



NO PEACE IN AGFHANISTAN

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A suicide bomb attack on worshippers at a Shiite mosque in the Afghan city of Kunduz killed at least 55 people , in the bloodiest assault since U.S. forces left the country.

at least 50 people, all of them from Afghanistan's persecuted Shia minority, is a grave reminder that the conflict in the country is far from over.



The Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K), the Afghanistan-based arm of the terrorist organisation, has claimed responsibility. The IS's doctrinal hatred towards the Shias is known. In Iraq and Syria, it systematically targeted Shias, who it calls "rejectionists" of faith, and used such attacks to mobilise the support of Sunni hardliners and trigger sectarian conflicts



IS-K - Islamic State Khorasan Province - is the regional affiliate of the Islamic State group.

It is the most extreme and violent of all the jihadist militant groups in Afghanistan.

IS-K was set up in January 2015 at the height of IS's power in Iraq and Syria, before its self-declared caliphate was defeated and dismantled by a US-led coalition.

It recruits both Afghan and Pakistani jihadists, especially defecting members of the Afghan Taliban who don't see their own organisation as extreme enough.



The Kunduz blast was the third major attack by the IS since the Taliban's takeover of Kabul on August 15.

Days later, an IS suicide squad attacked Kabul airport when thousands of Afghans were desperately trying to flee the country, killing at least 170 Afghans and 13 American soldiers.

On October 3, a bomb targeted a memorial service being held for Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, in a Kabul mosque, killing five.

All these attacks suggest that the IS-K's ability to strike has grown.

When the Taliban captured power in 1996, their main promise was to provide security to a people who were living through almost two decades of civil war. The Taliban had taken control of almost 90% of the country and established order through the implementation of their brutal code.

This time, the Taliban control almost all of the country, but still struggle to establish order. There have been multiple instances of direct fighting between the Taliban and IS-K jihadists.

The Taliban is an enemy for the IS-K, which wants to establish a foothold in Afghanistan exploiting the its sectarian wounds and security vacuum.

While both groups have used tactics of terror, the IS-K is a pan-Islamist jihadist outfit, while the Taliban are largely a Pashtun nationalist militancy.

The rise of the IS-K poses multiple challenges to the Taliban's rule over Afghanistan, which many in Afghanistan and Pakistan saw as a solution to the country's security woes.

On one side, their promise to provide security looks hollow.

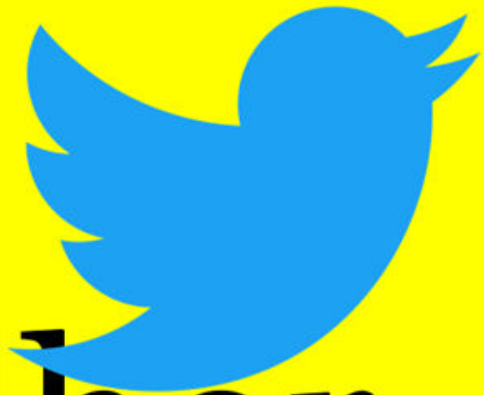
Afghanistan's cities under the Taliban remain as insecure as they were under the previous Islamic Republic

On the other hand, even if the Taliban, under pressure from Afghanistan's donors and the public, want to make some concessions on the many restrictions already imposed, they would come under pressure from the more extremist IS-K, which says the Taliban are not Islamic enough.

For the people of Afghanistan, who are stuck between the devil and the deep blue sea, the war that started 40 years ago continues, no matter who is in power in Kabul.



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