



**NEFA Exclusive: An Interview  
with Haji Namdar  
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*[NEFA interviewed Haji Namdar at an undisclosed location in the Bar Qambarkhel area, Khyber Agency on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2008, one day after he was unsuccessfully targeted by a Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) suicide bomber. Among the most well-known radical 'leaders' in Khyber, Namdar served as head of the now-defunct militant organization 'Amr Bilmaroof Wa Nahi Anilmunkar'; he also joined forces with Mangal Bagh, supporting him in the recent clashes against government forces. On June 30, 2008, Namdar's house was destroyed during the recent military offensive ordered by Islamabad. Then, on August 13, 2008, Namdar was shot to death at a mosque in Khyber Agency. The TTP later took credit for the attack.]*

**Q.)** Something about your self, age and education.

**A.)** My age is around 39 to 40.

**Q.)** Your education.

**A.)** I did my matric (10<sup>th</sup> grade) but could not continue in college due to various reasons, despite admission there. Nevertheless I do have the required worldly and religious education.

**Q.)** Did you attend any religious seminary?

**A.)** Not regularly, but I did have sittings with religious scholars in Saudi Arabia.



**Q.)** What did you do there?

**A.)** I went there to earn my livelihood and spent around ten years in the Kingdom. During my stay there I also attended sessions in seminaries such as Maktab-e-Jamiati that propagate religion (Islam) throughout the world.

Then, when I returned home, I did not find the social environment here very satisfactory. Road links had been established to the inaccessible Tirah valley and the environment had changed drastically. I therefore undertook the responsibility of bringing religious and educational awareness among these people, so that others would not use them for their misadventures. I stayed back and initiated a movement in the name of Amar Bil Maroof wa Nahi Anil Munkar, and through that forum we succeeded in bringing an end to social evils and injustices in our area.

**Q.)** How many people do you have in your fold for the purpose?

**A.)** Well, my entire tribe is with me, so I cannot figure out the exact number.

**Q.)** How many of them are armed?

**A.)** Traditionally, every tribesman has arms in his possession and there is nothing special about this. So I must say that the number of my tribesmen constitute the number of armed people with me. We, on our part, do not provide arms to our men.

**Q.)** What is your area of operations?

**A.)** Within the country our movement is strictly restricted to Bar Qambarkhel tribe of the Khyber Agency. Here, we ensure social justice and basic human rights, especially for women and children. We help the poor and orphans of the area and construct religious seminaries and Masjids (mosques). And above all, we strive to implement Islamic law in its true spirit.

**Q.)** How are your relations with Mangal Bagh?

**A.)** We enjoy good relations with him. He has all the clans of the Afridi tribe in his fold and we have complete harmony in our beliefs. Lashkar-e-Islam operates in the entire tribal agency and enjoys the support of reputed tribal elders.

**Q.)** Do you lend support to each other.

**A.)** Certainly. In every hour of need we come to rescue of each other. This support include material in terms of arms and ammunition, exchange of men and moral. We do help each other.

**Q.)** Do you have any relations with Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)?

**A.)** We did have contacts with them, primarily to know who they were and what their rising in the tribal areas was meant for, but we found that there is no good in them. They want to establish a state. They intend to establish a state of their own in the tribal areas of Pakistan and are involved in most of the suicide attacks carried out against the security forces and elsewhere in the country.



**Q.)** You are said to have invited these people to your area and also gave them shelter here?

**A.)** Certainly. No doubt that we gave them shelter, thinking that they were mujahideen, working for the rise of Islam and fighting against the enemies of Islam. There are still people who work towards this cause and we support them and will continue to support them in whatever manner possible, but these are certainly not the TTP people. And after we came to know of the intentions of the TTP, we expelled them from the area and now we have severed our contacts with them.

**Q.)** Was the suicide attack against you conducted by the TTP?

**A.)** Hakimullah, an appointee of Baitullah (Mehsud) has claimed responsibility for the attack. He telephoned my men to claim the responsibility and to seek return of the suicide bomber's body. Afterwards, head of the Ulema Shura (council of the Islamic scholars) of the Lashkar-e-Islam, Maulvi Mateen contacted me for the return of the body, and I handed over the same to him.

Hakimullah is a close associate of Baitullah Mehsud and had come to this agency with the intention to raise an armed force here, which was to be used against the government, as is the case with the rest of the tribal agencies. Blasts in public places and attacking jirgas is what they are up to.

They conveyed to me that I was attacked for refusing to become party to their anti-state activities. Nevertheless, I would seek God's help and I am confident that they cannot harm me. Some agencies have made a hoax out of them, but I know how to deal with them.



**Q.)** Mangal Bagh says he enjoyed good relations with the TTP but would not allow them to come here.

**A.)** The people who carried out the suicide attack against me had primarily come to strike a truce between Mangal Bagh's Lashkar-e-Islam and Ansarul-Islam group of the Khyber Agency and later stayed back. Mangal Bagh understands what he is doing, but we on our part have no affiliation with them.

**Q.)** Is there any threat to Mangal from the TTP?

**A.)** No doubt that their (TTP) main aim is to establish an independent state comprising all the tribal agencies of the country, and in their struggle they would eliminate anyone if it disturbed their smooth sailing, no matter if it is Mangal Bagh or anyone else.

What I intend to say is that every single person of the country should know their real face and save themselves from their trap. If it is me, Mangal Bagh or any other person, we should stand in their way to foil their nefarious designs.

**Q.)** They claim to be fighting against infidel forces and that they are part of the worldwide Jihad. You seem to be negating their claim.

**A.)** No doubt that Bait-ul Muqadas (the al-Aqsa Mosque) has remained under the occupation of the Jews and Christians for the last several decades now. The infidel forces have captured the entire Arab world by bringing their economy under their direct control. Now they have occupied Iraq and are establishing their rule in Afghanistan.

We now have no other choice but to stand for Jihad as they have reached our doorstep. The way they captured Afghanistan, they will now attempt to come into our tribal areas and disgrace us, and before they do that we must be prepared for our defense. In our struggle, come what may, we would be there to wage Jihad.

**Q.)** Do you approve of the jihad being fought by Al Qaeda?

**A.)** Personally I don't have any contacts with Al Qaeda, nor am I aware of their intentions. I won't negate their struggle, but personally I do not approve of their methods.



**Q.)** Which of their actions do you not approve of?

**A.)** Well, they work very secretly and I do not know about their intentions. What can I tell you? Nevertheless we have no association with them, nor do we adopt the kind of actions they take

to pressure their opponents, like attacking irrelevant people, or if I may say, innocent people.

They (Al Qaeda) did come to the remote Tirah Valley eight years ago before proceeding on to Afghanistan, but our tribesmen did not allow them to stay here. However, being Muslim, we support their struggle against the Jews and Christians if it is at all for the cause of Islam. Infidels are enemies of all Muslims and we need to give them a collective resistance.

**Q.)** You are very strict in the implementation of the Islamic laws in your area as compared to Mangal Bagh.

**A.)** Our strictness is meant to make a true Islamic society in our area. Moreover, I am strict in implementation of those Islamic laws where God and the Holy Quran direct me to be strict. I cannot change the Holy Quran or God's will.

TTP has been particularly involved in engaging children in carrying out un-Islamic acts such as suicide attacks against innocent people. My people's knowledge of the religion of Islam would save them from falling into the wrong hands in the name of religion.

**Q.)** Your band of armed men is also said to have small children.

**A.)** Not at all. Praise be to Allah, we have even stopped children from laborious jobs and instead sent them to schools and religious seminaries. In schools too, we have made it obligatory upon the administration to hire services of religious scholars for their schoolchildren.

So this accusation against me is totally baseless. Personally I am against the employment of children and their induction into armed forces. I have strongly forbidden inclusion of any child in the patrolling teams of the organization, and I have made this announcement through my FM radio station.



Instead, we brought those children to schools and seminaries, who were working as bus conductors or as waiters in hotels or in any other place, and warned the parents against doing so in future.

**Q.)** You stress more the implementation of Islamic law and advocating reasons for Jihad, while Mangal Bagh mainly works against social evils.

**A.)** Praise be to Allah, we have eliminated 80 per cent of the social evils in our area during the last five years of our struggle. The practice of making women do backbreaking jobs, working in the field, fetching wood and water from far-flung areas, and their sale in the name of marriage has totally been abolished from our area, nor is child labour any longer in practice here. We gave every single person his basic human rights, and by ensuring five daily prayers and morning sermons, we have succeeded in eradicating other social evils.

**Q.)** How are your relations with the government?

**A.)** During the past more than five years of our movement, we did not opt for struggle with the government agencies, and our relations with the government are good. At times there were excesses from the government side, but we did not react. We don't want to fight them, even if they do.

**Q.)** Why the excesses against you?

**A.)** Well, at times when we tried to stand for the oppressed against the oppressor in some local dispute, the government intervened, but we never chose to be at odds with the security forces, knowing that some elements were conspiring against us. The security forces once shelled my house in one such incident, but we did not fire a single shot at them.