

Scenario 92

SALEEM SHAHZAD'S TWO INTERVIEWS

Senior Editor of *The Real News Network (TRNN)*, Paul Jay, called Saleem Shahzad from Washington on 19th & 21st May 2011 asking him about the reaction of Senator John Kerry's recent visit to Pakistan on a fence - building mission in the backdrop of Osama's killing and accusing Pakistani military and ISI in that connection AND that why the Pakistani politicians were being pushed into turmoil.

Here is an *Interview dated 19th May 2011* of Saleem Shahzad, Pakistan's Bureau Chief of Asia Times online with Washington based *'the Real News.com [TTRN]* given verbatim:

PAUL JAY [SENIOR EDITOR] of TRNN: Senator John Kerry was in Pakistan on what was called a fence - building mission. Fence building necessary because the US after killing bin Laden [incompre.] accused Pakistani military and Intelligence agencies of being incompetent or, worse, perhaps protecting bin Laden. This has also sent Pakistan politics into quite a bit of turmoil. [*Saleem Shahzad is being welcomed to join TTRN*]

S SHAHZAD [PAKISTAN BUREAU CHIEF of ASIA TIMES ONLINE]: *Thank you.*

PAUL JAY: So, first of all, is there any doubt amongst the military, the intelligence agencies, or Pakistan public opinion that it was in fact Osama bin Laden who was killed?

SHAHZAD: *Yes, I mean, undoubtedly it was bin Laden who was killed in Pakistan. There is no doubt about that.*

JAY: Now, you've written extensively over the last few years about a division in the military - I guess the ISI as well, the intelligence service -- that before 9/11, people that were very Islamic and very connected to the Taliban in Afghanistan who were very religious were very well promoted in the military and the ISI, and after 9/11, many of them quit in opposition to Musharraf's alliance with the United States, some were even arrested, and there was a purge of the more senior pro-Islamist elements. But you've talked about this division, how some of these retired officers continued to work with mid-level cadre in the army. How are they responding to the killing of bin Laden? And what does this mean for Pakistan's politics?

SHAHZAD: *Well, as far as my understanding is concerned, many of the military officers who had a religious inclination resigned or took their retirement soon after 9/11. Some of them silently sat at their home, but many joined forces with the different militant groups.*

I personally interacted with some of the officers who joined Commander Ilyas Kashmiri, who is now the member of al-Qaeda's shura. And some of those retired army officers were also behind the Mumbai attack in 2008. And, of course, bin Laden's killing is a big event for them. And they are also assessing the new situation after bin Laden's killing, and that is a new collaboration between the Pakistani security forces and the US military establishment.

And as you can see in yesterday's joint statement issued in Islamabad after John Kerry's visit, that both countries have reiterated that they would launch joint

operations against al-Qaeda, new targets. And the security forces -- [an] Islamabad security forces official personally told me that it means that now Pakistani forces and the Americans would jointly work to crack high-profile Afghan Taliban leaders and the Pakistani militants and as well as al-Qaeda leaders.

So the thing is that now I can clearly see a disturbance within the Pakistani establishment. And I understand that many of those retired officials, army officials, who'd use their clout inside the Pakistan army and instigate the [incompr.] officers, tried to manipulate them to work with the jihadi forces and instigate the rebellion against the state apparatus.

JAY: To what extent do you think the Pakistan military was simply posturing about not knowing about the attack on bin Laden? I mean, it is hard to conceive that, number one, they didn't know he was in the house down the road from their military base. It's also hard to conceive that even the American intelligence agencies wouldn't have known something. You've written before about how much the FBI and some of the other American intelligence agencies have become kind of connected to working very closely with, even sometimes controlling, you've written, the Pakistan ISI. What do you think happened here?

SHAHZAD: *Well, as far as Osama bin Laden's hiding cave is concerned, I don't have any qualified opinion to share with you. But given my interaction and my exposure with some of the retired army officials who were hand-in-glove with the jihadi forces, I can safely guess that it is quite possible that some retired army officers, use their connections to keep Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad, although I'm not sure that he was living over there for the last five years.*

I'm not sure about the time period which is mentioned by the Americans. But I think that if he was living in Abbottabad for several months, I think it was not possible without the help and connivance of some of the elements who were directly or indirectly connected with the military establishment.

JAY: Now, the leaders of the army and the intelligence service spoke in Pakistan's Parliament a little while ago, I guess just a few days ago, in an unprecedented presentation. But you wrote what they said there was essentially riddled with contradictions. What were the contradictions?

SHAHZAD: *There were many contradictions. First of all, they vent their anger; they vent their anger against the American strikes inside Abbottabad. But I think that they were very much onboard, they were very much onboard.*

As far as my understanding and my information is concerned, Americans did inform them about the arrival of the Navy SEALs inside Pakistan, but they did not share the information that--where they would strike and what is their exact high-value target. The name of the high-value target, that was Osama bin Laden.

So that is very much in line of the previous American tactics in Pakistan. They did send Navy SEALs inside Pakistan in past years, and they did share the information with Pakistan, and Pakistan did back those initiatives. But the thing was that -- they made lot of hue and cry about the drone strikes and everything, but immediately after the parliamentary resolution, there were at least two drone strikes inside Pakistan. And there was not even a formal protest by Pakistani military establishment or by the Pakistani foreign office.

JAY: Saleem, I thought you had written that the head of the Air Force, I think, had said to Parliament that you should give us orders to shoot these drones down.

SHAHZAD: *That's true. That's true. He said, actually, actually, Armed Forces chief tried to take parliamentary cover. But they did not mean that, no. They give the option to the Parliament, and at the same time, they also warn the Parliament that if you allow us and Pakistani Armed Forces would retaliate, we're waiting for the American reactions, that Americans would also react in the same way--in more harsher way, rather.*

So, I mean, they put the option in front of the Parliament, but at the same time, they also warned the Parliament. So it was--I mean, it was a sort of a defective briefing, I must say. So there were a lot of--I mean, the whole of their statement was completely riddled by contradictions.

JAY: Now, the--what exactly is the strength and role of al-Qaeda now in Pakistan? You hear everything from there's, like, 50 al-Qaeda fighters left and they really don't play much of a role. On the other side of it, you hear that al-Qaeda's actually reborn itself, has new leadership, and has a very close connection with the Taliban. Where is the truth in this as you know it?

SHAHZAD: *There are two aspects. Number one, there are--first you have to understand this fact, that there are 17 Arab-Afghan groups which are operating inside Pakistani tribal areas and in Afghanistan, and most of the groups are allied with al-Qaeda, but they are not part of al-Qaeda. They have alliance with al-Qaeda, but they are not a part of al-Qaeda, number one. And the strength of those 17 Arab-Afghan groups is, like, over 1,000, approximately.*

Second, those who are the members of al-Qaeda are hardly, like, 100, not more than 100.

The third thing is--and this is the most important thing, and that is the phenomenon of neo-Taliban, the new generation of those Afghan fighters, of the Pakistani fighters, or the fighters coming from the Pakistani tribal areas who were--previously pledged their allegiance to Mullah Omar and the Taliban.

But now they--in the last ten years, they completely absorbed al-Qaeda's ideology inside-out, and they are more loyal to al-Qaeda than Mullah Omar or to the al-Qaeda leaders or to their jihadi commanders. So this is the new group, this al-Qaeda horizontally, not only in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the tribal areas, but all across the globe, like in Yemen, in Somalia, and other parts, even in America.

So this is the new generation, on which al-Qaeda is heavily banking on. And not only those, but it also includes the new converts, white Caucasians, which are living in North Waziristan and in South Waziristan. And many of them were sent back to their countries of origin in Europe, Canada, and America, and different countries. So this was completely a new phenomenon. Al-Qaeda grew horizontally in different directions.

JAY: Now, al-Qaeda's relationship and the Taliban's relationship with the ISI and the Pakistan military has also been a matter of great debate. Many people have suggested that there's kind of a dual policy going on, that the Taliban at the very least, if not al-Qaeda, but the Taliban, are a sort of a lever, a card that Pakistan gets to play in Afghanistan.

And there's also been talk about this split, the Pakistan Taliban versus the Afghan Taliban, that the Afghan Taliban are focused on Afghanistan, and they have the links with the Pakistan military. But the Pakistani Taliban is closer to al-Qaeda, and they're more targeted at overthrowing the Pakistan regime itself. So what do you make of that?

SHAHZAD: *Over the last ten years, things have become very complicated. You cannot say that in any categorical terms, that Afghan Taliban are the same person as the Pakistani establishment. Yes, part of Afghan Taliban is still in contact with the military establishment, but all their top commanders, all the top commanders of Taliban, Afghan Taliban, are now completely in the hands of al-Qaeda.*

For example, the biggest Taliban Afghan commander is Sirajuddin Haqqani. He is very close to al-Qaeda. Similarly, Commander Nazir who runs the largest anti-NATO, anti-Western coalition network in Afghan province of Paktika--he has also influence in the Afghan province of Zabul and Helmand-- is completely part of al-Qaeda.

People say that he is Afghan Taliban. He is very close to the military establishment. But when recently I interviewed him, he said to me in categorical terms that "I am part of al-Qaeda," and he -- and his very close lieutenant handed me check in which it was written that anybody who would be friendly with Pakistan would be considered as Taliban and al-Qaeda's foe.

So that actually showed that the currents have completely changed in the last ten years. Asia has completely changed in the last ten years.

JAY: Thanks very much for joining us Syed and we will continue to do this conversation in Part 2 of this interview and please join us for that on The Real News Network.

The second stint of that ***Interview dated 21st May 2011*** of Saleem Shahzad with Washington based ***'the Real News.com [TTRN]*** is given below verbatim:

PAUL JAY: Based partly on what you've written, it seems that the more pressure the US puts on the Pakistan army to participate in the Afghan war and to deal with the al-Qaeda Taliban elements, the more it splits the army. How serious a division is there?

SHAHZAD: *There are several dimensions of this split. Number one, you have to appreciate the Pakistani military establishment supported the Taliban regime for the last--for five years from the middle to late '90s and early 2000. So the thing is that they not only supported the Taliban regime but they had also some agreements with the Taliban. And they had even the agreements with al-Qaeda before 9/11.*

JAY: In some of your articles you have mentioned the possibilities of even a kind of mutiny. Is that possible now?

SHAHZAD: *Well, it is quite possible. And if you remember, immediately after the 9/11, there were several attacks on then chief of the army staff and the president, Mr. Pervez Musharraf. And each of those attacks, there was a connection of Pakistani Armed Forces. In some cases there were southern Pakistan Air Force officials were involved. So you just cannot set aside the element of a limited mutiny in Pakistan army.*

There would certainly be a backlash, because you have to appreciate this fact, that Pakistan army has always been closely allied with Islamist forces. They had agreements with the Taliban in the past when they were ruling Afghanistan, and they had even agreements with al-Qaeda when they were living in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime.

They had, even, agreement with al-Qaeda, when Lieutenant General Mahmud, of the ISI, visited Kandahar after 9/11, and he met with the Taliban government. And he verbally assured Osama bin Laden that Pakistan would not mount any operation against al-Qaeda, they would not try to arrest them, and al-Qaeda would not, you know, retaliate against Pakistan, either.

So, under the same very agreement, you know, Osama bin Laden and all the top al-Qaeda members were allowed to sneak inside Pakistan. And the crackdowns have mounted only in 2003, when Pakistani intelligence wrongly reported to General Pervez Musharraf that al-Qaeda was behind the attack on his motorcade in 2003.

As a reaction, then Musharraf ordered a crackdown against al-Qaeda and all the jihadi organizations. And then, I mean, of course al-Qaeda also retaliated against the Pakistani military establishment and against Pervez Musharraf. So the thing is that the element of a limited revolt or mutiny within the Pakistan army is there, and you just cannot, you know, ignore that.

JAY: Now, how have the broader sections of Pakistani public opinion reacted to the killing of bin Laden and what's going on in terms of the controversy with the military and the ISI? I mean, what do--I know there's no such thing as *most Pakistanis*, but in terms of the sort of majority of urban Pakistan public opinion, you could say, what do they think?

SHAHZAD: *The majority population of urban Pakistan are completely disillusioned with the Pakistani military establishment. They are least bothered about anti-Americanism. They are least bothered about al-Qaedaism. They are least bothered about Pakistan's military role. But they do bother about two, three things. One is the economic meltdown in the whole country, the economic crisis in the country.*

They do bother about and they do concern about--on the question of Pakistan sovereignty, which is under siege from all sides, not only from the American side, but also from the militant side.

I mean, they are very much concerned that Pakistan has turned into a proxy battleground by all sorts of forces, not only from the al-Qaeda side and the American side, but also Iranians and the Saudis are very active inside Pakistan, and they are paying money to different groups in different militant outfits to settle the score against each other.

So the thing is, they are completely disillusioned with everybody, and they are looking for some new leaders who would, you know, take the country out of the crisis, of economic crisis, of the political crisis.

And the issue -- and the identity crisis. Pakistan's identity crisis that what the Pakistan is really up to. Is it a republic? Is it an Islamic Republic? Is it democratic state? Or what? So they are actually--they're completely disillusioned with the situation.

JAY: Now, just let me ask you one final question, which I haven't asked you before. The 9/11 attacks themselves, if in fact they were organized from bin Laden and al-Qaeda, and he was in Afghanistan but he was closely tied to at least elements, if not important sections, of the leadership of the Pakistan military and intelligence, clearly bin Laden was closely connected with sections of the Saudi royal family. Has there ever been an inquiry or a call for an inquiry into what was behind 9/11 and whether or not Pakistan or Saudi intelligence played any role in it?

SHAHZAD: *You have to appreciate two things when you would investigate the 9/11 plot. Number one, the broader ideas.*

The broader ideas actually came from Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, who actually wanted a friction between the West and the Muslim world on very broad lines. And for that, he actually wanted a flashpoint to be created.

And the second element was Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. Khalid Sheikh Mohammed was not al-Qaeda's member. He was a standalone jihadi. And he came up with this idea of 9/11. And then he proposed that idea to Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri and Osama bin Laden. Ayman al-Zawahiri was the most happy person.

And if you study Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri's personality, you would be knowing that he is a silent manipulator. He cunningly manipulated Osama bin Laden's mind, and that way he made sure that 9/11, like, even would happen in America, but because it would guarantee a massive friction in the world, and massive polarization in the world, and would divide the world on ideological lines, and that is what he was precisely looking for.

So I don't think that there is any question of the Saudi involvement, Saudi establishment's involvement or the Pakistani military establishment involvement. No matter how close they were to the Taliban or Osama bin Laden or any other personality -- even Osama bin Laden was very well manipulated by Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri.

JAY: There certainly was some evidence of connections between the Saudi royal family. There was a document from a congressional investigation that the *LA Times* reported on, that there were at least individual members of the Saudi royal family that have helped to finance certain members of the 9/11 participants. Has this ever been actually investigated or looked into within Pakistan? Because as you've--you've reported yourself that the ISI and military had very close connections with al-Qaeda before 9/11.

SHAHZAD: *There were proofs; there were evidence of financial linkages between the Taliban and al-Qaeda and the Saudi royal family, and even within the Pakistani military establishment. But, actually, those linkages were presented larger than the life.*

Most of that financial assistance was meant for the NGOs which were operating in Afghanistan. And several royal family members donated the funds to those NGOs. But it was presented in a different light, in a different angle, as the royal family donated the money, royal family members donated the money to al-Qaeda for launching 9/11 operation.

So that was -- I don't, you know, give much break to those evidences. Al-Qaeda is completely an anti-establishment and anti-state element. And this is the same for the whole world. Al-Qaeda is not loyal to any single state of the world. So I don't subscribe, actually.

JAY: Okay. Just one thing, finally, then. The Americans have positioned the death of bin Laden as a possible opening for negotiations with the Taliban, that now the Taliban can separate itself from al-Qaeda and there's some kind of a process that can now be negotiated. Do you think there's any merit to that argument?

SHAHZAD: *I don't think so. I don't think so. They are grieving, actually. Number one, they underestimated the--or you can say they have wrongly interpreted Taliban's sentiments. Taliban, whether they are different from al-Qaeda or they have differences from al-Qaeda on strategy and may be on the ideology, but they are very courteous people.*

And since Americans have assassinated Osama bin Laden, this is no occasion for the Taliban that they would ditch al-Qaeda and they would switch to Americans. It is quite possible that after five, six years, after many years, they would behave differently. But on this particular occasion, on this particular occasion, I don't think that Taliban would behave in a friendly way towards Americans. I don't think so.

JAY: Alright. Thanks very much for joining us, Saleem.

SHAHZAD: *My pleasure.*

JAY: And thank you for joining us on The Real News Network.

SALEEM SHAHZAD KILLED:

Investigative journalist Saleem Shahzad was abducted **on 29th May 2011** from Islamabad while going from home to the TV station in his own car. He was taken away two days after his story on **'infiltration of al Qaeda into the Pakistan Navy'** had been published in all the media sections.

On 31st May 2011, his tortured dead body was found lying in a canal near *Sara e Alamgir*, a place about 120 km away from Islamabad. Nearby, the police found a white Toyota Corolla that had been abandoned by the canal, in the shade of a banyan tree. The police discovered that the car belonged to Shahzad; its doors were locked, and there was no trace of blood. There were voices that the agencies had kidnapped him and beaten to death; which was subsequently never proved.

Saleem Shahzad, the missing journalist, was abducted by un-known people from the busy F-6/2 area of Islamabad around 5:45 pm. At the time, he was on his way to the studios of Pakistan's Dunya News channel to discuss the contents of his latest report about the naval-base attack. On his way, Shahzad had responded to a call from a producer at Dunya News and said he was on his way; but Shahzad's phone went dead twelve minutes later.

Saleem Shahzad was killed and some people declared it as Al-Qaeda or Taliban's job but they did not make demands of ransom in return for his release, nor did they claim credit for his assassination. In fact, no terror group or NGO or agency had claimed responsibility for Shahzad's murder.

Daily **'the Telegraph'** of **31st May 2011** had added that:

'He [Saleem Shahzad] had been contacted by the agencies and the media groups last year after writing that Pakistan had released Mullah Baradar, who was second-in-command of the Afghan Taliban until he was detained in Karachi.'

The background of the above mention event remains that **on 17th October 2010**, Saleem Shahzad was summoned to the ISI HQ to discuss the contents of an article published the day before with two officials from the agency's media wing. That report, published in ***Asia Times Online***, alleged that Pakistan had quietly released Afghan Taliban commander Mullah Baradar, Mullah Omar's deputy, to take part in talks through the Pakistan army. One of the officials of 'that intelligence agency' told Shahzad they had recently arrested a terrorist and recovered a lot of data, diaries and other material during the interrogation. The terrorist had a list with him but if they found his [S Shahzad's] name in the list, they would certainly let him know.

Incidentally, the two ISI officials present at the meeting, Rear Admiral Adnan Nawaz and Commodore Khalid Pervaiz, were both from the navy. Commodore Pervaiz was then appointed as the new commander of the Karachi naval base that was attacked.

The meeting was held in an extremely polite and friendly atmosphere and no words were minced. During the conversation, however, Shahzad told the officers that he got the information [regarding attack on the Naval Base Karachi] from an intelligence official and later confirmed the story from **'the most credible Taliban source'**.

Referring to **'the News' dated 4th June 2011**; Babar Sattar, an advocate by profession but a free lancing essay contributor to the print media, was also called by the agencies to know the background of an article **'reforming khakis'** penned doen by him. In his article he had written on multiple aspects of the army commands including:

'.....mainly about an undaunted sense of righteousness felt by the military with the belief that its vision and definition of national security and national interest is the perennial manifestation of wisdom and truth.

And that the Civilians have no authority to talk about national security, if doing so, would be termed as interference.'

During his meeting with officials of the ISI's Information Management Wing Babar Sattar was told that *"it is part of the Wing's mandate to remain in touch with the journalist community...the main objective behind all such interactions is provision of accurate information on matters of national security."*

The citizens at large had been questioning **'Pakistan's National Security Policy'** because they worry about the direction in which it was pushing this country. Mr Sattar believed that:

'It is not allegiance to an enemy but the love for their homeland and concern for their future, and that of their kids that motivates them to demand course correction.'

Coming back to Saleem Shahzad account, **'The New Yorker'** dated **19th September 2011** remarked later:

'A hallmark of Shahzad's reporting was that it frequently featured interviews with Islamist militants, including Al Qaeda fighters. His work was sometimes inaccurate...

Perhaps because he had cultivated so many militants as sources, he occasionally seemed to glorify the men who were carrying out suicide bombings and assassinations.

*In 2009, he published a breathless account of a **meeting with Ilyas Kashmiri**, a top Al Qaeda leader. Shahzad noted that the terrorist*

At times, he seemed to spare the intelligence services from the most damning details; but on several important occasions—as in the case of the Mehran attack—he wrote what appeared to be undiluted truth about the Pakistani state's deepest dilemmas.'

It has been on the record since a decade that most of the terrorist activities on Pak-Afghan borders, in the far off places of Balochistan and inside Karachi city were found linked with the India-sponsored NGOs. All the recoveries of illegal weapons, arsenals, automated guns, 9mm revolvers and the bombing gadgets were invariably marked made either in USA or in India – why so. Yet the civil governments in succession, especially the PML(N), were always seen keen to establish business ties with India.

Once the PML(N) was bent upon allocating the title of **'Most Favoured Nation'** [MFN] to India, it was the army establishment which came in between with the statistics of atrocities in hand, which Pakistan suffered through its 'beloved neighbour'. The civil government had no answer.

Recall the famous academic perception also that **'the next war with India is ahead due to Kashmir or over the Water Resources.'**

JUDICIAL COMMISSION ON SS MURDER:

On 13th January 2012, the Judicial Commission comprised of Justice Mian Saqib Nisar, Justice Agha Rafiq Ahmed Khan, Javed Iqbal [IG Police Punjab], Binyamin Khan [IG Police Islamabad], and Pervaiz Shaukat [PFUJ's President] finalized its report in seven months after interviews of 41 individuals in 31 formal meetings.

[The media & journalists believed that the Commission's Chairman Justice Saqib Nisar lacked credibility. The government appointed him and the CJP endorsed him. He was once alleged for writing one of the most controversial judgments in Pakistan's legal history; Mukhtaran Mai Case. CJ Iftikhar Chaudhry himself claimed that the issue could be resolved in four days.]

'Business as usual' was the main decree what the Judicial Commission, formed to investigate slain journalist Saleem Shahzad's murder case, concluded at the end. *Saleem Shahzad was allegedly receiving death threats from various terrorist groups for his investigation spree but mostly for stepping out his domain and, above all, on the charges of passing on one groups' secret information to the other rival faction.*

The 140-page report had recommended the PM Gilani to make the report public while making its due observations. The Judicial Commission wrote a very interesting and sarcastic conclusive sentence in its final report that:

'It seems that Saleem Shahzad committed self-torture and suicide and later his dead body drove a car to the canal and dumped itself there.

The commission found no involvement of any security agency, including the ISI, in the killing of the journalist. Moreover, none of the journalists interviewed gave any evidence or shared information about the involvement of agencies. No one even blamed any intelligence agency of involvement.'

The Commission further directed the Islamabad and Punjab police departments to continue their respective investigation process to identify the perpetrators of the crime. Numerous media reports of next day commented that the Judicial Commission had made a mockery of justice. *'The commission, despite its clear mandate, failed miserably and disappointed all'*, the media mainly held.

The matter had touched the boundaries of sentiments in fact. The people at large and especially the media wanted to hear the JC's version as per their perceptions. They wanted to hear the outcome as the country's intelligence agencies had murdered Saleem Shahzad. The fact remained that no judge would ever give judgment on the basis of media reports or the hearsay among the general public. Here too, the JC members needed convincing evidence of some body's involvement, individual or intelligence agency or terrorist group.

The media reporters and journalists came out on roads all over Pakistan protesting against the JC's report. The Commission blamed the victim for violating responsible and ethical conduct of journalism. The press reporters furiously wrote that:

'JC's report is a white-wash; it has given license to some one to continue its kill and dump policy against the dissenting voices with impunity across the country. The abduction and killing of daring journalists would continue and their families should expect no justice. What sort of a country are we living in?'

According to the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), during the last year, five out of 16 journalists killed in Pakistan were allegedly abducted and murdered by political parties sponsored killing groups or the secret agencies.

No wonder our country is considered the most dangerous place for journalists in the world. The Judicial Commission on Saleem Shahzad murder case has only left journalists feeling even more insecure.'

The other side of the picture was worth consideration too.

Saleem Shahzad was the Pakistan bureau chief of Asia Times Online and the author of the upcoming book **'Inside al-Qaeda and the Taliban: Beyond Bin Laden and 9/11'**. If one dissects the minute details of the interviews between the two media-men, Saleem & Paul Jay, it would suggest the intelligentsia that any one else like a member of Taliban or Al Qaeda or secret CIA or Afghan Intelligence working in Pakistan clandestinely could have picked Saleem and killed him.

By the details of two interviews, one can ponder that Saleem Shahzad had spoken less about Pak-Army (though seldom appeared negative) and more he spoke about Taliban & al Qaeda's behavioural traits; *the ISI might be standing at a remote place to be blamed*. The JC had also pointed towards the same 'belligerents' involved in the war on terror for his murder.

Referring to daily the **'Dawn' dated 13th January 2012**, the JC didn't single out any person or organization, which could have killed him, leaving the room open for further probe. In its set of recommendations, the most important was to rein in the ISI or other alike agencies and the IB to make them accountable.

According to the executive summary of the JC, Saleem's writings probably did, and certainly could have drawn the ire of various belligerents in the war on terror which included the Pakistani state and non-state actors such as the Taliban and Al Qaeda and US or Afghan or Indian secret players; as clearly, he was also in close contact with all of them.

Some of the witnesses examined had also pointed towards his links with Ilyas Kashmiri, who was subsequently killed in a drone attack on 3rd / 4th June 2011. The commission said it had been unable to identify the culprits despite having looked very substantial material, direct and circumstantial, because **"Yet such evidence has not surfaced,"** to single out the culprits above doubts.

The Commission urged that the agencies like ISI and IB be made more law-abiding through legislation, carefully outlining their respective mandates and role; that their interaction with the media be carefully streamlined institutionally and regularly documented. They should be made more accountable through a suitably tailored judicial forum to redress grievances against them.

Polly Truscott, South Asia Director at Amnesty International said later:

"Shahzad's killing last year highlighted the perils faced by journalists in Pakistan. This country remains one of the most dangerous countries for media workers with at least three journalists killed in the past five months. Last year, at least six lost their lives.

*The commission's failure to get to the bottom of the Shahzad killing illustrates the apathy of the Parliament in the field of proper law making as per needs of the day - **Pakistan's criminal justice system is alarmingly useless.***

No government official or public office holder should be above the law and they should be subjected to proper scrutiny whether the allegation of corruption by civil

authorities or abductions by the intelligence services or funding of NGOs and religious schools through foreign sources."

INSECURE MEDIA IN PAKISTAN:

The disappearance of Saleem Shahzad was a reminder of the multiple hazards faced by journalists working in Pakistan. **On 13th January 2011**, Wali Khan Babar, a respected reporter for Geo News, was gunned down in Karachi [Later found out in 2015 that it was target killing by MQM's dissident]. In June 2011 reporter Abdullah Bhattani cheated death after being shot three times in Rawalpindi, while a radio station in the northwest town of Charsadda was bombed. Bhattani recovered subsequently.

With 10 slain journalists in 2010 year, the Newsier in Washington, D.C. called Pakistan "the deadliest country in the world for journalists."

'**Reporters Without Borders**' ranked Pakistan at 151 out of 178 countries when it was counted at press freedom in 2010-11. Five more journalists & media men were killed since Saleem was murdered, including one Razzaq Gul, a reporter with the Express News in southern Balochistan.

On 3rd February 2012, the last supplementary statement of Saleem Shahzad's case FIR no; 192 dated 30th May 2011, was written by DSP Saddar Circle, Mandi Bahuddin, Hafiz Aatur Rehman. The case was declared closed due to 'lack of evidence'. The irony of fate was that till Saleem's 2nd anniversary in May 2013, their family was still waiting for the succession certificate.

On 1st anniversary of Saleem Shahzad's murder, the **daily 'Independent' of UK dated 30th May 2012**, wrote:

'A year has somehow charged past since the abduction and murder of Pakistani journalist Saleem Shahzad, a full 12 months in which no suspect could be identified, no-one charged with his killing and nobody brought to justice. As per post-mortem report he had been tortured and that his corpse had sustained at least 17 injuries.

What was it that Saleem was on his way to talk about? Two days before he went missing, he had published an article about the 22nd May 2011 attack on the Mehran naval base in Karachi, claiming al-Qaeda had carried out the assault after the break down of talks between the military and militants over the release of naval officials earlier arrested on suspicion of having al-Qaeda links.'

Saleem Shahzad could not get justice, albeit, his wife, Anita, got 3m Pakistani rupees (£20,000 then) by means of his compensation. Shahzad's colleagues suggested that Saleem had brought events upon himself – reflected the fact that their country was one of the very deadliest for the media to work in. The Judicial Commission could not go beyond suggesting that:

"The Pakistani state, the non-state actors such as the Taliban and al Qaeda, and foreign actors could all have had a motive to silence him, it concluded."

On 2nd anniversary of Shahzad's killing, the '**Express Tribune**' of **30th May 2013**, wrote:

'Police have closed investigation into the murder of journalist Saleem Shahzad, taking a stance that no clue has been found'.

The tail piece now:

'There is one mother who spoils her kids rotten. And there is another who disciplines them, grooms them, and nurtures their character by teaching them to distinguish right from wrong. Both these mothers are acting out of love; but only the second is being constructive.' [Babar Sattar]