

PAKISTAN'S TALIBAN ATTACKS PESHAWAR SCHOOL: MORE THAN 130 KILLED

It seems that various extremist groups are in a demented contest to see who can commit the biggest atrocity. Boko Haram shocked the world with their kidnapping of school girls and claims that they had married the girls. ISIS surged into the lead with their professionally produced videos of beheadings of prisoners. But for calculated moves carrying both a high level of carnage and huge symbolism, today's attack on Army Public School and Degree College in Peshawar by Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) reaches new levels of sickness.

Pakistan's military has been conducting the Zarb e-Azb campaign against terrorist groups in Pakistan's tribal areas since June. The choice of a school with an army affiliation, then, is a clear message that the attack is in response to the ongoing military campaign. Further, December 16 is the anniversary of the surrender of Pakistan's military to India in 1971, creating Bangladesh from East Pakistan. With the choice of this date, the TTP is aiming for further humiliation of Pakistan's military.

Some information on the attack is filtering out. From the New York Times:

The siege started Tuesday morning around 10 a.m. when at least five to six heavily armed Taliban gunmen entered Army Public School and Degree College in Peshawar, the capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. According to initial reports, the gunmen opened fire on students and have taken dozens of them as hostages. Some students managed to escape the school compound, the local news media reported.



The gunmen entered after scaling a wall at the rear of the main school building. They opened fire and took dozens of students hostage in the main auditorium of the building, the news media reported.

Live updates on developments are being provided here by Dawn.

The attack seems to be unifying Pakistan at a time when political divisions have been deepening. Imran Khan (whose PTI party governs Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province) has postponed his next large demonstration in the series of actions in which he has been calling for Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to step down.

As the Express Tribune points out, the TTP has a history of attacks on education, with the most famous previous attack being that on Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousufzai in 2012.

Undaunted, Malala has already denounced today's attack. And the TTP, along with other extremist groups, have been attacking health care workers administering polio vaccines, killing one as recently as last week and four in late November.

It's really hard to see how extremist groups think that they are helping their cause when they commit such huge crimes against humanity.