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## AHMEDABAD SERIAL BOMB BLAST CASE

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### ABSTRACT

***“No religion is responsible for terrorism. People are responsible for violence and terrorism”***

– Barrack Obama

The 2008 Ahmedabad serial bomb bombings were among India's bloodiest terror attacks, which were carried out by the Indian Mujahideen (IM) in a coordinated act of violence. On July 26, 2008, 21 bombs exploded within 70 minutes in crowded public areas, killing 56 people and injuring nearly 200. The Islamic Movement claimed responsibility for the bombings, alleging retaliation for the 2002 Gujarat riots.

A comprehensive inquiry led to the detention of several suspects, and the prosecution relied on forensic evidence, CCTV video, technological communications, and witness testimony to prove guilt. The defense argued a lack of direct evidence, procedural flaws, forced confessions, and unfair inference. On February 8, 2022, 49 suspects were convicted by a special court in Ahmedabad after long-drawn legal procedures. This is one of the historical judgments that had condemned 38 people to death and 11 to life imprisonment, thus recording the highest death sentences awarded to a person in a single case in India.

The case set a judicial precedent in the counterterrorism cases, which stirred debates on issues of justice, due process, death penalty, and national security. It showcased India's powerful stance against terrorism but also inflamed controversies about human rights, fair trial, and the efficacy of the judicial system in addressing the extremist threats.

**Keywords:** Ahmedabad bomb blasts, Indian Mujahideen, terrorism, counterterrorism, forensic evidence, CCTV footage, 2002 Gujarat riots, capital punishment, death sentence, fair trial, national security, justice.

### INTRODUCTION

***“Terrorism anywhere is a threat to peace everywhere”***

– Kofi Annan.

Terrorism is one of the most complex and pressing challenges facing modern societies. It is an act of violence or intimidation carried out to achieve political, religious, or ideological objectives. Unlike conventional warfare, terrorism often targets civilians, spreading fear and instability across nations.

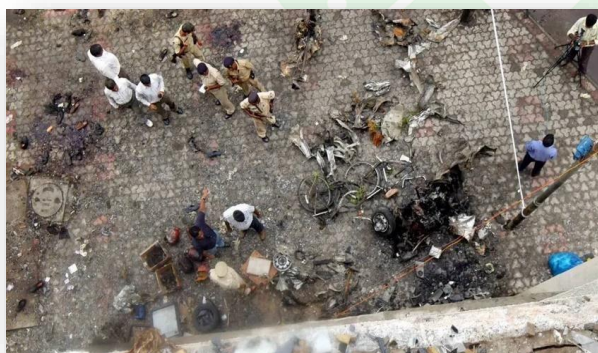
Terrorist activities are not limited to any one region or ideology—they manifest in various forms, from suicide bombings and hijackings to cyber terrorism and biological attacks. The impact of terrorism extends beyond immediate destruction; it disrupts economies, deepens communal divisions, and challenges the sovereignty of states. In response, governments worldwide have strengthened counter-terrorism laws, intelligence networks, and global cooperation efforts to combat this menace.

However, the fight against terrorism is not just about military or legal action—it also involves addressing the root causes, such as economic inequality, political grievances, and ideological radicalization. While global organizations like the United Nations (UN), Interpol, and national security agencies work tirelessly to combat terrorism, the battle remains ongoing, evolving with technology and changing geopolitical landscapes.

Terrorism is not just an attack on people—it is an attack on peace, stability, and humanity itself. The challenge before nations today is to strike a balance between security and civil liberties, ensuring that counterterrorism efforts do not erode democratic values. Only through collective global action and sustained peace-building efforts can the world hope to overcome the scourge of terrorism.

### **FACTS OF THE CASE**

The year 2008 shocked the Indian picture with an extraordinary terrorist attack that belied the country's whole security mindset. On July 26, 2008, twenty-one coordinated bomb blasts swept through Ahmedabad, Gujarat, during a



70-minute period, killing 56 and wounding over 200. The attack was claimed by the Indian Mujahideen

(IM), a proscribed terrorist organization, as retaliation for the 2002 Gujarat riots. Furthermore, the crime resulted in one of the most thorough anti-terrorism investigations in Indian history, leading to the arrest and

imprisonment of a number of individuals. On February 8, 2022, a special court convicted 49 individuals in one of India's greatest terror cases following a lengthy legal struggle. In fact, it became the largest death penalty conviction in the history of Indian judiciary when 38 criminals were sentenced to death and 11 others were sentenced to life imprisonment on February 18, 2022. The verdict underscored India's no-nonsense attitude to terrorism, while also sparking discussion about justice, security, and the court system.

### **BACKGROUND OF THE CASE**

The 2008 Ahmedabad serial bomb blasts were a meticulously planned terrorist attack that occurred on July 26, 2008. The attacks were carried out in a coordinated manner, targeting crowded public places, including hospitals, markets, and public transport, with the intention of causing maximum casualties and terrorizing the public.

- ✗ A total of 21 bombs were planted across different locations in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.
- ✗ The explosions occurred within a span of 70 minutes, beginning at around 6:41 PM.
- ✗ The attack resulted in 56 deaths and over 200 injuries.
- ✗ The Indian Mujahideen (IM), a banned terrorist organization, claimed responsibility for the attack via an email sent to media outlets just before the blasts.
- ✗ The email cited revenge for the 2002 Gujarat riots, alleging that the attacks were retaliation against the state government's handling of communal violence.

### **EXECUTION**

- **Bomb Locations<sup>1992</sup>:** The bombs were placed in crowded areas, including buses, hospitals, market areas, and near public transportation hubs to maximize destruction.

<sup>1992</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2008\\_Ahmedabad\\_bombings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2008_Ahmedabad_bombings)

- Ahmedabad Civil Hospital, trauma centre
- Khadia
- Raipur
- Sarangpur
- L.G.Hospital
- Maninagar
- Hatkeshwar Circle
- Bapunagar
- Thakkarbapa Nagar
- Jawahar Chowk
- Govindwadi
- Isanpur
- Narol
- Sarkhej



○ **Use of Timer Devices:** The bombs were fitted with sophisticated timer devices, allowing them to explode at different intervals, making rescue operations more challenging.

○ **Bicycle Bombs:** Some bombs were planted on bicycles, similar to the 2006 Mumbai train blasts technique.

○ **Secondary Explosions:** Two of the bombs were planted near hospitals to target those rushing to aid the injured, exacerbating the impact.

### **WARNING OF THE ATTACK THROUGH MAIL**

Several news agencies reported receiving a 14-page e-mail five minutes before the explosions with the subject line: "Await 5 minutes for the revenge of Gujarat",<sup>1993</sup> apparently referring to the 2002 Gujarat violence which took place after the Godhra train burning incident. The e-mail was sent by the Islamic extremist group known as Indian Mujahideen on 26 July at around 6:41pm IST.<sup>1994</sup>

The contents of the e-mail warned of attacks in 5 minutes: "In the name of Allah the Indian Mujahideen strike again! Do whatever you can, within 5 minutes from now, feel the terror of Death!"

The e-mail also contained threats against Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Vilasrao Deshmukh, and his deputy, R.R. Patil, with the claim, "We wonder at your memory.

Have you forgotten the evening of 11 July 2006 so quickly and so easily?"

Furthermore, the threats went on to warn Indian businessman Mukesh Ambani of Reliance Industries to "think-twice" before "usurping and building a citadel on a land in Mumbai that belongs to the Waqf board...lest it turns into horrifying memories for you which you will never ever forget". The e-mail also reportedly threatened several Bollywood actors, asking them to stop acting.<sup>1995</sup>

Police reported that they questioned U.S. national Ken Haywood from whose IP address the threatening email was sent. Haywood's residence in the Sanpada area of Navi Mumbai was raided by ATS officials on 27 July after the IP address from which a threatening email was

<sup>1993</sup> Rosenberg, Matthew (27 July 2008). "Islamic group claims India blasts that killed 45". Archived from the original on 3 August 2008. Retrieved 27 July 2008.

<sup>1994</sup> "Islamic group claims India blasts that killed 45". *Boston Herald*. Herald Media. 27 July 2008. Archived from the original on 5 August 2008. Retrieved 27 July 2008.

<sup>1995</sup> "Mukesh Ambani in Indian Mujahideen's e-mail". *The Times of India*. 27 July 2008. Archived from the original on 21 October 2012. Retrieved 27 July 2008.

sent minutes before the Ahmedabad serial blasts was found to be his.<sup>1996</sup>

This case remains one of the most significant terror cases in India, highlighting the challenges of counterterrorism efforts, the role of sleeper cells, and the legal system's response to terrorism.

### **CASUALTIES**

The blast killed 56 people and wounded more than 200.<sup>1997</sup> Initially, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh approved an ex-gratia payment of ₹ 100,000 (US\$2,300) to the deceased's nearest of kin. However, when visiting Ahmedabad, he increased the *ex gratia* value to ₹ 350,000 (US\$8,050). In addition, he declared a compensation of ₹50,000 (US\$1,200) for individuals injured in bombings.<sup>1998</sup>

Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi has proposed a compensation package of Rs 500,000 (US\$11,500) for each bomb attack victim.<sup>1999</sup>

### **CHARGES**

**1. Accused Identification and tracking** → **Mohammad Riyaz @ Riyaz Bhatkal (A-1)** – Commander of Indian

Mujahideen (IM), involved in conspiracy and execution of terrorist attacks, financial dealings, and bomb blasts.

→ **Zia ur Rahman @ Waqas (A-3)** – Pakistani national, who had entered India illegally, involved in bomb-making and execution of Dilsukhnagar blasts.

→ **Mohammed Tahseen Akhtar @ Hassan (A-4)** – IM member, provided logistical support,

arranged shelter, and participated in executing the attacks.

→ Digital footprints, encrypted emails, and internet chats revealed communication among accused.

→ Funding traced through Hawala transactions and Western Union from Pakistan, Dubai, and Sharjah.

### **2. Offense**

Waging war against the Government of India. This was achieved through the following;

→ Conspiracy to carry out terrorist activities.

→ Carried out twin bomb explosions in **Dilsukhnagar, Hyderabad (21.02.2012)** → Bombs were placed on bicycles near **107 Bus Stand** and **A1 Mirchi Centre**.

→ Caused **18 deaths (one of which being a pregnancy loss), many injuries, and damage to property.**

### **3. Means & Modus Operandi**

→ **Explosives:** Pressure cookers, timers, and bombs placed on bicycles.

→ **Communication:** Encrypted emails, coded messages.

→ **Funding:** Hawala transactions, financial support from ISI.

→ **Logistics:** Shelter arrangements, procurement of fake IDs, sourcing explosives.

### **4. Legal Sanctions & Prosecution Approval**

→ Sanction for prosecution given by Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

→ Consent from District Magistrates of Ranga reddy and Hyderabad.

→ Commonly submitted final report under RC No. 1/2013/NIA/HYD & RC No. 2/2013/NIA/HYD

### **5. Charges**

#### **1) Indian Penal Code (IPC)**

○ 302 : Murder

○ 307 : Attempt to murder

<sup>1996</sup> "Ahmedabad blasts: Lie detector, Narco tests on US national Haywood". The Times of India. 13 August 2008. Retrieved 13 August 2008.

<sup>1997</sup> "Death toll in Ahmedabad serial blasts rises to 55". Khabrein.info. 1 August 2008. Archived from the original on 4 October 2008. Retrieved 1 August 2008.

<sup>1998</sup> "Ahmedabad blasts: PM asks people to maintain communal harmony". Express India. The Indian Express Group. 26 July 2008. Archived from the original on 6 August 2008. Retrieved 26 July 2008.

<sup>1999</sup> "It's a war against India: Narendra Modi". The Times of India. 27 July 2008. Archived from the original on 21 October 2012. Retrieved 27 July 2008.

- 324, 326 : Hurt/Grievous hurt
- 316 : Death of unborn child
- 436 : Mischief by explosive substance
- 121, 121A, 122 : Waging war/conspiracy against India
- 201 : Causing disappearance of evidence
- 120B : Criminal conspiracy

## 2) Explosive Substances Act, 1908

➤ Sections 3 & 5: Causing explosions, possession of explosives

## 3) Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA)

○ Sections 10, 17, 18, 20, 38(2), 39(2) r/w 18 : Membership, funding, planning, and executing terrorist activities

○ Section 19 : Harboursing terrorists

## 4) Foreigners Act, 1946

➤ Section 14 : Entering Indian territory without any permission (exclusively related to A-3)

## INVESTIGATION



Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami claims responsibility of the blasts. The email said, "the innocent Muslims arrested in the (Mumbai), bomb blast case are being tried for years and years."<sup>2000</sup> Union Home Secretary Madhukar Gupta said that Centre dispatched one team of bomb experts and decided to convene a meeting of

<sup>2000</sup> "BJP-ruled states incur wrath of terrorists". *The Times of India*. 27 July 2008. Archived from the original on 21 October 2012. Retrieved 27 July 2008.

top officials of state governments to discuss the situation arising out of the recent explosions.<sup>2001</sup> According to the Times of India, the

intelligence community believes that both blasts of Bangalore and Ahmedabad were carried out by a network of Wahabi fundamentalists masquerading as Indian Mujahideen.<sup>2002</sup>

## LEADS



Multiple TV channels reported that an e-mail had been received from a terror outfit called Indian Mujahideen that claimed responsibility for the attacks. The e-mail is traced back to a locality in Navi Mumbai.<sup>2003</sup> <sup>2004</sup>This outfit previously claimed responsibility for the Jaipur bombings on 13 May 2008.<sup>2005</sup> The police investigation has revolved around the claims asserted in two phone calls.

A doctor, who was visiting one of the hospitals where one of the blasts occurred, has said that he heard a person talking on his cellphone say, "Bangalore was a failure, however Ahmedabad

<sup>2001</sup> "Centre dispatches bomb expert team to Ahmedabad". *Hindustan Times*. HT Media Ltd. 26 July 2008.

Archived from the original on 13 March 2014. Retrieved 7 August 2008

<sup>2002</sup> "Experts see Wahabis in garb of Indian Mujahideen". *The Times of India*. 28 July 2008. Archived from the original on 21 October 2012. Retrieved 28 July 2008.

<sup>2003</sup> Das, Rathin; A. Sharan (26 July 2008). "29 killed as 17 blasts rock Ahmedabad". *Hindustan Times*. HT Media Ltd. Archived from the original on 5 June 2011. Retrieved 26 July 2008.

<sup>2004</sup> "E-mail threat: Police raid Navi Mumbai residence". India Today Group. Living Media. 27 July 2008. Archived from the original on 3 August 2008. Retrieved 27 July 2008.

<sup>2005</sup> Ramesh, Randeep (15 May 2008). "Indian Mujahideen claims responsibility for Jaipur blasts". *The Guardian*. London. Retrieved 26 July 2008.

will be successful and we will celebrate if God wishes".<sup>2006</sup> A sketch of him was released. The doctor described the suspected culprit as being around "30–34 years old; wearing a pink shirt; clean shaven; and seemingly an educated Police sketch that was released to media on 27 July 2008 person.

A person claims to have received two suspicious calls at around 8:00pm IST. In one of the calls, it is said that the caller said, "Ejaz, kaam ho gaya hai?", which means "Ejaz, has the job been done?"<sup>2007</sup>

Two cars, both stolen Maruti Wagon R models with vehicle license plates reading "GJ-6-CD 3569" and "GJ-5-CD 2908" were also found in Surat. Four live bombs were defused in one of the cars. Wooden box containing white powder, wires, battery and shrapnel were also found near Nupur hospital.<sup>2008</sup> The cars used for bombing in Ahmedabad and those which were diffused at Surat were eventually traced to Navi Mumbai, where from they have been stolen on 7 and 15 July 2008.<sup>2009</sup> Investigations revealed that from there they were loaded with explosives at Vadodara,<sup>2010</sup> and thereafter taken to Ahmedabad and Surat.

On 30 July 2008, it was reported that the police had found CCTV footage of one of the bombers in one of the car's drivers. The photograph taken from a toll booth near Pune. It had already been established that the bombers had snatched the cars from Navi Mumbai before driving it to Gujarat.<sup>2011</sup> The car used in the blast at the Ahmedabad Civil Hospital was driven 6 times between Ahmedabad and Surat between 7 and 24 July.<sup>2012</sup> The police claimed on 4 August 2008, that they got their first big

break in the case as a shop where LPG cylinders that were used to carry out the blasts were bought was identified. The police further claimed that wood from the locally purchased one had been used in making crates to plant bombs inside them.<sup>2013</sup>

### SUSPECTS

The Hindustan Times on 28 July 2008 reported that police and intelligence officials had zeroed in on three masterminds behind the blasts. The suspects, Rasool Khan Yakoob Khan Pathan alias Rasool 'Party', Sohail Khan and Mufti Sufiyan, are suspected to be key operatives of either the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) or the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI). They are also believed to have got to Pakistan after the 2002 Gujarat riots.<sup>23</sup>

On 29 July 2008, police arrested three suspects, Abdul Qadir, Hasil Mohammad and Hussain Ibrahim, near Limdi on Rajkot-Ahmedabad highway in Surendranagar district, while they were leaving Ahmedabad soon after the blasts.<sup>2014</sup>

On 30 July 2008, Rediff reported that the Intelligence Bureau (IB) believes two men, Rasool Khan Parti and Mohammad Sufiya Ahmed Patangiya, who are currently residing at Farahan Arcade Gulistan in Karachi, were the masterminds behind both the Ahmedabad and the 2008 Bangalore serial blasts. They are former residents of

Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh and are members of Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami. The Gujarat Police are hunting them related to the assassination of former state minister of Gujarat, Haren Pandya.<sup>2015</sup> On 16 August 2008, the Gujarat Police stated that they had cracked the case,<sup>26</sup> and it had become the swiftest case

<sup>2006</sup> I heard the culprit speaking on phone, claims witness Zee News Archived 30 July 2008

<sup>2007</sup> I heard the culprit speaking on phone, claims witness Zee News Archived 30 July 2008

<sup>2008</sup> "Two cars with explosives found in Surat". Archived 30 July 2008 at the Wayback Machine. Retrieved 30 July 2008.

<sup>2009</sup> "Police defuse bombs found in Surat". 29 July 2008. Retrieved 4 August 2008

<sup>2010</sup> Shastri, Parth; Ali, S Ahmed (29 July 2008). "Cars started from Mumbai, bombs loaded in Vadodara". The Times of India. Retrieved 28 July 2008.

<sup>2011</sup> "Driver of one of the terror cars on CCTV". Archived from the original on 29 June 2013. Retrieved 30 July 2008.

<sup>2012</sup> Dayal, Prashant (31 July 2008). "Car used in Ahmedabad Civil Hospital blast moved 6 times between cities". *The Times of India*. Retrieved 31 July 2008.

<sup>2013</sup> "Gujarat police claim their first breakthrough in blast case". Archived from the original on 5 July 2013. <sup>23</sup> Desai, Stavan; A. Sharan (28 July 2008). "Ahmedabad blasts: Three masterminds under scanner". Hindustan Times. HT Media Ltd. Archived from the original on 11 January 2009. Retrieved 28 July 2008.

<sup>2014</sup> "Serial blasts: Ahmedabad police detains 3 men". Archived from the original on 5 July 2013. Retrieved 29 July 2008.

<sup>2015</sup> "IB identifies Pak-based masterminds". Archived from the original on 1 August 2008. Retrieved 30 July 2008. <sup>26</sup> "Gujarat cops crack serial blasts case". Archived from the original on 20 August 2008. Retrieved 20 August 2008.

of terrorism in recent times. As per the Gujarat Director General of Police P. C. Pande, Mufti Abu Bashir was the brain behind the blasts, and up to 10 of his accomplices have been arrested so far.

The Gujarat Police said, on 20 November 2008, that Amir Raza Khan, the Kolkata based HuJI operative, was now based in Pakistan, had masterminded the blasts too. SIMI members Safdar Nagori, Hafez Hussain, Sibli Abdul Karim, Kamruddin Nagori, Amil Parvez and Mufti Abu Bashir planned the attack and asked Abdus Subhan alias Tauqeer and Qayamuddin Kapadia to carry out the blasts, the chargesheet by the Crime Branch alleged. Members of SIMI carried out terror training camps in Waghamon at Kerala and at Halol close to Vadodara. Then Qayamuddin, along with Tauqeer had a meeting in the city for making the respective local contacts on logistics and further support for going ahead with conspiracy. The Local contacts were individuals who had prior association with the SIMI and were in force before it became banned by Central Government in the year 2001.<sup>2016</sup>

### **ARRESTS**

✗ **Maulana Abdul Halim (July 27, 2008):** A suspected Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) activist, Maulana Abdul Halim was arrested from Dani Limda in Ahmedabad. He was accused of instigating Muslim youth post the 2002 Gujarat violence and facilitating their travel to Uttar Pradesh for terror training. Additionally, he was alleged to have sent 33 youths to Pakistan for terror training in 2003.<sup>2017</sup> Following his arrest, he was remanded to 14-day police custody by the Metropolitan Magistrate in Ahmedabad.<sup>2018</sup>

✗ **Mufti Abu Bashir and Nine Others (August 15, 2008):** The Gujarat police arrested Mufti Abu

Bashir, believed to be a SIMI activist from Binapara village in Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh, along with nine others in connection to the bombings.<sup>2019</sup> Bashir was alleged to be the mastermind behind the attacks.

✗ **Abdul Razik Mansuri (October 24, 2008):** A SIMI activist and resident of the Gomtipur area in Nagda district, Madhya Pradesh, Mansuri was arrested along with Harun Rashid, a Gujarat resident. The Joint Commissioner of Police for the crime branch, Ashish Bhatia, stated that Mansuri was apprehended in Nagda district and brought to Ahmedabad for interrogation.<sup>2020</sup>

✗ **Qayamuddin Kapadia (November 11, 2008):** The Madhya Pradesh AntiTerror Squad (ATS) arrested Kapadia, a top-ranking SIMI member and key conspirator in the attack, in Ujjain. He reportedly admitted involvement in the Ahmedabad blasts and collaboration with other operatives for subsequent attacks.<sup>2021</sup>

✗ **Rafiuddin Kapadia (November 13, 2008):** Brother of key accused Qayamuddin Kapadia, Rafiuddin was arrested by Ahmedabad city police. He was alleged to have been present at a SIMI training camp in Halol near Vadodara.

✗ **Mohammed Abrar Babu Khan alias Abrar Shaikh (March 26, 2012):**

Maharashtra ATS arrested Abrar Shaikh in an encounter in Sambhajinagar. During the encounter, Khaleel Qureshi was killed, and Mohammed Shakeer was wounded. All were alleged members of the terrorist group Indian Mujahideen. A police constable was also injured during the incident.<sup>2022</sup>

✗ **Nasir Rangrez (June 19, 2016):** The Gujarat Anti-Terrorism Squad arrested

<sup>2016</sup> "Ahmedabad blasts carried out on the direction of Pak's Amir Raza Khan". The Times of India. 20 November 2008. Archived from the original on 22 October 2012. Retrieved 21 November 2008.

<sup>2017</sup> "More bombs, nation on alert". Archived 11 January 2009 at the Wayback Machine.

<sup>2018</sup> "SIMI activist sent to 14-day police custody". Archived from the original on 5 July 2013. Retrieved 28 July 2008.

<sup>2019</sup> Abu Bashir behind Ahmedabad blasts: Police

<sup>2020</sup> "Politics/Nation". The Times of India. 24 October 2008. Retrieved 25 October 2008.

<sup>2021</sup> "Ahmedabad blasts plotter held in MP". The Times of India. 11 November 2008. Archived from the original on 22 October 2012. Retrieved 13 November 2008.

<sup>2022</sup> "ATS Guns Down Ahmedabad Terror Suspect, Arrests 1". outlook india. 26 March 2012. Archived from the original on 27 March 2012. Retrieved 26 March 2012.

Rangrez from Belgaum in connection with the 2008 Ahmedabad blasts.<sup>2023</sup>



These arrests were part of a broader investigation that led to the conviction of 49 individuals in February 2022. Of these, 38 were sentenced to death, and 11 received life imprisonment.<sup>2024</sup>

The investigation involved coordination with various state police departments, including those from Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, and West Bengal, contributing to the swift detection and arrest of the accused.<sup>2025</sup>

### **FURTHER THREATS**

The danger of terror hadn't ceased completely. Gujarat police discovered an in-service bomb beside Hatkeshwar, Maninagar scheduled to explode on 12:00am IST.<sup>2026</sup> A bomb team responded immediately in time and thus successfully defused the explosive on the public address in front of a large throng of persons who burst forth in jubilation and applause.

### **Kerala**

A phone call from Pakistan came to a journalist in Karnataka reporting that there are going to be more bombings tomorrow in Kerala. Kerala Police Chief Raman Srivastava said, "I have received information from DGP of Karnataka

about the terror threat to Kerala. We communicated with the journalist, who mentioned that he has received two calls today, first at 1 p.m. and the other at 3:30 p.m.<sup>2027</sup>

### **Surat**

On the following Monday, just days after the Ahmedabad bombings, another device was found in Surat's Varachha area. The bomb was placed beside an electrical transmitter and had 700-800 grams of ammonium nitrate, a parcel of shrapnel, two detonators, one battery, and a circuit.<sup>2028</sup> This was after the two vehicle bombs that were found shortly after the Ahmedabad attacks. On Tuesday, July 29, eighteen explosives were found in Surat and subsequently diffused. They were primarily found in residential and diamond-processing neighborhoods of Surat within under four hours of time.<sup>2029</sup> According to the Times of India, a top government official believes that putting so many "unexploded" explosives was likely an attempt to deflect police attention away from the current bombing investigation.<sup>2030</sup><sup>2031</sup> A bomb disposal crew discovered and defused another explosive during Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the city. In total, 23 explosives were discovered in Surat over three days.<sup>42</sup> Forensic examinations revealed that the explosives did not explode because the circuits were poorly constructed. The police were unsure whether this was done intentionally or as a means of estimating the bomb squad's reaction time in preparation for future strikes.<sup>2032</sup>

### **Rajasthan**

Three bombs were spotted on a road in Pali district, near Marwar Junction in Rajasthan. Onlookers noticed the bombs, which were

<sup>2023</sup> "2008 Ahmedabad blasts: Accused nabbed from Karnataka". The Indian Express. 20 June 2016. Retrieved 5 June 2017.

<sup>2024</sup> <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2022/Feb/18/2008-ahmedabad-serial-blasts-gujarat-court-awards-death-penalty-to-38-11-get-life-imprisonment-2420984.html>

<sup>2025</sup> <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/49-convicted-28-acquitted-in-2008-ahmedabad-serial-blastscase/articleshow/>

<sup>2026</sup> "Two cars with explosives found in Surat". Archived 30 July 2008 at the Wayback Machine. Retrieved 30 July 2008.

<sup>2027</sup> "Terror call claims Kerala next on target". Archived from the original on 4 August 2008. Retrieved 28 July 2008.

<sup>2028</sup> Another live bomb defused in Surat Times of India Archived 3 August 2008 at the Wayback Machine

<sup>2029</sup> NDTV.com: Surat: 18 bombs found, defused; 3 detained

<sup>2030</sup> "Live bombs an attempt to distract attention from probe". *The Times of India*. 29 July 2008. Retrieved 28 July 2008.

<sup>2031</sup> bombs defused in Surat, India remains on edge – Newindpress.com

<sup>2032</sup> "Faulty chips saved Surat". Archived from the original on 11 January 2009. Retrieved 30 July 2008.

placed in half-litre oil tins and set on the Marwar-Ranawas Road at a one-kilometer distance. The box also held a bunch of fuse wire, 30-40 marbles, eight iron plates, and a detonator. There was no wiring of clocks or any other electronic gadget for the bombs. The bomb disposal squad managed to diffused the bombs.<sup>2033</sup>

### Tamil Nadu

Sheikh Abdul Ghaffoor, 39, was detained in Tamil Nadu on August 15, 2008, for allegedly planning attacks on Independence Day.<sup>45</sup> The scheme involved attacking the state capital Chennai, three other towns in Tamil Nadu, and at least six trains. The Meenakshi Amman Temple in Madurai is likely to be at the top of the list for a terror strike.<sup>2034</sup>

The guy was apprehended with a big quantity of explosives and two-timing devices. According to reports, the scheme was exposed by P Ali Abdullah, an incarcerated head of a banned organization who has been serving prison sentences in India since 2003. On August 1, 2008, Chennai city police said that the arrests were not related to either of the blasts (ahmedabad or banglore).

### Kolkata

An E-Mail was sent to [Kolkata](#) on 29 July 2008 to bomb 8 different locations in Kolkata. Subsequently, high alert was placed in Kolkata but the e-mail turned out to be a hoax.<sup>47</sup>

### New Delhi

On July 30, 2008, another email sent to the Japanese Embassy in New Delhi threatened that many places will be destroyed there. The Embassy submitted the threat message to Delhi Police, where the city remained on Red Alert. The letter threatened to blow up Sarojini

Nagar – the target site of the 2005, October blasts.

In response to these threats, Japan closed its embassy in New Delhi on July 31, 2008, and advised its citizens living in India to steer clear of crowded places like bazaars and railway stations.<sup>2035</sup> However, the preliminary assessment of a child arrested for sending emails to the Japanese embassy suggested that he might have some psychological problems.<sup>2036</sup> Delhi police revealed that the youth who sent the email was frustrated of a failed visa application to the embassy and the email threat was a hoax.<sup>50</sup>

### ARGUMENTS

In the 2008 Ahmedabad serial bomb blast case, both the prosecution and defense presented detailed arguments before the special court.

### PROSECUTION'S CONTENTIONS

#### 1. Conspiracy & Terror Links

- ☑ The prosecution claimed that the accused were part of the banned terrorist organization, Indian Mujahideen (IM).
- ☑ They claimed the blasts were carried out in retaliation against the 2002 Gujarat riots, meant to flare up communal tensions.
- ☑ Intercepted communications and testimonies connecting the accused with IM activity were also evidence.

<sup>2033</sup> "Three bombs defused in Rajasthan". Archived from the original on 4 August 2008. Retrieved 29 July 2008. <sup>45</sup> "Terror module busted in Tamil Nadu, 1 held". Archived 28 July 2008 at the Wayback Machine. Retrieved 30 July 2008.

<sup>2034</sup> Chennai next terror target? Bomb-maker held in Nellai Archived 31 July 2008 at the Wayback Machine <sup>47</sup> <https://www.ndtv.com/video/now-kolkata-faces-bomb-threats-34798>

<sup>2035</sup> UPDATE 1-Japan closes India visa office, warns over bombings, Reuters.com. Accessed 11 September 2024.

<sup>2036</sup> Youth held for sending email threat to Japanese Embassy, indiatimes.com. Accessed 11 September 2024. <sup>50</sup> Terror email to Japanese Embassy a hoax: Police, Sify.com. Accessed 11 September 2024

## 2. Forensic & Electronic Evidence



☒ Forensic evidence established the connection between the accused and the explosive materials used in the blasts.

☒ CCTV footage showed how people were putting bombs at various places.

☒ Emails from the IM, taking the responsibility of attacks, were sent to the culprit.

## 3. Bombs & Execution Plan

☒ The bombs were placed in congested markets and public transport in order to create maximum casualties.

☒ The prosecution provided details of proper planning, elaborating on how the blasts took place at a synchronized time.

☒ Materials like timers and detonators were recovered as evidence.

## 4. Witness Statements

☒ Eyewitnesses at the blast sites identified the accused.

☒ Survivors testified about the events that led to the blasts.

☒ Investigating officers testified about the evidence collected and analyzed that linked the accused to the crime.

## 5. Roughest Punishment

☒ The attacks were so severe that 56 people lost their lives, and more than 200 were injured. The prosecution demanded the death penalty for the main accused.

☒ They argued that there was a need for a stern deterrent against future terrorist activities.

## DEFENCE'S CONTENTIONS

### 1. Absence of Direct evidence

☒ The defence contended that there was no direct evidence linking the accused to the bombings.

☒ They argued that the prosecution's case was based solely on circumstantial evidence and was insufficient for conviction.

### 2. Coerced Confessions

☒ A number of the accused alleged that their admissions were coerced and not voluntary. Defence counsel mentioned the claims of torture and abusive questioning that had transpired.

☒ The defense produced forensic findings including irregularities that indicated evidence manipulation or contamination.

☒ Electronic evidence was mismanaged, thus its legitimacy is doubtful.

### 3. Fabrication & Framing

☒ They contended that the accused were framed on the basis of their religious identity or political past.

☒ The defense pleaded that the investigation was biased and framed the innocents.

### 4. Mitigating Circumstances

☒ The defense argued for a life imprisonment term for the convicts on grounds of age, no history of previous crime, and rehabilitative potential.

☒ They emphasized how individual circumstances are to be weighed before punitive awards are made.

## EVIDENCES AND PHOTOGRAPHS

☒ **CCTV Footage:** Images captured individuals planting explosives at various locations.

☒ **Forensic Evidence:**  
Photographs of recovered bomb components, including timers and detonators.

☒ **Email Correspondence:**  
Screenshots of the email sent by the IM claiming responsibility for the attacks.

☒ **Scene of Crime:** Photographs depicting the aftermath of the blasts, showing the extent of damage and casualties.

These pieces of evidence were pivotal in the court's deliberations, leading to the conviction and sentencing of the accused.

## CHALLENGES FACED BY INVESTIGATORS

○ The bombs were put in several locations in Gujarat, and detectives worked hard to remove some from Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi's seat and Surat, a major city.

○ Several threatening emails regarding the incident were arriving, posing a problem for the detectives. Police questioned Ken Haywood, a US national whose IP address was used to send the threatening email. On July 27, ATS agents went to Haywood's residence after ascertaining that the IP address from which a threatening email was sent minutes before the Ahmedabad explosions belonged to him. On July 27, ATS agents visited Haywood's home after determining that the IP address from which a threatening email was received minutes before the Ahmedabad bombings belonged to him.

○ The "historic" judgment in this case reflects the hard work and team spirit of detectives who obtained evidence by bursting separate modules

and arresting suspects from many states in a short period.

○ The terrorists were well-planned,

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nits operating independently. Detecting a crime done with such forethought is tough, but the investigator overcame the obstacle with a collaborative effort. They detected the crime quickly.

## AFTERMATH AND IMPACT

### Hindu-Muslim Unity

The assaults are widely thought to have been carried out to heighten the degree of tension in Gujarat following the burning of the Godhra train<sup>2037</sup>. The attack on Sarkhej was believed to have been carried out in communally sensitive locations where the Muslim assailants hoped to incite communal strife and unrest.<sup>2038</sup> Peaceful rallies by Hindus and Muslims across Gujarat condemned the assaults as cowardly. Similar expressions of solidarity were staged in Delhi and Bhopal, where Hindus and Muslims held candlelight vigils.<sup>2039</sup> During his visit to the area, Prime Minister Singh praised the unity of Gujarat, stating, "I salute the people of Gujarat for their perseverance. These terrorist attacks are intended to damage our social fabric, undermining communal harmony and demoralising our people".<sup>2040</sup>

<sup>2037</sup> "Blasts aimed at destroying social fabric: PM", *The Times of India*. Retrieved 30 July 2008.

<sup>2038</sup> "Toll rises to 45, army conducts flag marches in Ahmedabad", *hindu.com* Archived 31 July 2008 at the Wayback Machine. Retrieved 30 July 2008

<sup>2039</sup> "Day in Pics". *The Times of India*. 28 July 2008. Retrieved 28 July 2008.

<sup>2040</sup> NDTV.com: PM praises people of Gujarat for their resilience Archived 2 August 2008 at the Wayback

The bombings were criticized by President Pratibha Patil<sup>2041</sup>, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh<sup>2042</sup>, Vice-President Hamid Ansari<sup>2043</sup>, and Chief Minister Narendra Modi, who urged calm. Shakeel Ahmed, Minister of State for Home, expressed grief and outrage at the string of assaults.<sup>2044</sup> "We should assess the situation correctly and try to help the people that have suffered and plan to see that these things do not happen afterwards," the home minister, Shivraj Patil, said. L.K. Advani<sup>2045</sup>, a BJP leader, denounced the bombings and called for anti-terror legislation in Gujarat and Rajasthan.

The Bahujan Samaj Party questioned intelligence services' incapacity to remain on alert regarding the bomb conspiracy and asked that the state Congress persuade the UPA to ratify the GUJCOC Act. The parent group of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad called for a countrywide anti-Jehadi protest on July 28th. They urged the government to act now, before it is too late to combat terrorism.<sup>2046</sup> "Effectively counter terrorists and extremist outfits" is the slogan used by AIADMK general secretary J. Jayalalithaa when pushing for the restoration of special legislation such as POTA.<sup>2047</sup>

Sonia Gandhi<sup>2048</sup>, the president of the Congress Party, Union Minister of State for

Home Affairs Prakash Jaiswal, CPI M,<sup>2049</sup> and other Indians have strongly condemned

## Machine

these blasts. All India Muslim Forum<sup>2050</sup>, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar<sup>2051</sup>, Sanchetna, Sahrwaru, Safar, as well as FMWA, Muslim Majlise Mushavirat, Sarkhej Muslim Welfare Organization, Ahmedabad Muslim Welfare Society, Sirat Committee, Aman Samuday, Anhad, Swabhimani Andolan, Lok Kala Manch, Samarpan Sarvoday Sanskrutik Manch, Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan, Bharatiya Moolnivasi Janjagran Abhiyan, and Action Aid (Gujarat).<sup>2052</sup>

## IMPACT

The Ahmedabad serial bomb blasts of 2008 caused tragic immediate loss of life and property but have since impacted India's security policies, judicial processes, societal dynamics, and counterterrorism approaches. The aftermath of the incident continues to affect so many areas of governance and public policy.

### 1. Security Policy Changes

☑ **Counterterrorism aftermath:** The assaults were devastating to India's security and intelligence system, exposing crucial weaknesses. As a result, the overall shift in counterterrorism strategies was reflected in this.

☑ **Improved inter-agency intelligence coordination:** It became clear that better cooperation is essential among various intelligence and law enforcement services. The changes that followed attempted to create an operational coordination network for inter-agency communication, allowing for a quick and efficient response to any danger.

☑ **Beginning legislative reforms:** The tragedy provided political capital for the administration to speed up legal reforms. Amendments and

<sup>2041</sup> "President deplores blasts, asks people to maintain peace". *The Hindu*. 26 July 2008. p. 1. Archived from the original on 29 July 2008. Retrieved 26 July 2008.

<sup>2042</sup> "President, PM condemn blasts". Rediff. 26 July 2008. Archived from the original on 29 July 2008. Retrieved 26 July 2008.

<sup>2043</sup> "Vice President condemns serial blasts in Ahmedabad". Outlook India. 26 July 2008. p. 1. Archived from the original on 1 August 2008. Retrieved 26 July 2008.

<sup>2044</sup> Centre 'surprised' over Ahmedabad blasts, Sify.com. Accessed 11 September 2024.

<sup>2045</sup> "Govt, BJP condemn Ahmedabad blasts". Zee News. 26 July 2008. p. 1. Archived from the original on 30 July 2008. Retrieved 26 July 2008.

<sup>2046</sup> "Togadia accuses Govt. of being soft on terrorists", hindu.com Archived 1 August 2008 at the Wayback Machine Retrieved 30 July 2008.

<sup>2047</sup> "Jayalithaa demands revival of POTA". Archived 28 July 2008 at the Wayback Machine. Retrieved 30 July 2008.

<sup>2048</sup> "Sonia Gandhi condemns Ahmedabad serial blasts", hindustantimes.com Archived 25 October 2012 at the Wayback Machine. Retrieved 30 July 2008.

<sup>2049</sup> "CPM slams serial blasts in Ahmedabad", Sify.com. Retrieved 30 July 2008.

<sup>2050</sup> South Asia Contact Group Achieve: Condemnation of Bangalore and Ahmedabad Blasts – Dr. M. K.

Sherwani Archived 28 July 2012 at archive.today

<sup>2051</sup> The Hindu News Update Service Archived 1 August 2008 at the Wayback Machine

<sup>2052</sup> "Political parties, social organisations condemn blasts", expressindia.com Archived 3 August 2008 at the Wayback Machine Retrieved July 2008.

stricter enforcement of legislation such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act were implemented. Though these legislation were intended to empower security agencies, they sparked arguments over the balance between national security and civil liberties.

❑ **Investment in Forensic Interventions and Surveillance Technology:** The case exposed a gap in forensic skills and evidence management. Following the event, a major investment was undertaken to modernize forensic laboratories and surveillance equipment to increase the precision of future investigations.

## 2. Support and Rehabilitation for Victims

❑ **Compensation from the government:** The government created compensation plans to address the burden on victim's relatives.

❑ **Manifestation of financial assistance:** Financial assistance was provided to impacted families as a buffer against loss and to acquire medicine for rehabilitation purposes.

❑ **Immediate Primary and Psychological Medical Care:** Survivors and families of the deceased received long-term medical treatment and psychological therapy through unique programs designed to address the trauma produced by the blasts.

❑ **Community Rehabilitation efforts:** In addition to financial help, the following efforts were implemented.

❑ **Training and Education:** These efforts aim to restore the economic credibility of affected communities by providing vocational training and skill development courses, as well as supporting children of those slain.

## 3. Lessons for Counterterrorism

❑ **Operational and strategic reforms:** The case shed light on operational and strategic aspects that contributed to counterterrorism failures.

❑ **Preemptive information Operations:** Proactive information gathering is vital for targeting and dismantling terror networks

before they can launch concentrated assaults on eligible targets.

❑ **Modernize Investigative Approaches:** A recent assessment focuses on digital evidence collecting and forensic examination. Thus, important forensic technical advancements and improved evidence-handling standards were allowed.

❑ **Understanding judicial and procedural precedents:** The extended trial, as well as the subsequent momentous ruling, established significant legal precedents.

❑ **Handling terrorist Cases:** This case served as a reference point for future terrorist trials, highlighting the complexities and importance of thorough investigation.

❑ **Balancing Justice and National Security:** This sparked a dialogue about balancing fair trial standards with national security demands, which has continued to evolve through subsequent legal reforms.

## 4. Societal and Political Impact

❑ **Awareness Altered:** The bombings and ensuing court proceedings caused a seismic change in the nation's mindset.

❑ **The Nation Felt More Secure:** After the assaults, fear and uncertainty led to requests for improved public security measures.

❑ **Political Market:** The incident sparked equal disputes in electoral politics and public policy, with counterterrorism being the primary focus among politicians and policymakers.

❑ **Communal Rift Repair:** Following the devastating assaults, efforts were made to repair communal differences.

❑ **Inter-Community discussion:** To combat extremist narratives, both official and civil society groups promote interfaith discussion and collaboration.

❑ **Social settlement program:** The Social Settlement Program aims to address socio-economic factors and settle economically impoverished neighborhoods over time.

## 5. Implications Beyond the Nation

### ☒ International Counterterrorism Methods:

The case contributed to the global understanding of counterterrorism.

☒ **A benchmark for terrorism trials:** The Ahmedabad case serves as a paradigm for managing difficult terrorist cases, making it a benchmark for legal experts and law enforcement authorities worldwide.

☒ **Global Cooperation:** Lessons learnt from these events can improve international information sharing and monitoring of transnational terror networks.

☒ **Policy Comparison:** The aftermath of the bombings has often been linked to other terrorism attacks throughout the world. These frequently compare the counterterrorism framework to investigative and preventive best practices.

In conclusion, the affect and consequence of the 2008 Ahmedabad serial bomb impacts run past an quick awful occasion. They drove extraordinary changes in Indian policymaking.

### TRIAL AND VERDICT

The trial blended 35 isolated cases as a single case and was listened in a extraordinary court of Judge A. R. Patel in Ahmedabad. The trial started in 2009 and kept going for almost 13 a long time. The hearing was concluded in September 2021.<sup>2053</sup>

On 8 February 2022 the decision was conveyed articulating 28 blamed cleared due to need of worthy prove whereas 49 as indicted. The sentences were given on 18 February 2022, counting 38 passing sentences and 11 life detainments.<sup>2054 69</sup>

<sup>2053</sup> Langa, Mahesh (8 February 2022). "49 convicted, 28 acquitted in 2008 Ahmedabad serial blasts case". *The Hindu*. ISSN 0971-751X. Retrieved 8 February 2022.

<sup>2054</sup> "India court sentences 38 to death over 2008 bombings". *CNA*. 18 February 2022. p. 1. Archived from the original on 18 February 2022. Retrieved 18 February 2022. <sup>69</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2008\\_Ahmedabad\\_bombings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2008_Ahmedabad_bombings)

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