India

Introduction

This page provides a country-specific quantitative overview of the foreign terrorist fighter (FTF) phenomenon. This includes, where available, a breakdown of how many individuals departed from or have returned to the country as well as certain demographics within those groups. The data is laid out below in infographics, you can hover over a data point to see its exact figures. Where not enough data is available the table is greyed out. If you can assist in completing this data, please click fill out the questionnaire on our [contact page](#).

Below this information, the page also sets out in detail a qualitative review of the policy measures utilized by or available to the country in response to the FTF phenomenon and provides a list of additional reading material relevant to the FTF situation in the country.

Last updated: 14 April 2025.

India		
Totals	Total (Departed)	127[1]
	Total (Non-Returned)	c.a. 40[2]
	Total (Returned)	5-11[3]
Nationality (At Departure)	Indian National	127[4]
	Dual Citizen	0[5]
	Resident	-
Gender	Males (Departed)	-
	Females (Departed)	-
	Males (Returned)	-

[1] Nanjappa, V., '66 Indian Muslims fighting for ISIS abroad: The top contributors are Tamil Nadu, Kerala', OneIndia, 17 December 2021, https://www.oneindia.com/india/66-indian-muslims-fighting-for-isis-abroad-the-top-contributors-are-tamil-nadu-kerala-3348840.html.

[2] 'Middle East: Nearly 40 Indians who joined ISIS are forced to stay in jails, no place to return home [translated]', TV9 Bharatvarsh, 17 February 2022, https://www.tv9hindi.com/world/middle-east-news/at-least-40-indians-who-joined-isis-islamic-state-now-in-middle-east-prison-camps-find-there-no-way-home-turkey-and-libya-1066194.html.

[3] J. Cook and G. Vale, From Daesh to 'Diaspora' II: The Challenges Posed by Women and Minors After the Fall of the Caliphate, International Centre for the Study of Radicalization, Vol.12, issue 6, July 2019, p. 37, https://ctc.westpoint.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/CTC-SENTINEL-062019.pdf.

[4] See fn. 1.

[5] Anand, G., 'India's 'Foreign Terrorist Fighters' and their families: Will Centre agree to seek their extradition?' The Leaflet, https://theleaflet.in/indias-foreign-terrorist-fighters-and-their-families-will-centre-agree-to-seek-their-extradition/; The Citizenship Act of 1955 does not allow Indians to possess dual citizenship.

	Females (Returned)	1[6]
Parent Status	Female Parent (Non-Returned)	-
	Male Parent (Non-Returned)	-
	Female Parent (Returned)	-
	Male Parent (Returned)	-
Current Location (Non-Returned)	Died	-
	In Camps	40[7]
	In Prison	-
	Operational (in region)	-
	Operational (other regions)	-
	Prosecuted (awaiting trial or convicted and in prison)	-
	Other (Unknown location)	-
Current Legal Status (Non-Returned)	Prosecuted	-
	Held Without Charges	-
	Citizenship Revoked	-
	Trials in Absentia	-
Current Legal Status (Returned)	Citizenship Revoked	-
	Extradited to Third Country	-
	Prosecuted	-
	Post-release	-
	In Rehabilitation/Reintegration Program	-
	Not prosecuted	-
Method of Return	Own Initiative	
	Expelled	-
	Repatriated	-
Returnee Attacks	n/a	-

[6] Fn. 3.

[7] Middle East: Nearly 40 Indians who joined ISIS are forced to stay in jails, no place to return home [translated]', TV9 Bharatvarsh, 17 February 2022, https://www.tv9hindi.com/world/middle-east-news/at-least-40-indians-who-joined-isis-islamic-state-now-in-middle-east-prison-camps-find-there-no-way-home-turkey-and-libya-1066194.html.

Preventive measures

India does not have a central counterterrorism and prevention strategy. Law and order fall under the jurisdiction of the individual states, so do counterterrorism and prevention measures. As of 2020, five Indian states have drafted a strategy concerning prevention of terrorism and violent extremism.

Assam, located in northeast India, recently became the sixth state to formulate a strategy for Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). These efforts are tailored to suit local circumstances, with CVE programs specifically targeting demographics most susceptible to terrorist recruitment.

Educational Programs and Initiatives:

In the Jammu and Kashmir region, the Indian Army undertakes various initiatives aimed at averting radicalization. These include operating schools, organizing training courses, conducting recruitment drives, hosting medical camps, and providing emergency services. Additionally, the Indian Army has collaborated with a financial services company to introduce skill development programs.

Administrative measures

The Central Government may **deprive a citizen of Indian citizenship** through an order. The grounds for deprivation include if; the citizen has shown themselves, by act or speech, to be disloyal or disaffected towards the Government established by law in India, or if the citizen has, within five years after registration or naturalization, been sentenced in any country to imprisonment for a term of not less than twelve months. The Central Government may not deprive an individual of citizenship unless it is satisfied that it is not conducive to the public good that the person should continue to be a citizen of India. The Government must give notice to the individual including their right to have the case referred to a committee of inquiry. This regulation is contained in Paragraph 10 of the Citizenship Act, 1955.

The Central Government may **add or remove an organization the Schedule of listed terrorist organizations**. It may exercise this power if it believes that the organization is involved in terrorism, namely through; committing or participating in acts of terrorism, preparing for terrorism, promoting or encouraging terrorism, or otherwise being involved in terrorism. The organization, or any person affected by the inclusion of the organization on the Schedule, may apply to the Central Government to be removed from the Schedule. If the application is rejected, the application may apply

for a review by the Review Committee within one month from the date of receipt of the order by the applicant. These regulations are found under Chapter III, Paragraph 18 of The Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2002.

Criminal and surveillance measures

In India, **incitement** is criminalized under Section 18 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967, which outlines punishment for whoever 'advocates, abets, advises or incites' the commission of a terrorist act or preparation for such. This Act was amended in 2004 to deal specifically with terrorist related offenses, and all other terrorism laws were repealed.

Recruitment is criminalized under Section 18B of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967, which was inserted by the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act 2008. It criminalizes those who 'recruit or cause to be recruited' anyone for the commission of a terrorist act.

Membership is punishable under Section 20 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967. This Act was amended in 2004 to deal specifically with terrorist related offenses, and all other terrorism laws were repealed. In addition, Section 38 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967 punishes those who associate or profess to associate with a terrorist organization with the intent to further its activities. Section 39 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967 criminalizes support of, or invitation to support, a terrorist organization with the intention to further its activity. This includes organizing or managing meetings to further the goals of the terrorist organization, or addressing a meeting to encourage support of a terrorist organization.

Section 18A of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967, which was inserted in 2008, criminalizes the **organization of camps for training** to commit terrorist acts.

Finally, Section 18 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967 criminalizes the **act of conspiracy**, meaning those who conspire or attempt to commit, or advocate, abet, advise or incite, direct or knowingly facilitate the commission of a terrorist act or any act preparatory to the commission of a terrorist act. In addition, Section 35 clarifies that an organization is deemed to be involved in terrorism if it takes part in preparation, therefore criminalizes **preparation** for terrorism by an organization.

Surveillance:
India and the United States work together to implement aviation security measures, including those aligned with the principles outlined in United Nations Security Council Resolution 2309(2016), particularly regarding data collection. Enhanced screening

procedures at entry ports and the promotion of information exchange are key focuses. Indian border and customs agencies are using Passenger Name Records and Advanced Passenger Information in controlling international travel. In terms of international intelligence sharing, India among others signed a bilateral agreement with the United States in 2016 to facilitate exchange of intelligence information regarding terrorist suspects. However, in 2019, US authorities indicated that the agreement was not fully operational at the time as Indian authorities were still working on the implementation. In 2020, exchange of information as conducted more frequently.

After the Mumbai attacks, India has extended its surveillance architecture by amending the Information technology Act of 2000 in 2008 and in 2022. The law allows authorities to intercept, monitor, or decrypt any information online through any computer resource when it is "necessary or expedient" to do so in the interest of national security, public order.

Rehabilitation and reintegration measures

In India, the Counter Terrorism and Counter Radicalization Division (CT-CRD) within the Ministry of Home Affairs was established in 2014 in response to the rise of ISIL/Da'esh as a global threat and was tasked with developing deradicalization programs. As a result of increased counterterrorism debates and cooperation with other countries and regional powers, such as the European Union or the United Arab Emirates, various models were considered and tested for a deradicalization program, more specifically the Saudi Arabian and UK models. However, little is known about the structures, methodologies, datasets, community approaches, and localized variations and applications of these programs from different states' perspective.

In **Maharashtra**, the deradicalization program is run by the state's Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS), which is part of the Mumbai Police's ranks. The program was launched in 2016 under orders from the Ministry of Home Affairs. The agenda includes opening *vyayam shalas* (exercise centers) in minority areas (i.e. with a Muslim population); making National Cadet Corps (NCC), Bharat Scouts and Guides compulsory in minority schools; and setting up an independent media outlet 'to deliver mainstream thoughts and values' within the youths of the minority population. These were aided by socioeconomic packages with a declared aim of bringing the 'youth of the minority community back into the mainstream', by making outreach efforts using education, sports, urban planning, law and order, skill development, women and child issues, social justice and healthcare. Teaching values of democracy and the demerits of dictatorship were also added.

Under the ATS, the Maharashtra program keeps the police forces at the forefront and the mandate for the police force implementing the program also includes simultaneously addressing 'any feeling of communalism within the force', despite the fact that the program is aimed at ground-up community outreach and

'deradicalization' of a community that may already feel targeted. Confidence-building is one of the program's basic principles. Another important facet of the program is maintaining databases that go beyond generic police databases.

The four stilts developed by the ATS revolving around a 'candidate,' as part of the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), include family, psychologists, clergy, and the police. The cases are led by 'friend officers', sensitized versions of general case officers. The period of outreach with a 'candidate' is five years, with the minimum benchmark being four weeks. The final tier of the program deals with financial stability, with offers of skill development courses, small loans, and help in setting up a basic business. One important area where the Maharashtra program has been successful is ensuring that parents do not hesitate to contact helplines and law enforcement agencies if they find their child sharing or consuming extremist propaganda. Since the local police officials and beat officers are often hired from within the local community or region, locals consider them as one of their own. This helps create an early warning system. However, the process gets complicated when central agencies get involved, with turf-battles creating a panic-driven environment. This can instill fear in communities that are otherwise receptive to police intervention, since escalation can quickly turn a deradicalization case into a counterterrorism one. The state of **Kerala** launched a deradicalization program in 2016. The state has seen a number of pro-ISIL/Da'esh cases, specifically in its northern districts, with several cases in regions such as Kannur, Malapuram and Kasaragod, including a few ISIL/Da'esh sympathizers who successfully managed to travel to West Asia and Afghanistan in their quest to join the terror group. 'Operation Pigeon', orchestrated by the Kerala state police, claims to have saved the lives of 350 youth via social media monitoring, by approaching them before they were radicalized. The contours of radicalization in Kerala are different, with the direct connections through the two million migrants working in the Gulf region of the local population paying a critical role in shaping both the radicalization specific to this region and the kind of tools required to 'deradicalize' someone.

Outside of deradicalization programs, both Kerala and Maharashtra have different approaches to localized cases and returnees (of which there are only a few cases in both states). The returning cases, due to their nature, have a greater involvement of central agencies. For both Maharashtra and Kerala, the successful cases of deradicalization also serve as counternarratives. While the approach to at least some of these narratives that have made it to the media is rather simplistic, they do seem to be effective. In some articles, attempts are made to create binaries and stories are embedded within stories to create these counternarratives. However, there is a tangible difference between Maharashtra and Kerala in terms of how the counternarratives are set out. While Maharashtrians tend to concentrate more on family and community, Keralites have a stronger focus on the theological perspective, with clerics taking a much more central role in the counternarrative.

Additional Resources

Bandreddi, A., Fighting for Kashmir: Examining the Influence of Foreign Fighters in the Kashmir Insurgency, Proceedings of The National Conference On Undergraduate Research (NCUR) 2020, p. 697-709., available at: http://libjournals.unca.edu/ncur/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/3188-Bandreddi-Akhil-FINAL.pdf

Sinan Siyech, M., Understanding the Indian foreign fighter lacuna, Raisina Debates, Observer research Foundation, 31 January 2020, available at: https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/understanding-the-indian-foreign-fighter-lacuna-60921/

Indian Ministry of Home Affairs website

Taneja, K., Deradicalization as Counterterrorism Strategy: The Experience of Indian States, ORF Occasional Paper No. 262, Observer Research Foundation, August 2020, https://www.orfonline.org/research/deradicalisation-as-counterterrorism-strategy-the-experience-of-indian-states/

Kabir Taneja, An examination of India's policy response to foreign fighters, 30 September 2021, https://www.orfonline.org/research/an-examination-of-indias-policy-response-to-foreign-fighters