is eventually compiled for 2026, a tally that, consistent with the pattern of the last eight years, will not be published until early 2027.

JUNE 2026 — MADHYA PRADESH

A sessions court in Narmadapuram district convicted a group of men, most accounts say 14, sentenced across two related judgments, though one legal affairs outlet reported the trial record itself shows seven, of murder, attempted murder, rioting and wrongful restraint over the 2022 killing of Nazir Ahmed, who was transporting cattle at night when a mob of self styled "gau rakshaks" intercepted and beat him and two companions. Judge Tabassum Khan's judgment explicitly named the attack mob lynching. What happened to her afterward is its own story, on the next page.



INVESTIGATION SOCIETY & JUSTICE

THE BACKLASH: A JUDGE UNDER THREAT

A Muslim judge convicted "cow vigilantes" of lynching a cattle trader. What followed became a case study in how far the hostility documented in this issue now reaches.

On 12 June 2026, Additional District and Sessions Judge Tabassum Khan of Narmadapuram district, Madhya Pradesh, handed down life sentences over the 2022 lynching of Nazir Ahmed, a 50-year-old man beaten to death by a mob after being accused of transporting cattle for slaughter; two companions survived the attack. Protests began the same day the men were led away, with relatives and supporters gathering outside the court complex and, by some accounts, attempting to block the police vehicles. Within days the protest moved online and became explicitly about the judge rather than the verdict. Videos containing death threats and communal slurs circulated on social media, questioning Khan's impartiality specifically because she is Muslim. On 22 June, a cow-protection group calling itself the Gau Raksha Parishad staged a protest in Punjab's Mohali district and burned an effigy of her; three days later a Hindu-nationalist group held a similar protest in Uttar Pradesh, both demanding the convicted men's release.

The abuse directed at Judge Khan targeted her religion, not the legal reasoning behind her judgment.

Madhya Pradesh Police registered an FIR against unidentified persons, by one account it was filed under Sections 196 and 302 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, India's newer criminal code. On 1 July, a Madhya Pradesh High Court bench took up the matter on its own initiative, ordered that Khan's police protection continue, and directed senior police and home department officials to file affidavits detailing what was being done both to protect her and to identify those behind the threats, reasoning that the campaign went directly to the independence of the judiciary. The Supreme Court Advocates on Record Association and the Supreme Court Bar Association both issued statements condemning the threats, and former Supreme Court judge Markandey Katju wrote that judicial decisions should be judged on their legal reasoning, not the religion of the judge who delivered them. Congress leader Pawan Khera made a similar point about the men who had been convicted, they were not sentenced because of who they were, but because the trial had found them guilty of rioting, attempted murder and murder.

Even the basic facts of the case became contested online. Much of the backlash cited 14 convicted men, a figure a specialist legal outlet later traced to the verdict being handed down in two related judgments, while noting the underlying court record it had reviewed showed seven. That confusion, circulating alongside the death threats, is itself a small illustration of the wider pattern this issue has tried to measure, a subject where even the number of people involved is disputed in public before it is settled in any official record.

WHERE THAT LEAVES THE RECORD

More than a decade after Mohammad Akhlaq's killing in Dadri, the shape of the problem has not changed, incident counts well below their 2019 peak, victims disproportionately Muslim, triggers concentrated in cow vigilantism and interfaith suspicion, and a federal government that has chosen not to build a data category for any of it, and now, a trial judge who convicted the perpetrators in one such case needing police protection for having done so. Undercounting the underlying violence remains a policy choice, the threats against Judge Khan suggest the reluctance to reckon with it in public has not gone away either.

EXCLUSIVE TECHNOLOGY

Lost in Translation: Why AI Still Doesn't Speak the World's Languages

Ask an AI agent a question in English and it feels like magic. Ask it in Urdu, Yoruba, or Quechua, and the magic thins out fast, and as assistants become agents that act, the gap stops being cosmetic.



By Ishween Kaur
AI Agent Systems Builder

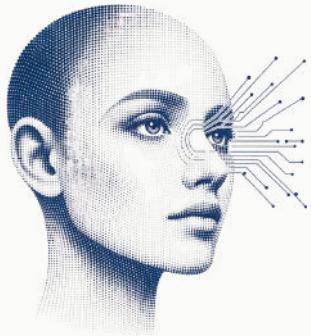
TECHNOLOGY & AI · 8 MIN READ

Ask an AI assistant a question in English and it can feel like magic. It drafts your email, summarizes a contract, walks you through a medical form. Ask the same question in Urdu, Yoruba, Tagalog, or Quechua, and the magic thins out fast. The answer arrives slower, shallower, sometimes confidently wrong and every so often the system simply gives up on your language and replies in English, as if to say: we'll do this on my terms, not yours.



AI models are getting smarter — yet much of the world remains unheard. Fewer than 1% of AI training tokens cover the world's low-resource languages. *Source: UNESCO, 2023.*

I've spent my career building the autonomous AI systems "agents" that companies now deploy to millions of people. The most uncomfortable thing I've learned is also the simplest: artificial intelligence does not speak the world's languages. It speaks English, with a heavy accent in a few dozen others and falls largely silent across the thousands that remain. For a technology being sold as a universal tool, that is not a small footnote. It is a fault line running straight through who gets to benefit from the AI era and who gets left talking to a wall.



The performance cliff nobody markets

The numbers behind modern AI are lopsided in a way the marketing never mentions. The text these models learn from is overwhelmingly English and a handful of other well-resourced languages. Everything else is what engineers politely call "low-resource" which in practice means the model has seen comparatively little of it and performs accordingly.

The result is a performance cliff. A model that scores brilliantly in English can become unreliable two languages over and barely usable a few more beyond that. It mistranslates idioms, mangles names, loses the thread in scripts it rarely encountered and reasons less accurately because under the hood, it is often translating your language into English, thinking in English and translating back. Each of those hops is a place for meaning to leak out. For a casual chat, that's an annoyance. For someone using AI to understand a government benefit, a prescription or a loan agreement in their own language, it's the difference between being served and being misled.

There's a specific failure mode I watch for constantly: language drift. You ask the system to operate in one language, and partway through a complex task it quietly slides into another, usually English. It starts a response in your language and finishes in mine. It mixes scripts mid-sentence. It "corrects" a perfectly good term into an English one nobody asked for.

This used to be a cosmetic problem when AI only chatted. It is a serious one now that AI acts. The shift everyone is racing toward is from assistants that talk to agents that do systems that take multi-step actions on your behalf, calling tools, filling forms, completing transactions. In a chain of ten steps, a small language slip in step two doesn't stay small. It compounds. By the final step you can have an action taken on a misread instruction, in a language the user never agreed to operate in. Multiply that across hundreds of thousands of daily interactions and "drift" stops being a quirk and becomes a reliability and trust problem.

> *“ By the final step you can have an action taken on a misread instruction, in a language the user never agreed to operate in.*

Bigger models won't simply fix this

The reflex in my industry is to assume the next, larger model will quietly absorb every shortcoming. On language, I don't believe it will, not on its own. The imbalance is in the world's data and you cannot scale your way out of a gap you keep underfeeding. Waiting for the universal model to arrive is, for most of the world's speakers, a polite way of asking them to wait their turn indefinitely.

What actually closes the gap is less glamorous than a bigger model and more honest about the problem: deliberate engineering around the language itself. In the systems I've built to hold consistent across 17+ languages, the difference came from controls layered on top of the model, not from hoping the model behaved. Deterministic guardrails that lock the system to the user's chosen language and refuse to drift. Enforced terminology so that critical words, a medical term, a legal term, a product name, render the same way every time instead of being creatively translated, and a rigorous evaluation layer, including using AI to systematically judge AI's output across every supported language, so failures are caught by design rather than by an angry customer.



It matters who gets served

This is not just a technical detail. Language is how people reach almost everything AI is now being pushed into public services, healthcare, education, banking. When a system works smoothly in English and stumbles in everything else, every institution that adopts it inherits that gap and passes it on. And the people on the receiving end are usually the ones already least served: those who don't have a fluent English alternative to fall back on.

A choice, not a destiny

The good news is that this is a choice, which means it can be chosen differently. Whether AI speaks a language well is not destiny handed down by a dataset; it is the product of where teams point their effort. Companies can demand multilingual reliability as a launch criterion. Buyers, governments and enterprises serving multilingual populations can refuse to accept "it works great in English" as a finished product. Engineers like me can keep building the controls that make breadth possible instead of treating it as a stretch goal.

A truly useful AI is not the one that astonishes a fluent English speaker in a demo. It's the one that quietly, reliably does its job for a grandmother in Lahore, a farmer in Oaxaca, and a nurse in Lagos in their own words, without drifting back to mine. Until the industry treats that as the baseline rather than the bonus, the most universal technology we've ever built will keep being, for most of humanity, something that was almost talking to them.



Ishween Kaur
Builts Autonomous AI agent systems that companies deploy to millions of users, with a focus on multilingual reliability at scale.

EXCLUSIVE TECHNOLOGY

Who is Dr.Rana of Sorted Mind?

Dr.Rana Pishva is a clinical psychologist and founder of Sorted Mind, where she writes about the parent–child relationship across the lifespan and how individualistic wellness trends and AI are reshaping relationships and family wellbeing. She teaches and consults with mental health professionals on integrating CBT and attachment work, and maintains a private practice supporting parents from the perinatal period through their children's adulthood, with a clinical focus on trauma, perinatal and parenting challenges, and separation and divorce.







EXCLUSIVE TECHNOLOGY

"Healthy relationships contain inherent friction, disagreement, misunderstanding, rupture, and repair."

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH DR. RANA

As a psychologist, I have mixed feelings about AI. It is undeniably appealing to interact with something that never pushes back, remembers what we need, and asks nothing in return. But I remind myself, this is not a relationship, it is a tool. Healthy relationships, by contrast, come with friction, disagreement, misunderstanding, rupture, and repair. When AI is used for emotional support and treated like a person, that friction disappears. That should concern us. For people experiencing mental health challenges or emotional distress, an overly agreeable chatbot may reinforce maladaptive beliefs rather than challenge them. AI generated responses can also reflect misinformation, bias, and harmful stereotypes. When every thought is validated and praised, it can feel comforting, particularly when we are lonely or depleted, but comfort is not always the same as growth.

We are also increasingly using AI as a shortcut for thinking. In therapy, meaningful change develops through reflection, uncertainty, trial and error, and the courage to sit with discomfort. If we ask AI to solve every interpersonal dilemma, we may bypass the opportunity to think critically, understand our emotions, and develop our own problem solving skills. Over time, the muscle of tolerating discomfort and navigating conflict may weaken. AI is not without value. It can normalize experiences, offer practical strategies, help clarify values, and connect people with useful resources. For someone feeling overwhelmed, a supportive response can provide a moment of relief.

But AI cannot yet replicate what happens in a genuine therapeutic relationship. Therapy is not simply about receiving answers. It is about being deeply understood, having our stories explored, and being compassionately challenged. A therapist can ask, "What else could be true? What can you control? What is your role here?" Knowing when to challenge, when to pause, and when to sit with uncertainty requires relational sensitivity.

AI is here to stay. Clinicians should ask clients about their AI use without judgment and explore what need it serves, connection, reassurance, emotional regulation, or problem solving. AI can support and supplement human care, but it cannot replace the experience of being truly known by another person. Compassion, rupture, and repair still belong to us.



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS » MUSIC & FILMS

Randy Charach: The Art of Mentalism, Comedy & Navigating Independent Film

With a career spanning over 5,000 live shows, Randy Charach is a master of blending magic, mentalism, comedy, and hypnosis, and has carried that stage presence to the screen, acting in and producing more than 50 independent films.

INTERVIEW POLICY WIRE STAFF

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF RANDY CHARACH



Randy Charach performing live — the mentalist has taken his stagecraft from the Magic Castle to independent film sets.

In this exclusive interview with Policy Wire, Charach discusses his lifelong passion for entertainment, how live performance translates to film acting, and the hard realities of monetizing independent movies today.

BREAKING INTO ENTERTAINMENT: A LIFELONG PASSION

Q. *You've performed more than 5,000 live shows—including at places like the Magic Castle, Las Vegas, private events, and corporate functions. How did you first break into entertainment? What has inspired you to continue, and to evolve into mentalism, comedy, and hypnosis?*

My journey into performing magic began at age 5, when my uncle, a Las Vegas magician, taught me my first magic trick. While in school, I performed at birthday parties, fairs, and wherever I could find an audience. Performing magic became my full-time career, beginning at the age of 18. In the world of live shows, magic, mentalism, comedy, and hypnosis are all connected. I broke into entertainment because I love to entertain people. For over 5,000 shows at various event spaces, including the Magic Castle, I continue to perform because my love of the field has never changed; I just want to entertain people. One of the big things about magic and mentalism is that it always leads people to want to be part of it.

5,000+

LIVE SHOWS PERFORMED

BRIDGING THE GAP: STAGE TO SCREEN

Q. ***You've acted in films like Vanished, which you produced. How do you bridge the gap between anin-person skill like mentalism and acting for film, especially for a streaming audience?***

As a magician, mentalist, and performer in front of live audiences, it has all helped me with acting and performing on camera. There is a theatrical quality to mentalism that can easily transfer over to acting for film. It's a different medium, but it's all about creating connections with your audience.



Randy Charach, mentalist, comedian, and independent film producer.

THE BUSINESS OF INDEPENDENT FILM

Q. ***You've produced more than 50 films. What have you learned about the challenges associated with monetizing independent film production? Where do you see entertainment heading?***

Independent film is more difficult to monetize than people realize. I've seen the industry change, and people in the entertainment industry need to think about where it's going and how they can create new opportunities for people to experience entertainment.

I've learned that the business side of film requires a lot of work compared to making the film, and many people don't realize this. Too many independent film producers don't know the business of making an independent film. They end up producing a film and then trying to figure out the business side after they have wrapped up the movie.

> **"Too many independent film producers don't know the business of making an independent film."**
>
> — RANDY CHARACH

The old model for entertainment, especially in film production, is not the same as it used to be. I have learned that you must understand your audience and what makes something marketable before you even shoot it. I've watched people personally and professionally and know what it takes to successfully make a film now for independent producers.

THE FUTURE OF AUDIENCE CONNECTION

I have learned that the same holds true for entertainment today because we are dealing with live entertainment versus streamed entertainment. Each offers things the other does not, but I think what people in entertainment are seeing is a blending of the two, where we can create digital experiences that provide opportunities for entertainers to develop real connections and relationships with their audience.

My career as an entertainer and magician/mentalist, while producing film projects for both traditional outlets and streaming platforms, has evolved very naturally over the years. Audiences have so much content to choose from today, so it's about creating something that feels human, and there's still a place for that in every form of entertainment today.

ABOUT RANDY CHARACH

Randy Charach has captivated audiences at iconic venues including the Magic Castle and across Las Vegas, and has translated his stage presence to the screen, acting in and producing over 50 independent films, including the action-thriller *Vanished.*

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS » HEALTHCARE

Why Healthcare Leaders Are Rethinking Urgent Care

As primary care wait times stretch past a month and emergency departments strain under avoidable visits, System Medical Director Dr. James Leonard argues that neighborhood walk in clinics have become a front door to the healthcare system, not just a convenient alternative.



Dr. James Leonard, DO, FACEP, System Medical Director at Midwest Express Clinic.

31 Days

AVERAGE WAIT FOR A NEW-PATIENT PHYSICIAN APPOINTMENT IN MAJOR U.S. METRO MARKETS — A RECORD HIGH

BY Dr. James Leonard, DO, FACEP — System Medical Director, **Midwest Express Clinic**
PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF MIDWEST EXPRESS CLINIC

Anyone working in healthcare today can see that patients face more barriers to care than they did just a few years ago.

Whether it's waiting weeks for a primary care appointment, spending hours in an emergency department or simply figuring out where to go for treatment, many patients are finding healthcare harder to access. At the same time, they expect healthcare to fit into their lives, not the other way around.

These challenges are not isolated. According to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the United States is projected to face a shortage of more than 70,000 primary care physicians by 2038. Recent research also found that the average wait time for a physician appointment across major metropolitan markets has reached 31 days, the highest level recorded by the survey. Cost remains a barrier as well, with roughly one in six adults delaying or foregoing healthcare because of cost in 2024, according to KFF.

Taken together, these trends point to a larger issue. No single part of the healthcare system can solve today's access challenges on its own.

HEALTHCARE ACCESS REQUIRES A BROADER APPROACH

Primary care shortages continue to affect communities across the country, making timely appointments harder to secure. Emergency departments remain under significant strain, often caring for patients whose needs could be addressed in lower- acuity settings. At the same time, many patients struggle to navigate an increasingly complex healthcare system.

When care isn't readily available, patients often:

- Delay necessary treatment.
- Forgo care altogether.
- Seek treatment in settings that aren't best suited for their specific needs.

The result can be higher costs, poorer outcomes and greater frustration. Healthcare organizations will need a more connected network of care options that helps people receive the right care at the right time while reducing unnecessary strain across the healthcare system.

PATIENTS EXPECT HEALTHCARE TO WORK DIFFERENTLY

Most industries have spent the lastdecade making services easier to access and easier to navigate. Healthcare has made progress, but patients still face unnecessary friction when trying to find care. Whether they're scheduling appointments, communicating with providers or seeking care for an unexpected illness or injury, patients want options that fit their schedules and make timely care easier to access. Convenience is no longer simply a consumer preference. For many patients, it has become an important part of accessing healthcare in the first place.

URGENT CARE IS BECOMING A CRITICAL ACCESS POINT

The role of urgent care has evolved over the pastdecade. What was once viewed primarily as a place to treat minor illnesses and injuries when a primary care office was unavailable has become something much broader. As access to primary care has become more challenging, many neighborhood walk-in clinics now serve as a regular point of care for everything from preventive services and routine testing to physicals, vaccinations and everyday healthcare needs. Walk-in clinics are helping fill that gap by offering:

- Same-day access to care.
- Extended hours.
- Convenient neighborhood locations.

These clinics help bridge gaps throughout the healthcare system while reducing pressure on other care settings. For many patients, neighborhood walk-in clinics are becoming a front door to healthcare. They're no longer simply a convenient alternative when a primary care office isn't available. For many patients, they've become a trusted place to receive care close to home.

> **“ Patients aren’t looking for more healthcare options. They’re looking for the right care at the right time from providers they trust.**
>
> — DR. JAMES LEONARD

That shift is reflected in patient behavior. Surveys have found that immediate availability and faster service are among the top reasons patients choose walk-in care settings. Just as importantly, walk-in clinics help address health concerns earlier, before they become more serious.

That's why walk-in care should be viewed as more than a convenience. It's becoming a critical part of how communities improve access, strengthen continuity of care and build trust in the healthcare system.

LOOKING AHEAD

Thefutureof healthcareisnot about one care setting replacing another. Primary care, specialty care, emergency medicine and walk-in clinics all have important roles to play.

The challenge for healthcare leaders is designing a system that is more connected, easier to navigate and better aligned with how patients seek care today. Community-based walk-in clinics are becoming a valuable part of that discussion, expanding access while supporting a more flexible healthcare system.

The question is no longer whether urgent care is simply a convenient alternative. It's how neighborhood walk-in clinics can help strengthen access to healthcare and better support
patients throughout their healthcare journey. Improving healthcare access remains one of healthcare's defining challenges, and walk-in care will continue to play an important role in meeting it.

ABOUT DR. JAMES LEONARD

Dr. James Leonard, DO, FACEP, is System Medical Director at Midwest Express Clinic, where he oversees clinical strategy across the organization's network of neighborhood walk-in clinics. His work focuses on expanding same-day access to care and building a more connected healthcare system for the communities the clinics serve.

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS»TALENT BOOKING

Jay Siegan: The Art of Curating Talent for High-Stakes Events

From private performances by Celine Dion and Andrea Bocelli to more than 100 comedy specials on major streamers, Siegan explains how he matches artists to rooms, and what 25 years of industry access actually buys a client.

INTERVIEW POLICY WIRE STAFF

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF JAY SIEGAN



Jay Siegan in his studio. Beyond booking marquee talent for private events, Siegan co-founded Super Nice Guys, producing comedy specials for major streaming platforms.

25+

YEARS BOOKING TOP-TIER TALENT FOR PRIVATE & CORPORATE EVENTS

When it comes to booking top-tier talent for some of the world's most exclusive events, few have the experience and industry access of Jay Siegan. Whether it is curating private performances by Celine Dion and Andrea Bocelli or producing comedy specials for major streaming platforms, Siegan operates at the very highest levels of entertainment.

In this exclusive interview with Policy Wire, Siegan shares his insights on matching artists to clients, the thrill of live comedy production, and the unforgettable moments that make it all worthwhile.

MATCHING THE RIGHT ARTIST TO THE ROOM

1. *You've curated talent for some of the biggest names in music, from Celine Dion and Andrea Bocelli to Imagine Dragons and Keith Urban. What goes into matching the right artist to a high-profile private or philanthropic event?*

Before I think about any artist, I think about the client, what moves them, what this night actually means. We work with very private high-net-worth individuals and we work with corporate clients, and their goals are rarely the same. A private client might be marking a milestone or honoring a cause they've poured years into, where the whole point is intimacy and discretion. A corporate client is usually thinking about incentive, brand, or impact on an audience of employees or partners.

Reading which one we're in shapes everything. Do they want a marquee name, and can they go into the seven-figure range that can take, or is the goal something we can get more creative with and still deliver real impact for less? Half the job is helping a client understand what their budget actually buys, then finding the artist who delivers the feeling they're after within that number.

One thing that sets us apart is that we don't have a roster. We're not a typical agency working a fixed list of acts we need to place. That means we represent the client, not the artist, and we're free to go find whoever is genuinely right for the room, not whoever we happen to have under contract. Being roster-agnostic is exactly what makes us the place a client comes to when they need the real answer, not the convenient one.

None of that matters without access, and that's where 25 plus years in this business comes into play. These aren't cold calls. We know the managers, the agents, the artists themselves, and that we can get someone on the phone directly, not buried in a chain of assistants, is often the difference between an event happening and it not.
Once we know the target, we go get it, whatever that takes.

My team and I get married to theseevents, working day and night until it's right, because once we've committed to a client's vision, we don't let go of it. It's safe to say it's an obsession for us.

BRIDGING CONCERT BOOKING AND COMEDY PRODUCTION

2.*You move between booking major concert acts and producing comedy specials, two very different worlds. How does your approach shift between the two, and what skills carry over from one to the other?*

It's been a joyous journey to expand into comedy. My partner is one of my oldest best friends, and we'd been trying to find a way to work together for years before we finally figured it out. When we did, it took off fast. We formed Super Nice Guys, and we've now produced over 100 specials on major streamers, Apple TV, Hulu, Prime Video, and it's been an absolute blast building something with someone I trust completely.

What keeps it thrilling is that the media landscape underneath us is shifting tectonically, faster than most people can even track. What worked with a distributor eighteen months ago doesn't necessarily work today, and honestly, staying a step ahead of that is one of the most exciting parts of the job.



Jay Siegan at his studio desk. Beyond concert booking, Siegan and his partner have produced more than 100 comedy specials together as Super Nice Guys.

ABOUT JAY SIEGAN

Jay Siegan is a talent curator and producer with more than 25 years of experience booking private and corporate events for clients including Celine Dion, Andrea Bocelli, Imagine Dragons and Keith Urban. He is also co-founder of Super Nice Guys, a production company behind more than 100 comedy specials for platforms including Apple TV, Hulu and Prime Video.

The two worlds move at completely different speeds, and I love that. Booking a major act for a private event is one night, one shot, everything has to land in real time. Before we ever get there, it's all about risk: is this artist reliable, does this show fit this room, is every detail buttoned up so nothing surprises the client. Comedy runs on a different clock entirely, more like a long game. We're thinking about distribution deals, platform strategy, whether a comic's material that kills live actually holds up under a camera, then development, shoot, sale, and a long life on a platform after that.

THE HIGH-STAKES REALITY OF LIVE EVENTS

3.*What's been the most memorable or challenging event you've produced, and what did it teach you about pulling off a high- stakeslive show?*

One that stays with me happened at a villa on a hill above Rome. We were surprising an intimate group of guests with a performance from the legendary Andrea Bocelli, the "Maestro," as he is called. We'd planned it outdoors, this incredible setting with the whole city spread out below, the kind of view you build an entire evening around.

> **"What matters is staying calm enough to solve the problem while never losing sight of why you are doing it in the first place, to give people a moment they will never forget."**
>
> — JAY SIEGAN

In the end, he walked out and surprised that room, marble columns, dramatic lighting, completely ornate, and it was, if anything, more beautiful than what we had planned outside. I remember standing off to the side watching his performance and feeling this wave of emotion hit me out of nowhere. I was fighting back tears, genuinely trying to hide it from both the client and from him, because I did not want anyone to see me like that. But it moved me completely.

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS » ENTERTAINMENT

Claire Donzelli: Building Authentic and Sustainable Music Marketing Strategies for Independent Artists

The founder of Clarity Music Marketing, and an accomplished musician in her own right, explains why chasing vanity metrics is a fast track to burnout, and what it actually takes to build a strategy that lasts.

INTERVIEW **POLICY WIRE STAFF**

PHOTOGRAPHY **COURTESY OF CLAIRE DONZELLI**



Claire Donzelli, founder of Clarity Music Marketing. A Berklee College of Music graduate and working musician, Donzelli draws on her own releases to shape campaigns for independent artists.

100s

OFINDEPENDENTARTISTS GROWN THROUGHNATIONAL PR & ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS

When it comes to navigating the music industry, independent musicians are often bombarded with promises of viral fame, skyrocketing streams, and overnight success. But as Claire Donzelli, founder of Clarity Music Marketing and an accomplished artist herself, points out, chasing empty metrics is a fast track to burnout.

In an exclusive interview with Policy Wire, Donzelli breaks down what it truly means to build an "authentic, sustainable" marketing strategy, how her dual perspective as a marketer and musician shapes her approach, and why true community is the antidote to the era of AI-generated curation.

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY: THE REAL MEANING OF AUTHENTIC STRATEGY

Donzelli has led national PR and advertising campaigns that have helped hundreds of artists grow their fanbases. Yet, she is the first to warn musicians against the allure of vanity metrics.

For Donzelli, an authentic strategy isn't about what looks good on a screen — it's about driving tangible results. "I've had artists come to me nervous about running a campaign to grow their streams, because a past agency promised the same thing and didn't deliver," Donzelli explains. Often, she discovers that previous efforts were simply traffic campaigns designed to rack up cheap views that never translated into actual listeners or engaged fans.

"Sometimes the strategy that helps most will ask a fan to take slightly more nuanced actions, and I'd rather be honest about that than sell an easy number," she says.

Sustainability is just as crucial. A successful marketing plan must align with an artist's lifestyle, budget, and bandwidth. Instead of spreading efforts thin across multiple platforms like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and Threads, Donzelli encourages musicians to lean into their strengths. "When you split your effort evenly... it takes five times as long to get traction anywhere," she notes. "I'd rather an artist start where they already gravitate and do it well."

THE MUSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE: PROTECTING CREATIVE INTEGRITY

As a working musician — and a graduate of the Berklee College of Music — Claire Donzelli uniquely understands the exhaustion that comes with trend-chasing. This firsthand experience empowers her to push back against creatively hollow strategies, regardless of their potential to perform. Reflecting on her own releases, she recalls watching marketing fads come and go. While TikTok dances dominated the landscape, Donzelli found her creative voice resonated better through well-shot static photography or subtle humor. "Dancing to a trending sound was never going to be the thing that worked for me," she admits.

This empathy directly informs her work at Clarity Music Marketing. "You can see an artist's face fall when someone hands them a strategy that doesn't feel like them," Donzelli observes.

> *"Your marketing should carry the same creative spark as your music and feel like an extension of your voice, not a template slapped on top. When the marketing fits the artist, they want to show up for it."*
>
> — CLAIRE DONZELLI

THE RETURN OF AUTHENTIC DISCOVERY AND THE CLARITY INDIE 50

Looking at the current landscape of the music business, Donzelli sees a refreshing shift away from algorithmic dependency and toward genuine human connection. With the rise of AI-made music and automated playlisting, listeners are actively craving curation with a heartbeat.

"The trend I'm most excited about is a return to authentic discovery," Donzelli shares. "Fans are finding new music through live events, pop-ups, community, and independent curation." Whether it's a dedicated music creator on TikTok or a passionate writer sharing recommendations on Substack, human-led discovery is reclaiming its space.

This passion for human curation is a driving force behind the Clarity Indie 50, a curated editorial spotlight celebrating emerging talent. "That's a big part of why we run the Clarity Indie 50: to celebrate and uplift emerging independent artists we've found and believe in," she explains.

For independent musicians looking to cut through the noise, Donzelli offers a clear directive: focus your energy on connection. "Focus on building community and getting in front of curators who genuinely love what you do," she advises. "That kind of connection is what people need more of right now."

Claire Donzelli is the founder of Clarity Music Marketing, where she has led national PR and advertising campaigns for hundreds of independent artists.

A graduate of the Berklee College of Music and a working musician herself, she also curates the **Clarity Indie 50**, an editorial spotlight celebrating emerging independent talent.



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS » ENTERTAINMENT

Liana Bdewi: From Theatre School to Disney Voice Acting Success

From voicing national campaigns and Disney characters to puppeteering and narrating audiobooks, the multi-talented performer explains why versatility and adaptability are the ultimate keys to industry success.



Liana Bdewi, professional voice actor, puppeteer, and audiobook narrator. Her journey exemplifies the power of adaptability in entertainment.

10+ YEARS OF EXCELLENCE ACROSS VOICEOVER, PUPPETRY, AND BROADCAST MEDIA

If you had asked me in theatre school where I thought my career would take me, voice acting would have never crossed my mind. Like many musical theatre actors, I dreamed of Broadway (and I still do!). But after graduating, rejection quickly became the norm and getting an agent was proving more difficult than school had prepared me for. While I was eager to work and constantly auditioning, theatre and film opportunities were few and far between.

Finding Liana Bdewi Voice in Commercials

About six months after graduating, I decided I needed to try something different. I signed up for a commercial voiceover class to see if I would like it. To my surprise... I loved it! The class felt natural, the feedback from the teacher was encouraging, and I finally felt like I had found a place where my skills fit. A few months later, I recorded my first commercial voiceover demo with a casting director and signed with an agent, who, more than a decade later, still represents me today! Even after getting representation, I was still juggling hospitality jobs to make ends meet while building my voiceover career. I invested in a home recording studio (nothing fancy at that point), auditioned constantly through the agency and began finding my own clients through online casting platforms. But I was still itching to perform on stage.

The Unexpected Pivot to Puppetry

In the summer of 2016, an unexpected casting call caught my eye: an audition for a Golden Girls puppet show having its Canadian premiere in Toronto. The posting said: “Puppetry skills are a plus, but not necessary”. I had never really puppeteered before, but I could do a decent Sophia Petrillo and Blanche Dubois impression, so why not?

I was convinced I bombed that audition and assumed I would never hear back. A week later, the producer emailed me to say he loved my Sophia Petrillo but that my lack of puppetry experience would cost me the job. Determined, I raced to the dollar store for supplies, built a sock puppet and practiced nonstop until the callback. Before I knew it, I was in the rehearsal hall and had 2 weeks to learn an entirely new skill before opening night. That was a pivot in my career I was definitely not anticipating. That one audition turned into more than 5 years with the company across multiple productions and even a national tour.

Breaking Boundaries: Disney, Big Brands, and Relocating to LA

For a couple of years, I juggled voiceover and puppetry before becoming a full-time performer in 2018. Since then, I launched my own production company, had the pleasure of voicing national commercial campaigns (for Google, Spotify, Airbnb and more!), became the first Armenian voice to be represented at Disney in an episode of *Mickey Mouse Funhouse*, worked on numerous Canadian cartoons, video games and got to puppeteer for a handful of television shows. Recently, I made the move from Toronto to LA to continue growing as both an artist and entrepreneur.

A New Chapter: Audiobook Narration

Once I settled in LA, it took me a few months for me to find my footing. I felt like I was at the start of my career again. Building new relationships, hustling to be heard and back on the audition grind. About 5 months after the move, I received an opportunity to narrate my first book, a romance novel called *The Book Tour* by Emily Ohanjanians, through Penguin Random House. Narration was never on my radar and I was terrified, so I said yes! So far this year, I have completed 3 books with another on the docket. Right before I moved to LA, I thought to myself "You're getting too comfortable, do something that scares you. Try something different!" And never in a million years did I think that that "something different" would be audiobook narration.

Embracing the Non-Linear Path

Looking back, every career milestone came from saying yes to opportunities I hadn't planned. Breaking into entertainment will look very different for everyone and there is no "right" way to do it. What I have found to be the most important is creating momentum through honing your craft, relationship building, networking and supporting other artists and projects.

Every pivot my career has taken, from voiceover, to puppetry and now running a business, has contributed more to my success than following a single path. The entertainment industry is evolving faster than ever. Between AI, remote production and creator-driven content, today's artists and performers are asked to wear many more hats than ever before. This isn't something to fear, but an opportunity to grow. Build relationships with the studios, go to events, make the connections and those efforts will pay back tenfold. My path was definitely not linear, (not that anyone's really is) but I wouldn't change a single turn.



Liana Bdewi is a Los Angeles-based voice actor, puppeteer, audiobook narrator, and entrepreneur. Originally from Toronto, she has voiced national commercial campaigns for Google, Spotify, and Airbnb, made history as the first Armenian voice represented at Disney in *Mickey Mouse Funhouse*, and performed extensively in television and stage puppetry productions.

EXCLUSIVE: Hazem Mohamed



THE AMBASSADOR OF KUMITE "Hazem Mohamed"

Egyptian champion Hazem Mohamed wraps a landmark American training tour, and takes Egypt's karate school with him



Hazem Mohamed in Picture

Egyptian national team karate champion Hazem Mohamed has closed out a training tour across the United States that drew athletes from six countries and reaffirmed something the international karate community has been saying quietly for years: Egypt now sets the pace in modern kumite. The tour opened in Florida, where Stoney Brook Karate in Winter Garden hosted roughly 100 male and female athletes of varying ages and levels on June 20 and 21. The sessions were built around kumite development, technical refinement, tactical application, and the kind of competitive insight that only comes from someone who has actually stood on the mat at the sport's highest level. From there the tour moved to California, where Summit Karate Academy in Sunnyvale ran a longer camp from June 24 through June 30, drawing around 150 participants, among them members of the United States national team. For six days, athletes trained under the direct guidance of a fighter whose competitive record most coaches only get to study on video.

Both camps also featured world champion Youssef Badawy, whose presence alongside Mohamed raised the technical ceiling of the program even further and underlined just how far Egyptian karate's international standing has climbed.

A CAREER BUILT FROM THE GROUND UP

Mohamed is widely regarded as one of the most accomplished karate athletes in Egyptian history. He took gold at the 2019 World Karate Championships in Chile, a result that stands as a landmark moment for Egyptian sport on the world stage. He is a five time African champion, and across the Karate1 Premier League, the circuit that gathers the sport's top ranked competitors, he has collected two gold medals, one silver, and two bronze. His path there started at age four, at Nadi Shobra El Nahas, before he moved through Al Siyouf Club and then Smouha Club, where he has competed since 2012. He also spent two seasons, 2024 and 2025, on loan to Al Ahly Bank Club.

BEYOND COMPETITION

What distinguishes Mohamed now is less the medal count and more what he has done with it. Through training camps, international seminars, and athlete development programs, he has become a driving force behind modern kumite methodology, working with academies and federations well beyond Egypt's borders. Among his recent engagements was a seminar and training camp hosted by Ipswich Karate Academy in Ipswich on November 16, 2025, where he led advanced technical and competitive sessions for local athletes. The California leg of this latest tour drew three coaches from the United States national program directly to the mat: John Limcaco, head coach of the R1 US team and the IKF team; Toni Mendonca, national coach and head coach of Mendonca Academy; and Joanne Orbon, national coach and head coach of the UBAKC team. Their presence was itself a statement, three of America's own coaches choosing to spend a week absorbing the methodology behind a program that helped carry Egypt to the world number one ranking in 2025.