

AMUN 2019

Historical Commission of Inquiry: Assassinations

**Final Report on the Assassination of
Former Pakistani Prime Minister Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto**

Introduction

On 27 December 2007, former Pakistani Prime Minister Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was assassinated as she left a campaign event at Liaquat Bagh, in the Pakistani city of Rawalpindi. In the attack on Ms. Bhutto, 24 other people were also killed and 91 were injured.

In May 2008, the government of Pakistan requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations to establish an international commission for the purpose of investigating the assassination of Ms. Bhutto. The Secretary-General appointed the members of the Commission in February 2009. The Secretary-General announced the commencement of activities of the Commission of Inquiry on 1 July 2009 with a six month mandate.

In the course of this investigation into the assassination of Bhutto, the Commission has collaborated with state actors to analyze evidence and taken testimony from witnesses to the attack. Work was done in the United Nations headquarters in New York, as well as London, England, and Rawalpindi, Pakistan. The body of this report details the evidence examined during the Commission's investigation.

In the course of our inquiry we repeatedly ventured into hostile situations in the greater pursuit of knowledge and justice. Unfortunately, this pursuit came at the cost of the life of one of our own, Commissioner Zachary Deaton. Commissioner Deaton is sadly now presumed dead after his disappearance on October 8, 2009. We would like to acknowledge the brave and selfless acts of the Commissioner in the course of our investigation. We are deeply saddened by his loss and express our deepest condolences to his family.

This report sets out the Commission's findings on the facts and circumstances of Ms. Bhutto's assassination.

Evidence

Forensic Evidence

The Commission applauds the work and dedication of those who participated in and aided the inquiry on the assassination of former Prime Minister Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto. The Commission's work would have been impossible without the selfless and invaluable collaboration of Scotland Yard, key witnesses, the Pakistan Interior Ministry, and forensic experts.

Forensic evidence gathered by these experts found key items implicating the suspected culprits in the attack. These included:

- i. Skull fragments belonging to a teenage male, later determined to belong to 15-year old Bilal Saeed, the suicide bomber who committed the assassination.
- ii. Bullet casings and fragments, which were tied to a weapon found at the scene of the crime bearing Saeed's fingerprints.
- iii. Residue from the explosion tied to the gun further confirms Scotland Yard's finding that there was a singular perpetrator behind both the shooting and the detonation of the explosive device.

Witness Testimony

The Commission was aided in its investigation by testimony from key witnesses who provided insight on how the attacks were carried out and who was responsible. The witnesses and their testimony were as follows:

a. Scotland Yard

The Commission met with a representative from Scotland Yard in London. Scotland Yard was responsible for aiding in the initial investigation into Bhutto's assassination in Rawalpindi, specifically regarding the forensics of the situation. Evidence provided from their testimony includes the following:

- i. Scotland Yard was not involved in any investigation of previous attempts to assassinate Bhutto.
- ii. In their testimony, they reiterated the findings from their initial report that Bhutto died from injuries to the head from hitting the lip of the escape hatch on her vehicle due to the force of the bomb blast.
- iii. The representative from Scotland Yard also shared that since the initial report, the only unidentified body has been determined to belong to a teenage male younger than 16 years of age or younger, likely the suicide bomber.
- iv. The representative recommended that a more thorough investigation should be conducted of Bhutto's route from the rally to the point of attack and from there to the hospital.

b. General Pervez Musharraf

Musharraf agreed to meet with our Commission on the condition that we temporarily relocated to the United Kingdom where he currently resides in exile.

- i. The former President testified that he warned Bhutto that her return to Pakistan would be dangerous. He commented that he was also concerned for his own safety.
 1. This piece of testimony contained key discrepancies. Despite the concern for her safety, Ms. Bhutto was not provided with additional security by President Musharraf.
- ii. Musharraf dismissed the suggestions that members of his own cabinet were responsible for the attacks, instead ensuring the entire plot was carried out by Al-Qaeda. He questioned why the Commission would investigate these officials.
- iii. Musharraf also expressed doubt concerning the validity of Bhutto's list of potential assassins. He believed there was no reason to suspect any of them.
- iv. Finally, Musharraf believed an autopsy was not necessary for the initial investigation or for the purposes of our Commission. He initially did not believe the United Nations should have any role in the autopsy, as the assassination was not part of a conflict between two states, and did not necessitate outside involvement.

c. Asif Ali Zardari

The Commission met with President Asif Ali Zardari at the United Nations headquarters in New York City to discuss questions pertaining to the assassination of his wife.

- i. Zardari gave the Commission his reasons for why there was no autopsy performed on his wife Benazir Bhutto:
 1. Zardari was not with his wife's body that same day, he had been in Dubai with their children as a safety precaution and Bhutto's body had already been placed inside of a coffin and in an unmarked room on a military base by the time he saw it.
 2. Zardari was in a state of grief and not in a frame of mind to insist on an autopsy being performed.
 3. Zardari was immensely distrustful of Musharraf's government, and those who would perform the autopsy would have been under his sway. Therefore, he did not want any Pakistani officials to perform the autopsy of his wife but rather opted to request that the United Nations perform an autopsy, a request which was not fulfilled because Musharraf did not allow the creation of a Commission at the time or the involvement of the UN in an autopsy.
 4. Due to a supreme court ruling, women are not typically given autopsies in Pakistan, even post mortem. Victims' bodies need to have the same

respect that they would have while living. The ruling dictated that only female doctors are allowed to perform autopsies on female victims. An autopsy could have been performed on Bhutto's body had a female doctor been present, but the fact that one was not brought in may be cause for suspicion and speculation.

- ii. Zardari strongly feels that the local Rawalpindi police did not conduct a proper investigation of the crime scene of his wife's assassination.
 1. Zardari stated that, immediately after the assassination, Mussaeiq Khan repeatedly asked for an autopsy, but these requests fell upon deaf ears.
 2. Zardari believes that typical protocol was not followed for the incident.
 - a. Hosing a crime scene down only an hour after a murder is not standard procedure according to him.
 - b. The Rawalpindi police were not conducive of an investigative body trying to find out the truth regarding a heinous criminal act.
- iii. Zardari believes strongly that the government headed by Musharraf were involved in the death of his wife.
 1. Zardari strongly believed Bhutto was going to bring democracy to the Pakistani people.
 2. Eliminating Bhutto as a threat would serve Musharraf's goal of securing power for his government.
 3. The decision to assign a local police force to protect Bhutto, a high level official, was "negligent at best."

d. Saud Aziz

The Commission met with Chief Police Officer Saud Aziz in Islamabad to discuss his role in the management of the scene during the immediate aftermath of the assassination.

- i. In regards to hosing down the site within an hour of the attack, Aziz explained that it was a necessary measure for crowd control and security purposes. He said that the police had already collected all of the evidence and did not want any of the biological matter, including that found on the car, to be cross-contaminated.
- ii. Aziz shared the following about his own personal beliefs and affiliations:
 1. He previously belonged to the All Pakistan Muslim League.
 2. He and Bhutto disagreed on several points politically.
 3. He believes Musharraf is a great man who did a lot of great things for Pakistan.
- iii. On the night of the assassination, Aziz said he visited the hospital where Bhutto was taken to check on her condition since she was a political leader in his district.

- iv. Aziz confirmed that he ordered the removal of Bhutto's shoes since they were another piece of evidence to be collected, but emphasized that they were quickly returned to the JIT for their investigation.
- v. Aziz also offered that offering guests tea and food upon their arrival is common hospitality in Pakistan. This was in regards to Aziz's offering of tea and food to JIT officers who worked with him to collect evidence, which led to a lengthy delay in actual evidence collection.

Actors

a. Non-State

i. Al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda, the prolific terrorist organization based in South Asia, has claimed responsibility for the assassination. Mustafa Abu al-Yazid claimed the group's responsibility in the days following the blast. This claim has been substantiated by further evidence and testimony which this committee has collected and reviewed.

Ailzat Shah, a compatriot of Bilal Aseed, reported training in Southern Waziristan with noted Al-Qaeda leader Baitullah Mehsud. Shah also reported training with Bilal Saeed, the principal suspect believed to be the suicide bomber in the attack on Bhutto.

Additionally, numerous witness and state officials, with the notable exception of current Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari, have confirmed that it is their belief that Al-Qaeda bears the responsibility for planning and carrying out former Prime Minister Bhutto's assassination.

During our third visit to Islamabad, we sent a Commissioner from our team to question an al-Qaeda spokesman. The purpose of this inquiry was to determine if they would provide any insight into whether this attack was in any way a collaboration with the Pakistani government. While attempting to travel to the region of South Waziristan to meet with the spokesman, Commissioner Greg Taushani, along with his convoy, was ambushed. Several security personnel were killed, and the Commissioner suffered severe injuries to the left shoulder and left kneecap. The Commission was then ordered to return to its office in New York. Commissioner Taushani was given immediate medical attention and fortunately made a full recovery.

While we were unable to press al-Qaeda for information at this time, we would still intend to ask if their attack on Bhutto was a collaboration with outside forces, and whether groups or individuals outside of al-Qaeda were aware of the plotted assassination before it occurred. The questions are as follows:

1. What was al-Qaeda's motive for this attack?
2. Why did al-Qaeda want Bhutto, specifically, dead?
3. Were there any other outside forces influencing the decision to assassinate Bhutto?
4. If the assassination order was handed down from another group, who did it come from?
5. Were there any groups or individuals outside of al-Qaeda who were aware this attack would be happening?
6. Did you collaborate with any other groups or authorities to carry out this assassination?
7. Do you have any information on the whereabouts of Commissioner Deaton?

As we were hampered in our attempts to conduct this questioning, we were unable to ascertain from this inquiry whether the Pakistani government was in any way directly involved in the attacks. As these questions remain critical to the investigation, the Commission would highly encourage further attempts to return in search of answers at a later date.

b. State

i. Pakistan

Pakistan's chief role in this investigation was providing information from the initial investigation into the assassination of Ms. Bhutto, as well as hosting the members of this Commission in order to conduct interviews with witnesses and further review the site of the assassination.

It is evident that the original Pakistani investigation lacked the professionalism, the means, or the will to conduct their investigation carefully. Notably, the site of Bhutto's assassination in Rawalpindi, a suburb of Islamabad, was cleared of evidence just one hour after the assassination. This is concerning as this is not standard operating procedure for police, and thus is irregular. Furthermore, after the site had been cleared, it was subject to a thorough cleaning by the Pakistani police in Rawalpindi. Especially troubling is the discovery that Ms. Bhutto's vehicle was cleaned of all human DNA and biological evidence prior to its inspection by the relevant experts.

This Commission is unable to state definitively that Pakistani officials were involved in the planning of the assassination or in the concealment of evidence in the wake of the bombing. It should, however, be noted that some high ranking Pakistani officials did refuse to cooperate with this Commission, as is their right. Furthermore, the reckless actions taken by Pakistani investigative forces in the aftermath of Ms. Bhutto's death can only constitute gross neglect of their investigative duties.

Impediments to the Inquiry

In the course of the Commission, the inquiry encountered significant obstacles to the continued success of the investigation. Notably actions taken by both state and non-state actors unsettled the Commission and seemed likely to be a measure to discourage following certain lines of inquiry.

a. **Pakistan**

While this Commission was provided immeasurable aid by certain elements of the current administration, members of Musharraf's government were less than willing to cooperate with this body. This included former ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) Chief Hamid Gul, mentioned in Ms. Bhutto's aforementioned email, who refused to testify before this body. Additionally, the protection which Pakistani security forces provided to the Commission was inconsistent, with the level of security provided to this body fluctuating arbitrarily. Likewise, it appears that hostile actors inside the Pakistani government divulged information on this Commission doings to unfriendly non-state actors.

b. **Al-Qaeda**

The kidnappig and subsequent murder of Commissioner Deaton

c.

Al-Qaeda proved especially troublesome during the course of this investigation. By contributing generally to the atmosphere of fear and instability in the region, Al-Qaeda sought to intimidate key witnesses and generally hamper our investigation. Including Commissioner Taushani, as was mentioned above, after engaging in a fact finding mission in South Waziristan was attacked by Al-Qaeda militants. These militants wounded the Commissioner and killed numerous staff belonging to the inquiry. These attacks precipitated the Commission's withdrawal from Pakistan and concluded the investigative portion of the inquiry.

Conclusions

The combined evidence collected in the initial investigation performed by Scotland Yard and in further investigation by this Commission inculcates the Al-Qaeda cell operating out of South Waziristan in the assassination of Benazir Bhutto. Testimony from Aitzat Shah, in corroboration with physical and video evidence, confirms the attack was perpetrated by 15-year-old Al-Qaeda operative Bilal Saeed. Saeed, along with Aitzat Shah, was radicalized under prominent South Waziristan Al-Qaeda leader and the leader of Tehrik-i-Taliban Batullah Mehsud in South Waziristan. It is there that Saeed received training for the execution of the assassination. Furthermore, an Egyptian national and known Al-Qaeda financial chief laid claim to the attack on behalf of Al-Qaeda.

It is the opinion of this Commission that, while Al-Qaeda was responsible for the attack, negligence on the part of the Pakistani government and local law enforcement created an unsafe environment for Ms. Bhutto in Rawalpindi. Despite her serious suspicions that she would be the target of an assassination, attempts by Ms. Bhutto to obtain more comprehensive security coverage in the form of private security personnel were denied.

Additionally, the ensuing investigation was not conducted according to standard operating procedures. This lack of adherence to protocol and thorough crime scene investigation immediately following the attack complicated efforts to ascertain the true nature of the attack. It is likely that partisan considerations were a factor in determining the level of protection which Ms. Bhutto was provided.

The Security Council, however, must be leary of speculation as to the motivations behind these partisan considerations. The Commission is not prepared to engage in baseless conjecture when engaging with former President Musharraf and his government's motives. However, the Commission is firm in its conviction that the required steps were not taken to ensure that Ms. Bhutto's life would not be put in danger.

Recommendations to the United Nations Security Council

1. In order to ensure thorough investigations of any future assassinations involving female political figures or important members within the Muslim community, this Commission recommends:
 - a. Area hospitals be equipped with appropriate and well trained female doctors readily available to perform an autopsy on the victim in the event of their death.
 - b. In the event that there is no suitable doctor able to perform this autopsy, the body should be held by local law enforcement until one is at their disposal. Keeping the

deceased under protection will ensure that the evidence and future investigation is not compromised.

2. This Commission strongly recommends that in the event of a legitimate threat against a political figure, that the relevant government agencies provide all reasonable security to ensure their protection.
3. In order to preserve the integrity and impartiality of further investigations of a similar nature, the Commission recommends that more channels of communication be opened between the UN and nations seeking outside aid in investigating internal crises.
 - a. Particularly regarding the involvement of Al-Qaeda, an NGO, it is best practice to involve the UN as an impartial international body to conduct these investigations.
 - b. Considering the significant public outcry and doubt cast by Bhutto supporters upon the release of the Scotland Yard report, utilizing the UN as a neutral outside investigative body will help to alleviate concerns of bias and partisanship in these investigations.
4. As stated earlier in this final report, this Commission believes that Al-Qaeda can still provide pertinent information as to the assassination of Benazir Bhutto. If there is a point in the future when it is deemed safe by the United Nations to return to Islamabad or South Waziristan, we recommend sending a team of highly trained security officials and UN representatives to conduct an interview using the seven questions listed above in the section 'Actors', subsection 'Al-Qaeda'. In the case this becomes a possibility in the future, we strongly recommend reassembling this Commission for a brief period to be determined upon a meeting to Al-Qaeda being conducted. The Commission will then add the responses to these questions to this report of the Commission into Bhutto's assassination.