

Al-Qa'ida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS)



OVERVIEW

AS OF JUNE 2026

Al-Qa'ida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) is an al-Qa'ida affiliate based mainly in Afghanistan. The group was formally announced in 2014 as an umbrella movement, uniting preexisting violent jihadist groups in South Asia. AQIS aims to remove Western influences from South Asia and replace secular governments with a unified Islamic emirate that enforces strict Sunni Islamic law. Since 2018, the group has experienced leadership losses, including the death of its founding amir Asim Umar. AQIS receives overarching guidance from al-Qa'ida's senior leaders and has publicly declared its intent to conduct attacks in the West and against US interests in South Asia.

AQIS has longstanding ties with the Taliban and has pledged allegiance to Taliban leader Haybatullah Akundzada, partly to secure its safe haven in Afghanistan. AQIS's 2017 code of conduct reveals that a key objective for the group has been to defend the Taliban and assist it in establishing an Islamic emirate, and AQIS congratulated the Taliban after its takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021. During the past few years, AQIS has tried to establish a presence in India and Bangladesh, and the group has threatened attacks in Kashmir. AQIS last claimed an attack in 2016 in Bangladesh.

Operating Areas

Based primarily in Afghanistan, with some activity in Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh

Members

Between 200 and 400

Tactics And Targets

AQIS has engaged in suicide bombings, small-arms attacks, ambushes, and assassinations. The group's attacks have largely focused on US and Pakistani Government and security personnel, civil society activists, and academics.

Terrorist Group Designation

The US State Department designated AQIS as a foreign terrorist organization in 2016.



Al-Qa'ida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) *(continued)*

KEY LEADERS



Abu Zar

a.k.a. Usama Mahmood

Leader since 2019, formerly an AQIS spokesperson



Yahya Ghauri

Deputy amir



Muhammad Maruf

Head of recruitment



Asim Umar [DECEASED]

Founder, killed in a US-Afghan raid in 2019

NOTABLE ATTACKS

25 April 2016

Kalabagan, Bangladesh

AQIS claimed responsibility for the murders of LGBTQIA+ activists Xulhaz Mannan and Mahbub Tonoy, who were killed with edged weapons.

6 September 2014

Karachi, Pakistan

Militants tried to seize a Pakistani Navy frigate at a dockyard, with the ultimate goal of targeting a US Navy vessel. One Pakistani officer was killed in the attack.

