

THE BALUCHISTAN LIBERATION ARMY (BLA) FEMALE SUICIDE BOMBERS.

BACKGROUND

The emergence of female suicide bombers within the BLA represents a **significant departure from traditional Baloch insurgent practices**. Unlike other militant theatres, where women's participation has historical precedent, Baloch militancy has only recently incorporated women into **direct combat and suicide roles**, primarily through the BLA's elite **Majeed Brigade**.

MANY CASES INVOLVE EDUCATED WOMEN from middle- and lower-middle-class backgrounds. Notably, the first high-profile attacker in the 2022 Karachi incident was university-educated and professionally active as a teacher. ***This pattern indicates a clear shift from predominantly economically driven recruitment toward ideologically motivated mobilization, underscoring the growing role of narrative-based radicalization over material incentives.***

18 MARCH 2026 - SECURITY FORCES ARRESTED A "WOULD-BE" FEMALE SUICIDE BOMBER IN KHUZDAR.

Addressing a press conference in Quetta, CHIEF MINISTER SARFARAZ BUGTI stated that security forces, acting on credible human intelligence, apprehended a would-be female **SUICIDE BOMBER IN KHUZDAR**. He further underscored that terrorist groups in Baluchistan are increasingly exploiting Baloch women for militant activities.

CM Bugti maintained that the operation to arrest the young woman identified as Laiba was carried out with the help of "human intelligence". He added that with her arrest, major destruction had been averted.

However, he noted that the mindset of young Baloch people was changing, recalling that security agencies receiving human intelligence in such operations was a "rare occurrence" in the recent past.

EMERGING TRENDS IN INSURGENT ACTIVITY – BLA.

Recent developments in Baluchistan indicate a significant tactical evolution in insurgent activity, particularly by the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), marked by the increasing use of female operatives in coordinated, multi-city attacks.

HISTORICALLY MALE-DOMINATED, the insurgency has shifted toward incorporating women some reportedly educated and from urban backgrounds reflecting both an expansion of the recruitment base and a deliberate effort to exploit reduced suspicion at security checkpoints while maximizing psychological and media impact.

INTELLIGENCE REPORTING SUGGESTS A COMBINATION OF VOLUNTARY RADICALIZATION, online indoctrination, and coercive methods, including cases of trafficking, forced marriages, and sexual exploitation, as illustrated by the reported case of a **19-YEAR-OLD FEMALE** who was allegedly passed between militant actors before being prepared for a suicide mission.

While the exact scenario of **A 19-YEAR-OLD BEING SOLD BY HER 50-YEAR-OLD HUSBAND** specifically to a TTP member and then to a BLA member in a single chain of events is not mentioned in the latest 2026 intelligence briefings provided, the following validated trends match the context of the inquiry:

Emerging patterns also indicate limited operational overlap between ethno nationalist groups like the BLA and religiously motivated networks such as the TTP, particularly in facilitation and training domains, contributing to a more complex and hybrid threat environment. **REPORTEDLY, as part of TTP and BLA nexus indicated that both BLA and TTP have engaged in using suicide bombers in Pakistan's restive areas.**

Law enforcement agencies in Karachi and Baluchistan have rescued young girls and women intended to be used as suicide bombers by the BLA. Militant groups, particularly the BLA's Majeed Brigade, have been using social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook to target, radicalize, and exploit young people, creating confusion and inducing them to commit violence.

THE BLA HAS INCREASINGLY USED FEMALE SUICIDE BOMBERS (FIDAYEEN) IN ATTACKS on security forces in Baluchistan. *The first woman to carry out such an attack for the BLA was identified as Shari Baloch in 2022, but the tactic has accelerated into 2025-2026.*

26 APRIL 2022 – FIRST FEMALE SUICIDE ATTACK (TURNING POINT).

A suicide bombing hit a van near the University of Karachi's Confucius Institute, killing three Chinese academics and their Pakistani driver. The Baluchistan Liberation Army, claimed responsibility, saying that the perpetrator was the organization's first female suicide bomber.

Of the three Chinese killed, one was the director of the university's Confucius Institute. The other two were teachers. China losing confidence in Pakistan's ability to secure Chinese nationals, has since requested permission to deploy Chinese private security contractors to Pakistan.

SUICIDE BOMBER PROFILE. The bomber was identified as **SHARI BALOCH**, a 30-year-old female and secondary school science teacher from Kech District in Baluchistan. She held bachelors and master's degrees in education from the Allama Iqbal Open University, and had also obtained a master's degree in zoology from the University of Baluchistan. She had reportedly enrolled in another postgraduate degree at the **University of Karachi** months before the attack, but was not reported to be a student there at the time.

Shari had a daughter and son, both reportedly aged five, with her husband Habitan Bashir Baloch, who is also from Kech and a dentist.

THE INCLUSION OF FEMALE ATTACKERS COMPLICATES TRADITIONAL THREAT PROFILING, increases operational unpredictability, and enhances the effectiveness of attacks against both hard and soft targets.

Overall, this trend underscores a maturing insurgency that is adaptive, media-aware, and increasingly capable of leveraging both ideological narratives and human vulnerability, posing heightened security, intelligence, and societal challenges for Pakistan in the near to medium term.

25 JUNE 2023 – TURBAT / BALUCHISTAN.

A constable was killed and two others, including a policewoman, were injured in a suicide attack carried out by a **Female Bomber** targeting a security convoy in Turbat town.

The Baloch Liberation Army's Majeed Brigade group claimed responsibility for attack. The banned organization identified the bomber as **SUMAIYA QALANDARANI**. ***This was the second suicide attack carried out by a Baloch woman after Shari Baloch targeted a van carrying Chinese teachers at Karachi University in April 2022.***

SUICIDE BOMBER PROFILE. SUMMAYA QALANDRANI Baloch (25 Years) was also an educated woman with deep interests in Journalism and writing. Described as a "**HIGHLY EDUCATED INDIVIDUAL**", reportedly used her skills in journalism and media, working for Hakkal, the BLA's media wing. ***Reports indicate she was pursuing a bachelor's degree in computer science prior to her involvement in the attack.***

Her involvement in the armed struggle was a conscious decision, rather than an impulsive act, influenced by deep ideological commitment. ***She was reported to be the fiancée of Rehan Baloch, a militant who executed a suicide attack in 2018, and was closely connected to the family of BLA founder General Aslam Baloch.***

26 AUGUST 2024. BELA / BALUCHISTAN.

MAHAL BALOCH after detonating a car bomb in a Pakistani Army base in Bela, Baluchistan during the August 2024 Baluchistan attacks. As it was uncommon for women to drive, she drew suspicion as she was driving to the army base. ***Mahal Baloch shared the same name as a missing woman from Baluchistan who was uninvolved with the BLA.***

After her death, the BLA published a video message that she recorded before the attack. Her alias, Zilan Kurd, was a tribute to Zeynep Kınacı, who she saw as a role model. She was first known by the alias in February 2023, when the YPG declared support for the BLA.

SUICIDE BOMBER PROFILE. Mahal Baloch was born in 2001 as the fifth of six children in Gwadar, Baluchistan. Her father was Kahda Hameed Assa.

She graduated from the Faculty of Arts at Degree College Gwadar, and then enrolled in a Bachelor of Laws program at Turbat University in 2021. Her father was a member of the National Awami Party and was a student of Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo.

She did internships for law practice in Quetta during summer breaks. **MAHAL BALOCH** had an average upbringing. Jayend Baloch, a spokesperson for the Baluchistan Liberation Army, claimed that Mahal Baloch had officially become a BLA militant in 2022.

In 2023, after extensive training, she was admitted to the Majeed Brigade, the BLA Special Forces. ***She left her family home on August 23, 2024.***

25 SEPTEMBER 2024. TURBAT / BALUCHISTAN.

ADILA BALOCH, A 27-YEAR-OLD WOMAN WHO WORKED FOR THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO). *Adila was recruited by the BLA for suicide bombing. She was arrested in Turbat for planning a suicide attack, has revealed that terrorists blackmail and manipulate Baloch women into committing such acts.*

She described how she was lured into joining terrorist groups under false promises. **Adila**, a qualified nurse running a project with the **World Health Organization**, shared her story of how she was deceived by extremist elements. "My job was to help people and save lives. *Unfortunately, I was misled by those who strayed me from the right path,*" she said.

SHE CONFESSED that the terrorists convinced her to commit a suicide bombing without considering the innocent lives that would be lost. "They showed me false hopes of a new and happy life," she explained, adding that once she joined them, she realized that the life in the mountains was nothing but hardship. Adila further revealed that she wasn't the only one misled by the terrorists and other Baloch youth, both men and women, had been similarly brainwashed.

SUICIDE BOMBER PROFILE. **Adila Baloch**, *a qualified nurse running a project with the World Health Organization, was arrested by the security forces in Turbat, Balochistan, before carrying out the attack.* Speaking at a press conference in Quetta, she described how she was lured into joining terrorist groups under false promises. "They showed me false hopes of a new and happy life," she explained, adding that once she joined the militants hiding in the mountains, she felt that life was full of hardship.

02 DEC 2025. NOKUNDI TOWN OF CHAGAI DISTRICT / BALUCHISTAN.

A FEMALE SUICIDE BOMBER of the banned Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) blew herself up at the entrance of the headquarters of a paramilitary force in Pakistan's restive Baluchistan province, triggering a prolonged gunfight in which six militants were killed.

The attacker detonated herself at the main entrance of the Frontier Corps (FC) headquarters in Nokundi town of Chagai district during late evening. **THE BLA LATER IDENTIFIED THE BOMBER AS ZINATA RAFIQ AND RELEASED HER PHOTOGRAPH.**

Following the explosion, six militants attempted to storm the headquarters. Three were shot dead near the entrance after an extended exchange of fire, while the remaining three managed to enter the compound before being encircled by FC personnel. The security officials said the three have been killed as well.

THE INCIDENT MARKS AT LEAST THE THIRD TIME THE BLA, considered the most active and well-armed insurgent group in Baluchistan, has used a female suicide attacker. *The incident marks at least the third time the BLA, considered the most active and well-armed insurgent group in Baluchistan, has used a female suicide attacker.*

29 DECEMBER 2025. KARACHI / SINDH

Police in Pakistan detained a teenage girl who was radicalized and recruited online by an outlawed separatist group to carry out a **"MAJOR SUICIDE ATTACK.**

No criminal charges will be filed and she will be placed under state protection as “a victim rather than a suspect,” Sindh provincial Home Minister Ziaul Hassan said at a news conference. The girl was detained during a routine Police Check on buses as she traveled to Karachi, the Sindh province capital, from southwestern Baluchistan province to meet a handler.

The girl was targeted online by the Baloch Liberation Army, which was designated as a terrorist group by the UNITED STATES EARLIER YEAR. The group convinced the girl that carrying out an attack would bring her honor and recognition within the Baloch community, similar to other women who have carried out suicide bombings against security forces.

The girl appeared with her mother at a news conference but her face was covered and her name and age were withheld. Police showed a video statement she made with details about her contacts with BLA and how she agreed to carry out a suicide attack.

Pakistan’s Information Minister Attaullah Tarar condemned BLA and other separatist groups for luring people toward violence and said detaining the girl prevented a potential large loss of life.

JANUARY AND EARLY FEBRUARY 2026, MULTIPLE CITIES / BALUCHISTAN.

The Baluchistan Liberation Army launched a series of coordinated, large-scale attacks across multiple districts in Baluchistan, Pakistan, known as **"Operation Black Storm – Phase 2" (or "Herof 2.0")**.

These attacks involved the participation of **MULTIPLE FEMALE SUICIDE BOMBERS**, marking a significant tactical shift in the separatist insurgency. Reports indicate that 2–3 women were among the suicide bombers, with a total of six women involved in the broader, coordinated wave of attacks in January. Attacks occurred in cities including Quetta, Nushki, Hub, Chaman, Gwadar, Mustang, and Makran, targeting police stations, security installations, and infrastructure.

The BLA released photos identifying one female suicide attacker as ASIFA MENGAL, who allegedly targeted the ISI headquarters in Nushki. The trend shows that the BLA used these attacks to showcase a growing appeal among women and to highlight a "dangerous evolution in tactics".

PROFILE. The BLA said 24-year-old **ASIFA MENGAL** was the daughter of Mohammad Ismail, a resident of Baluchistan’s Nushki. Born on October 2, 2002, she reportedly joined the banned outfit’s Majeed Brigade after turning 21.

ASIFA MENGAL decided to be a ‘fidayee’ (suicide bomber) last year in January. She is said to be the one to attackers who targeted the ISI headquarters in Nushki

The attacks resulted in dozens of deaths, with officials reporting 58 fatalities in the initial wave and significant civilian and security personnel losses. Pakistani security forces reported repelling the attacks, with dozens of militants killed.

AN OVERVIEW OF “OPERATION BLACK STORM – PHASE 2” (ALSO REFERRED TO AS “HEROF 2.0”) highlights a notable evolution in the operational and strategic posture of the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA). *The emergence of female suicide bombers, coupled with the deployment of increasingly sophisticated weaponry, indicates a deliberate effort by the group to adapt and sustain itself within a heavily securitized environment. By expanding its recruitment base and intensifying its propaganda outreach, the BLA appears intent on reshaping perceptions of its legitimacy, capability, and geographic reach.*

HOWEVER, THESE SHIFTS ARE NOT WITHOUT INHERENT RISKS. The escalation toward **HIGH CASUALTY ATTACKS**, particularly those involving civilian targets, may undermine local support especially if affected communities begin to view the violence as indiscriminate rather than politically driven. While the diversification of tactics may yield short-term operational gains, *it simultaneously risks provoking more forceful and sustained military responses from the state.*

ULTIMATELY, the evolving nature of the insurgency reflects deeper structural challenges in Baluchistan, including economic marginalization, limited political representation, and longstanding disputes over resource distribution.

These underlying issues suggest that a purely security-centric approach is unlikely to produce lasting stability. The future trajectory of the conflict will depend not only on battlefield dynamics but also on the extent to which parallel political, economic, and governance reforms are implemented to address root causes.

MOTIVATIONAL PATHWAYS AND GENDERED NARRATIVES IN FEMALE MILITANCY IN BALUCHISTAN”

Baloch separatists have waged an insurgency since the early 2000s seeking greater autonomy and in some cases independence from Pakistan while demanding a larger share of natural resources.

Baluchistan is the LARGEST PROVINCE OF PAKISTAN by land, with around 47 percent female population. The province has remained mired in extremist movements for decades, with the latest terrorism wave carried out by organizations including BLA Baloch Liberation Front (BLF), and many other affiliated groups.

The overall motivations which can be related to terrorist acts are either religious, social and economic marginalization, personal grievances, or sub-nationalist agendas. Specifically about women, there can be four motivating approaches.

FIRSTLY, it can be inspired by feminist liberation. **SECONDLY**, female terrorists can portray themselves as acting against gender discrimination in male-dominant societies. Females feel liberated by using violence as a symbol of rebellion against social norms. **THIRDLY**, it can be the recent awarding of the title of ‘Martyr’ for females, which was earlier dedicated to men only. **LASTLY**, it can be some coercion by the inspiring figure who is urging women to terrorist actions. Among all these motivating factors, one can anticipate that the reason behind Baloch women being misused for terrorist activities can be women’s marginalization in Baluchistan or the excitement of being called a martyr. But the financial, educational, and social background of all three female suicide bombers of BLA, reveal the facts otherwise.

CONCLUSION.

The future role of female suicide bombers within the Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) is likely to expand from a symbolic and high-impact tactic into a more institutionalized and operationally integrated component of the group's strategy. In the near to medium term, female operatives are expected to be deployed more frequently in both urban and conflict-zone attacks, particularly in areas such as Baluchistan and metropolitan centers like Karachi.

Their use provides clear tactical advantages, including reduced suspicion at checkpoints and greater access to sensitive targets, thereby increasing the likelihood of operational success. Beyond suicide missions, women are also likely to assume expanded roles in recruitment, logistics, and intelligence gathering, especially through digital platforms where they can target and radicalize other women.

This evolution is further reinforced by the psychological and propaganda value of female attackers, which amplifies media impact and supports narratives of broad-based participation in the insurgency.

LARGELY, the trajectory indicates a gradual normalization and scaling of female involvement, with growing reliance on online radicalization, personal grievance narratives, and socio-political factors to sustain recruitment pipelines.

NOTE:

- **The current insurgency in Baluchistan differs** from those in 1948, 1958, 1962, and 1971. Back then, tribal elements controlled the leadership and had an inconsistent ideology that could negotiate on lesser demands.
- **TODAY'S BALUCH INSURGENCY IS PREDOMINANTLY LED BY THE EDUCATED SECTION OF SOCIETY, PARTICULARLY THE EX-BALUCH STUDENT ORGANIZATION (BSO) CADRE.** With its mature leadership, the BSO strategically analyzes insurgent organizations and political leaders. This strategic approach has led to the insurgency's sustained and increasing strength.

END