

A person wearing a black balaclava and a camouflage jacket is shown in profile, holding an assault rifle. The person's face is obscured by the balaclava, and the rifle is held vertically. The background is plain white.

**Prabir Ghosh**

**Sumitra Padmanabhan**

**TERRORISM :  
A RATIONAL  
POINT OF VIEW**

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## TERRORISM: A RATIONAL POINT OF VIEW

### About the writers

**Prabir Ghosh**, the 62 years head of the Science and Rationalists' Association of India, is a renowned author, columnist, film maker and political scientist. He is the internationally famed debunker of godmen, astrologers and other merchants of “destiny and spiritualism”.

In his crusade against social evils he has survived at least 20 attempts on his life since the mid-1980s. He is also the undisputed founder of the modern concept of Contemporary Rationalism and the pioneer of the rationalist movement in India. Establishing the legal right to mention “Humanism” as religion is just one out of his numerous outstanding feats

He on behalf of the Science and Rationalists' Association of India offers US\$ 45,000 to anyone who claims to possess supernatural power of any kind and proves the same without resorting to any trick.

Since his first collection of essays ‘*Aloukik Noi Loukik [Vol - I]*’ (literally translated means “Everything is Natural-not supernatural) was published, Prabir Ghosh’s name was established firmly as an essayist with a difference, with a mission. His books feature in the list of best-sellers for the past 17 years.

“Guru Busters”, the documentary made on him by Channel 4, BBC Television, 13 years back remains a sensation even now. He was also covered by The Times, London, and New York Times in their cover story.

The uncompromising attitude and the stunning self-confidence which comes from deep conviction within, has given him a He-man image. But to those who know him closely, he is friendly, easily approachable, a loving and caring human being.

**Sumitra Padmanabhan**, the General Secretary of Humanists' Association is truly a face of humanity. A former Lecturer of English at the City College, Kolkata, she remains one of the best columnists of contemporary events and a champion of women’s causes.

As a President of the Science and Rationalists' Association of India, she has been closely associated with the Rationalist movement for the past 15 years.

She is also the Editor of [www.thefreethinker.tk](http://www.thefreethinker.tk) and [www.juktibadi.tk](http://www.juktibadi.tk).

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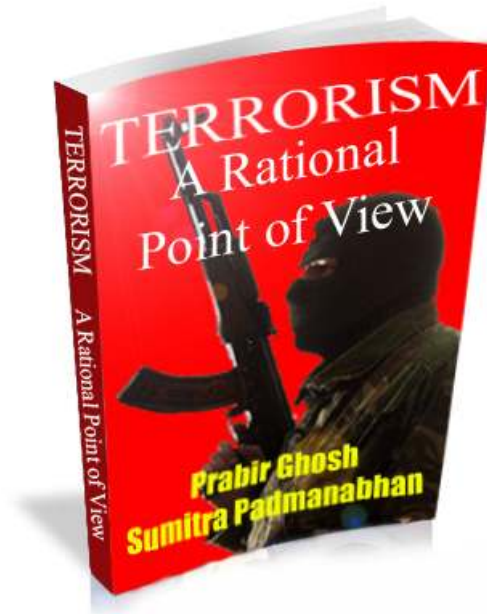
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## **TERRORISM: A RATIONAL POINT OF VIEW**

### **Whom do we call a 'Terrorist'?**

Before we brand a person, a group or a party as 'terrorist' we must think and come to a clear conclusion as to the definition of 'terrorism'.

What does the UN say? What is terrorism as per the Wikipedia? What is 'terrorism' according to USA or the European Union? What do all other countries say? What do the Human Rights Organizations mean by 'terrorism'? What is the difference between a terrorist and a freedom fighter? Whether creating economic disruption in a country can also be termed 'terrorism'?

Only after going through all these questions can we have a perfect, open-minded analysis and come to an unbiased conclusion.

Before going to analyze some of the more recent and relevant incidents, let us remember the **worst act of terrorism in the history of mankind**, namely the demolition of the WTO or the World Trade Center of USA on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001. It is known that there were enough evidences to pinpoint the hands of Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and some other Islamic countries behind this dirty act under the leadership of Osama bin Laden.

The old enmity between the Christian and the Islamic worlds erupted afresh as the Christian countries gradually developed into superpowers, leaving the Islamic nations lagging behind in all respects. This resulted in the ire and envy of the Islamic terrorist groups. The breakdown of the American Government's pride and self-righteousness on September 2001 came as a sudden shock to the entire world. It was as if the biggest muscleman of the locality got a tight slap from a petty goon in the middle of the marketplace!



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To get back its lost glory, the Government of US plunged into direct warfare with the Afghan and Iraqi governments.

It may be noted that ironically enough, 11<sup>th</sup> September 1993 was the day when Humanists' Association was born in India. [To preach secularism in a country known for its Hindu-Muslim division]. 'Humanism' was cruelly murdered 8 years later on the same date, killing thousands of innocent people in the busy towers buzzing with life and high-level activity.

### **Definition of Terrorism**

- ❖ As per Wikipedia, the largest storehouse of information, Terrorism in the modern sense (1) is violence or other harmful acts committed (or threatened) against civilians for political or other ideological goals. (2) Most definitions of terrorism include only those acts, which are intended to create fear or "terror", are perpetrated for an ideological goal (as opposed to a lone attack), and deliberately target or utterly disregard the safety of non-combatants. Many definitions also include only acts of unlawful violence.

As a form of unconventional warfare, terrorism is sometimes used when attempting to force political change by convincing a government or population to agree to demands to avoid future harm or fear of harm, destabilizing an existing government, motivating a disgruntled population to join an uprising, escalating a conflict in the hopes of disrupting the status quo, expressing a grievance, or drawing attention to a cause.



Terrorism has been used by a broad array of political organizations in furthering their objectives; both right-wing and left-wing political parties, nationalistic, and religious groups, revolutionaries and ruling governments.

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(3) The presence of non-state actors in widespread, armed conflict has created controversy regarding the application of the laws of war.



An International Round Table on Constructing Peace, Deconstructing Terror (2004) hosted by Strategic Foresight Group recommended that a distinction should be made between terrorism and acts of terror. While acts of terror are criminal acts as per the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 and domestic jurisprudence of almost all countries in the world, terrorism refers to a phenomenon including the actual acts, the perpetrators of acts of terror themselves and their motives. There is disagreement on definitions of terrorism. However, there is an intellectual consensus globally, that acts of terror should not be accepted under any circumstances. This is reflected in all important conventions including the United Nations counter terrorism strategy, the decisions of the Madrid Conference on terrorism, the Strategic Foresight Group and ALDE Round Tables at the European Parliament.

- ❖ There are more than 100 definitions of the word 'terrorism'. These definitions are used by: -

UNO,  
The European Union,  
United States and

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'Other Countries'.

- ❖ Most countries refuse to use the term 'terrorism' for a people's movement for freedom from a tyrant ruler. On November 2003 in the UN General Assembly, a proposal was brought by the United States saying that if any country sought help to fight terrorism in their country, UNO would provide the necessary assistance. But surprisingly, a majority of members said that 'terrorism' and 'freedom movement' should not be confused. For example, the activists in Kashmir or Palestine can in no way be termed as terrorists. The proposal brought by the United States was therefore voted out.

- ❖ **The United States of America and Terrorism**

The Defense Department of USA has defined 'Terrorism': - "The term 'terrorism' means premeditated politically motivated violence perpetrated against non combatant targets by sub-national or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience."

Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO) are foreign organizations that are designated by the Secretary of State in accordance with section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), as amended. FTO designations play a critical role in our fight against terrorism and are an effective means of curtailing support for terrorist activities and pressuring groups to get out of the terrorism business.

- ❖ The Defense Department also defines the FTO or Foreign Terrorist Organization. Those foreign organizations engaged in terrorist activities and threatening the security of the American citizens are the FTOs. Every two years the American Ministry of Defense publishes the list of FTO. Any bank account or property in the names of organizations enlisted in the FTO list are liable to be confiscated by the US Government. No US Citizen is allowed to help monetarily or otherwise any of these FTOs.

- ❖ **The Current List of Designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations**

1. Abu Nidal Organization (ANO)

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2. Abu Sayyaf Group
3. Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade
4. Ansar al-Islam
5. Armed Islamic Group (GIA)
6. Asbat al-Ansar
7. Aum Shinrikyo
8. Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA)
9. Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army (CPP/NPA)
10. Continuity Irish Republican Army
11. Gama'a al-Islamiyya (Islamic Group)
12. HAMAS (Islamic Resistance Movement)
13. Harakat ul-Mujahidin (HUM)
14. Hizballah (Party of God)
15. Islamic Jihad Group
16. Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)
17. Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM) (Army of Mohammed)
18. Jemaah Islamiya Organization (JI)
19. Al-Jihad (Egyptian Islamic Jihad)
20. Kahane Chai (Kach)
21. Kongra-Gel (KGGK, formerly Kurdistan Workers' Party, PKK, KADEK)
22. Lashkar-e Tayyiba (LT) (Army of the Righteous)
23. Lashkar i Jhangvi
24. Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)
25. Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG)
26. Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM)
27. Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization (MEK)
28. National Liberation Army (ELN)
29. Palestine Liberation Front (PLF)
30. Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)
31. Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)

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32. PFLP-General Command (PFLP-GC)
33. al-Qa'ida
34. Real IRA
35. Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)
36. Revolutionary Nuclei (formerly ELA)
37. Revolutionary Organization 17 November
38. Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C)
39. Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC)
40. Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso, SL)
41. Tanzim Qa-idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (QJBR) (al-Qaida in Iraq) (formerly Jama'at al-Tawhid wa'al-Jihad, JTG al-Zarqawi Network)
42. United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC)

❖ Section 212(a)(3)(B) of the INA defines "terrorist activity" to mean: "any activity which is unlawful under the laws of the place where it is committed (or which, if committed in the United States, would be unlawful under the laws of the United States or any State) and which involves any of the following:

- (i) The hijacking or sabotage of any conveyance (including an aircraft, vessel, or vehicle).
- (ii) The seizing or detaining, and threatening to kill, injure, or continue to detain, another individual in order to compel a third person (including a governmental organization) to do or abstain from doing any act as an explicit or implicit condition for the release of the individual seized or detained.
- (iii) A violent attack upon an internationally protected person (as defined in section 1116(b)(4) of title 18, United States Code) or upon the liberty of such a person.
- (iv) An assassination
- (v) The use of any –

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- (a) Biological agent, chemical agent, or nuclear weapon or device,  
or
  - (b) Explosive, firearm, or other weapon or dangerous device  
(other than for mere personal monetary gain), with intent to  
endanger, directly or indirectly, the safety of one or more  
individuals or to cause substantial damage to property.
- (vi) A threat, attempt, or conspiracy to do any of the foregoing.

### **In the 'terrorist' State India we find the arbitrary law of A.F.S.P.A.**

In the northeastern region of India there are seven states known as the 'seven sisters', namely, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. The notorious A.F.S.P.A. or the Armed Forces Special Powers Act prevails in all these states. Even the UN Human Rights Commission expresses its wonder and concern that such acts can still be used by any government.

The atrocities carried on by the Army in these regions are unparalleled; even US soldiers did not enact such cruelties on the people of Iraq or even the Iraqi soldiers.

In support of the brave Manipuris and condemning the excesses of the Armed Forces in Manipur, the Humanists' Association carried out continuous protests by organizing rallies, seminars, video shows, spreading leaflets, getting mass signatures etc. One such leaflet reads:-

**What is A.F.S.P.A.?**

**Please know ... and think...**

The Indian Government is carrying out an un-announced war against its own countrymen in Manipur for the last three decades. These 'special powers' of the Armed Forces were the handiwork of the British rulers who introduced it in order to handle the 'Quit India' movement in 1942. Why do we need it now in a free country? The various sections of this rule say –

**Section 4A** – Any army 'jawan' or a common soldier has the power to shoot and kill anyone **only on suspicion**.

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**Section 4B** – Soldiers have the power to **destroy people’s property**.

**Section 4D** – The Army has the power to enter any house, at any time **without a warrant** in order to search.

**Section 6** – Whatever is his crime, **a soldier cannot be convicted or punished** in any way.

Now mind the words ‘on suspicion’ and ‘without warrant’! This means unbridled power. It is the power to carry out anything between torture, killing and rape, burning or destruction of homes in the Region on a large scale for years. Just by ‘suspecting’ someone to be a terrorist, the army can kill or maim people. Thus, A.F.S.P.A. is a license to rape, loot, torture and kill at random.

The Human Rights Sub-Committee of UNO in 1991 and again in 1997 has condemned this A.F.S.P.A. as totally against the International Charter of Human Rights. It also categorically stated that India being a signatory of the 1996 International Charter of Political and Civil Rights and the 1984 Charter against cruelty and torture, has committed an extremely unethical crime by continuing to enforce A.F.S.P.A. since 1958 till date!

**The so-called ‘Democracy’ of India is shamefully incompatible with this ‘license of terrorism’, A.F.S.P.A.**

Let us see what Amnesty International has to say on this issue.

**India: Amnesty International renews its call for an unconditional repeal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958.**

Amnesty International is deeply concerned that the Indian Government may seek to retain provisions of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act 1958 that contravene its international human rights obligations and that continue to pose grave threats to the human rights of its people.

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On 2 December, the Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, announced that the Home Ministry was working on “modifying existing provisions or inserting new provisions” in the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 (A.F.S.P.A.), so as to give “due regard to the protection of basic human and civil rights”.

A decision to amend, rather than to repeal the AFSPA would fly in the face of the most significant recommendation by the five-member Committee led by former chairperson of the Law Commission, Justice B.P. Jeevan Reddy, contained in its report submitted to the Government of India in June 2005.

Amnesty International has repeatedly expressed its concern that the AFSPA contains provisions which contravene, either directly or by granting perpetrators impunity, key human rights including the right to life, the right to be free from torture and other ill-treatment, the right to be free from arbitrary deprivation of liberty and the right to remedy and reparation. These rights are enshrined in international law and standards, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which India is a state party. The AFSPA, which is operative in “disturbed areas”, including large parts of the Northeast region of India and Jammu and Kashmir, gives security forces wide ranging powers, including the power to use lethal force in contravention of international standards.

In light of the main provisions of the AFSPA being in violation of international human rights law, Amnesty International fully supports the recommendation to repeal the Act and urges the Government of India to implement this part of the Committee’s recommendations.

### **Public Statement**

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