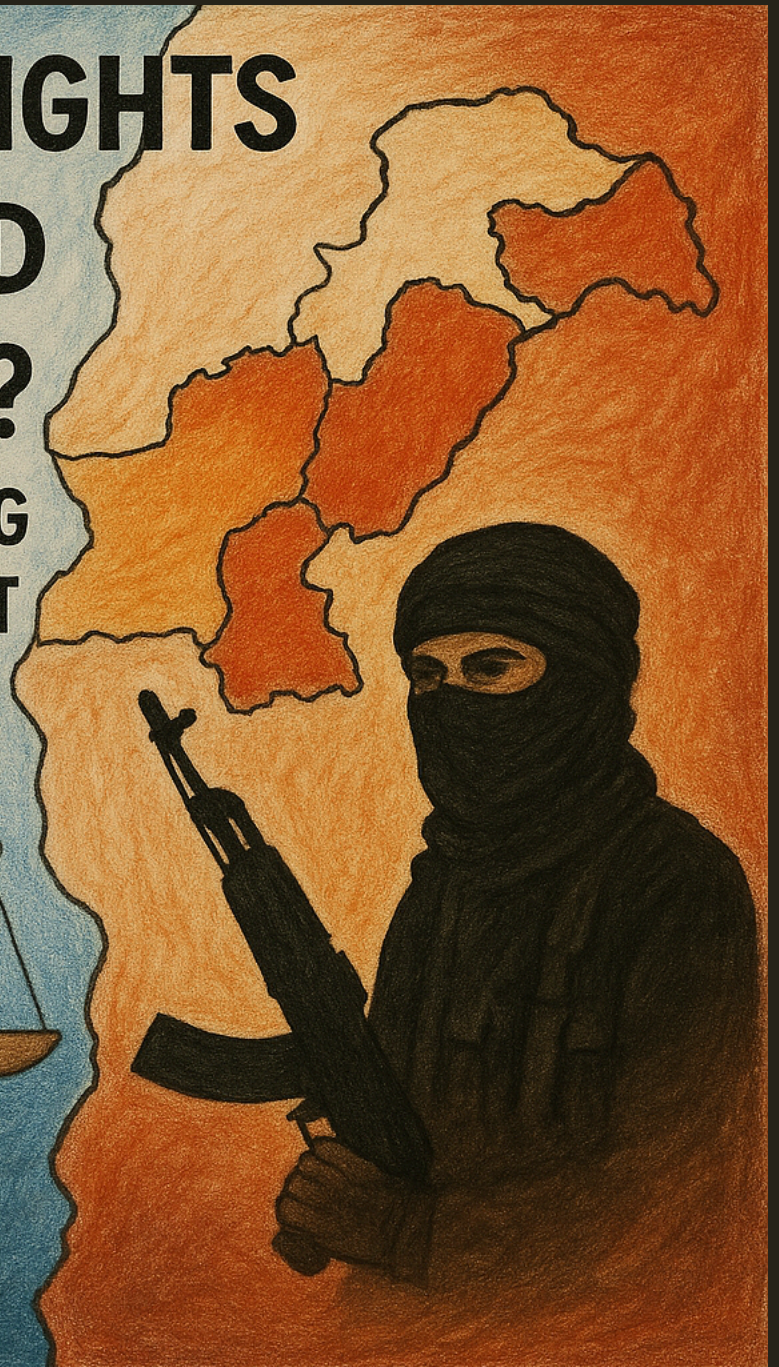


OPINION

HUMAN RIGHTS OR HYBRID WARFARE?

DECONSTRUCTING
BYC'S ALIGNMENT
WITH THE BLA



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- Integrate youth in research work, particularly in conflict resolution and peace-making efforts.

Opinion

Human Rights or Hybrid Warfare? Deconstructing BYC's Alignment with the BLA

Sabah Aslam¹

Balochistan, Pakistan's largest yet most volatile province, is engulfed in a struggle on two fronts: the physical threat of terrorism and a parallel war of narratives. On the ground, terrorist outfits such as the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) wage a deadly campaign of violence, orchestrating guerrilla attacks, suicide bombings, and assaults on civilians and infrastructure. In parallel, platforms like the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) portray themselves as peaceful human rights advocates while systematically amplifying narratives that sanitise or justify this terrorism. This convergence creates a dangerous synergy: extremist violence is masked under the cloak of 'human rights', enabling banned terrorist groups to gain sympathy domestically and legitimacy internationally. In today's era of hybrid warfare, where perception is as decisive as firepower, organisations like BYC risk serving as narrative force multipliers for terrorist agendas. Allowing such distortions to go unchallenged not only undermines Pakistan's internal cohesion but also damages its international standing. Deconstructing these narratives and exposing how terrorism hides behind a human rights veneer is critical for safeguarding Pakistan's national security and countering the psychological dimensions of modern conflict.

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Balochistan's Longstanding Terror Campaign

For decades, Balochistan has been the scene of a violent terrorist campaign. Armed groups such as the so-called Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Baloch Liberation Front (BLF) use terrorism under the guise of socio-political struggle; their actions are clearly and consistently terrorist in nature. The BLA has massacred civilians, targeted ethnic minorities, and sabotaged infrastructure. In recent years, the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) has escalated its campaign of terror through increasingly brutal attacks on civilians. In August 2024, BLA gunmen set up roadblocks in Balochistan, [dragged passengers off buses](#), and executed 23 unarmed travellers, deliberately targeting non-Baloch, particularly ethnic Punjabis. In March 2025, the group hijacked the [Jaffar Express](#) with more than 400 passengers on board—an unprecedented act of terror that resulted in dozens of casualties. Most recently, in May 2025, the BLA launched a horrific attack on a school bus, killing six people, including four children. This atrocity drew global condemnation, with [UNICEF denouncing it as a 'horrific' assault](#) on innocent lives. The U.S. designation of the BLA as a [Specially Designated Global Terrorist \(SDGT\)](#) group in 2019 and its subsequent elevation to [Foreign Terrorist Organisation \(FTO\)](#) status in 2025, alongside expanded sanctions against its multiple aliases, reflect Washington's intent to close operational loopholes and criminalise all support networks. The [Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's \(SCO\) 2025 joint declaration](#) condemned high-profile terrorist attacks, including the BLA-claimed Jaffar Express assault, signalling unprecedented consensus across regional stakeholders that such violence constitutes terrorism. Taken together, these developments reveal a narrowing space for the BLA and its sympathisers to legitimise their actions under human rights or political grievance narratives, strengthening Pakistan's position that the BLA's activities are a threat to both domestic security and regional stability. Yet, after each terrorist attack, the focus curiously shifts away from the perpetrators toward calls for Baloch activists to condemn the violence, a demand arising because of the glaring gap between genuine human rights advocacy and terrorist apologetics. This gap is where BYC's role becomes salient.



Mahrang Baloch pictured by her father's grave, marked with the flag of the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), a banned terrorist outfit.

The Rise of BYC: Activism or Apologism for Terrorism?

The Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC), translated as the ‘Baloch Solidarity Committee’, came into existence in 2018 against the backdrop of Balochistan’s fragile socio-political climate. Introduced as a women-led community platform, BYC initially drew recognition for its humanitarian activities, such as fundraising during the devastating floods in Balochistan. Its most prominent figure, Dr. Mahrang Baloch, began her journey from this platform. Even earlier, as a student at Bolan Medical College, she was known for staging protests against faculty management.

It is important to note that Mahrang is the daughter of *Ghaffar Langove*, a senior leader of the banned Baloch Liberation Army (BLA). Irrespective of her familial lineage, the state undertook a deliberate effort to channel her towards constructive social integration by investing in her professional development. She received full support to study medicine, including an MBBS degree on subsidised terms, monthly stipends, and scholarships, despite her lower merit standing. However, instead of serving society as a doctor, Mahrang shifted towards political agitation, later becoming a central face of BYC.

The Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) gained visibility through demonstrations highlighting socio-political grievances. One notable episode was the 2023 long march from Turbat to Islamabad, which was triggered by the death of a BLA-affiliated youth who was fatally wounded during an encounter. He came under fire from a BLA hideout while assisting authorities by leading them to the location of his associates. Presented internationally as a peaceful protest, this episode helped amplify BYC’s profile, with rights organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch echoing its claims.

However, beneath this image of non-violent civil rights activism, BYC’s posture reveals contradictions. Its leadership frequently highlights state actions while avoiding condemnation of terrorist activities. For instance, when 23 innocent civilians were massacred in Musakhail in August 2024 by BLA terrorists, BYC leaders chose silence. This selective outrage, speaking against the state while ignoring the atrocities of terrorist groups, raises serious doubts about its credibility as a genuine human rights forum.

External actors and hostile lobbies abroad have capitalised on BYC’s narrative, amplifying its campaigns to serve anti-Pakistan agendas. BYC portrays itself as a grassroots solidarity movement; its selective silence on terrorist atrocities, its international amplification, and the trajectory of its leadership indicate that it functions less as a neutral human rights body and more as a vehicle for external agendas. Far from empowering the Baloch people, such one-sided activism risks deepening divisions and providing cover for those who justify extremist violence against the state and its citizens.

BYC's Blurred Lines: When Civil Society Shields Terrorists

BYC's behaviour is not accidental but part of a calculated narrative strategy. While BYC bills itself as a civil rights platform, its activities and rhetoric often betray a deeper alignment with the terrorist movement. BYC events frequently glorify fallen terrorists in Balochistan as 'martyrs,' openly celebrating terrorists of the BLA killed in action. At protests and gatherings, separatist anthems are sung and flags of a 'Free Balochistan' are waved, symbols of an agenda far beyond mere civil rights reform. The Pakistani state is routinely demonised as an 'occupying force' in BYC's narrative. Notably absent in BYC's discourse is any acknowledgement of the BLA's documented terrorist brutality. This deliberate omission, a 'communicative act of erasure,' sustains the illusion of BYC's non-violence while letting terrorist propaganda spread unchecked. In effect, BYC and its leadership provide ideological cover for the terrorists: by co-opting the language of human rights, they legitimise terrorism against the state in the eyes of unwitting observers.

This blurred line between peaceful activism and terrorism advocacy is perhaps most evident in BYC's public silence (or evasiveness) on terrorist attacks. Dr. Mahrang Baloch's steadfast refusal to condemn the BLA is not mere oversight; it is a *discursive tactic* allowing her to maintain plausible deniability while the terrorist narrative flourishes under the radar of global accountability. By never explicitly endorsing violence, BYC's leaders retain their credentials as 'activists,' even as their one-sided narrative enables BLA propaganda to go unchallenged. BYC uses women and children in protests as human shields to deter crackdowns, indirectly protecting terrorists from state action. When BYC rallies cry 'stop the genocide' and demand justice but pointedly ignore atrocities committed by the terrorist groups in Balochistan, they are amplifying only half the truth, the half most convenient for the terrorists.

Importantly, BYC itself lacks any legal or constitutional status as an organisation. It is not registered as an NGO or political party in Pakistan. BYC operates outside any formal regulatory oversight, which raises questions about its transparency and accountability. This informality has reinforced suspicions that BYC is less a bona fide civil society group and more a convenient *front* for anti-state elements. In a press briefing on April 2, 2025, a senior police official openly questioned BYC's legitimacy, emphasising that 'it is not a registered organisation' and highlighting its unlawful activities during protests.

One such incident erased any remaining doubt about BYC's collusion with terrorists. In March 2025, after the BLA's deadly *Jaffar Express train hijacking*, Dr. Mahrang Baloch and other BYC members stormed the morgue at Quetta's Civil Hospital to forcibly take possession of the bodies of five slain BLA terrorists. BYC activists beat hospital staff, vandalised property, and insisted they themselves were the 'heirs' of the dead terrorists in order to claim the bodies. 'I leave it to you to answer the question of who the BLA's heirs are,' remarked Quetta's police chief sardonically, after recounting how BYC operatives tried to steal the terrorist corpses. Security forces intercepted the group and recovered the bodies before they could be removed. 'On the one hand, they [BYC] talk about human rights, and on the other, they own the bodies of terrorists,' the police official noted, underscoring the brazen solidarity between BYC and

the BLA. This episode, BYC literally attempting to honour and bury known terrorists, exemplifies how the Baloch Yakjehti Committee provides material and symbolic cover to terrorist actors under the guise of civil activism.

It would not be inappropriate to regard BYC as a *proxy for terrorist organisations*. BYC's modus operandi is to rally crowds on '[foreign narratives and funding](#)', provoke clashes with authorities, and then play the victim to attract sympathy from human rights organisations abroad. This assessment aligns with BYC's observed conduct: from glorifying BLA terrorists to reclaiming their bodies and shielding them in protests, BYC behaves less like a human rights group and more like an *auxiliary arm of the terrorist organisations*.

The 'Missing Persons' Façade: Terrorists in Disguise

Perhaps the most insidious aspect of the BYC–BLA nexus is the manipulation of the '*missing persons*' issue. BYC has gained prominence by protesting the enforced disappearance of Baloch activists. But evidence shows that in multiple cases, the very individuals whom BYC branded as '*missing*' (*implying state abduction*) later resurfaced not in secret prisons but as terrorists carrying out terrorist attacks. These cases expose how the narrative of state oppression has been used to conceal and even glorify active terrorists.

A striking example is *Abdul Wadood Satazkai*. In late 2023, BYC activists (including Dr. Mahrang) protested that [Wadood had been 'forcefully disappeared', with his sister publicly pleading for his return](#). Yet in January 2024, Wadood re-emerged in grisly fashion, [glorified by the BLA as a suicide bomber](#) who blew himself up during an attack in Mach city. The very man portrayed as an innocent victim of the state turned out to be an extremist perpetrator. Wadood's case was not an anomaly. [Karim Jan](#) was likewise listed by a Baloch students' group as a 'missing person', only to later detonate himself in a March 2024 suicide bombing at the Gwadar Port. [Tayyab Baloch](#), reported missing after returning from abroad, was celebrated by the BLA as the bomber behind an attack on an FC camp in Bela. [Rafique Bizenjo](#), once featured on protest banners as an enforced disappearance victim, blew himself up at Quetta Railway Station in November 2024, and [Bahar Baloch](#), missing for months, turned out to be the BLA terrorist who carried out a deadly car bombing in Turbat in January 2025. Each of these men had been championed by BYC or its affiliates as supposed '*victims*' of state abuse. In reality, they were frontline perpetrators of terrorism, a '*missing persons*' façade that hid a pipeline of recruits for terrorist activities against the state of Pakistan.

The revelation of these terrorist makeovers has forced a reckoning. Even Dr. Mahrang Baloch herself conceded a connection between some protesters and terrorists. After Pakistan conducted airstrikes on BLA hideouts across the Iran border in early 2023, Mahrang admitted that [families of the killed terrorists were present in her protest camps](#), effectively blurring the line between genuine victims and terrorist kin. This admission is chilling: BYC's protest encampments, ostensibly for grieving families, doubled as gatherings of terrorists' relatives and sympathisers. Far from a coincidence, it illustrates how the BYC movement interweaves the narratives of victims and terrorists, exploiting tragedy to shield terrorists from scrutiny.

A particularly illuminating case is that of *Sohaib Langove*. Sohaib, a young man from Mahrang's own extended family, was declared a 'missing person' by BYC-aligned groups in mid-2024. Less than a year later, in July 2025, he was killed in a security operation, not as an innocent civilian, but as a [foot soldier of the BLA](#). Security officials confirmed Sohaib (alias *Aamir Bakhsh*) died in a firefight on July 21, 2025, during an Army raid on a BLA hideout in Kalat. Incredibly, a few days after his death, Baloch activist networks (the online pages *Paank* and *Baam*) still went on to label Sohaib as 'missing,' falsely implying he was in state custody. Even more incriminating, photographs and videos soon surfaced showing [Sohaib Langove marching alongside Mahrang Baloch at BYC protests](#), serving as her bodyguard.

In other words, Mahrang's trusted aide, ostensibly a victim of 'enforced disappearance', was in fact an active BLA terrorist, moving freely under the cover of BYC's demonstrations. His case lays bare the modus operandi: *terrorist operatives are rebranded as 'missing persons' to push an anti-state agenda*. BYC's camp had effectively sheltered a terrorist in plain sight.



These examples highlight a broader pattern. *Multiple individuals whom BYC presented to the world as abducted innocents were later unmasked as terrorists* involved in bombings and attacks. The BYC's phenomenon of *the smoke and mirrors of missing persons' movements* is a deliberate strategy of misdirection. The terrorists in Balochistan have cynically hitched their cause to this issue, inserting their own cadres into the missing persons lists to shield them or to tarnish the state's image. Each time one of these 'missing' youth carries out an atrocity, it not only vindicates the state's suspicions but also deals a blow to BYC's moral authority.

International Amplification: Diaspora Protests and Narrative Warfare

A key strength of BYC and similar Baloch organisations is their ability to project the terrorist narrative onto the international stage. The Baloch diaspora, often in coordination with BYC's messaging, has been active in organising protests in Western capitals. Under banners of human rights and civil liberties, these overseas rallies highlight Pakistan's alleged atrocities in Balochistan, while pointedly ignoring BLA/BLF violence. For instance, in August 2024, a large Baloch diaspora protest in Hannover, Germany, decried a 'brutal crackdown' on BYC protesters and accused the Pakistani military of ruthless aggression in Gwadar. Protesters invoked terms like 'Baloch genocide' and demanded global intervention, echoing BYC's line

and disseminating it across borders. Unsurprisingly, they made no mention of the BLA's terrorism that provoked the state's response. This one-sided advocacy by diaspora groups effectively amplifies BYC's narrative transnationally.

Such campaigns have had a tangible impact. International human rights watchdogs and some Western lawmakers have put Pakistan on the defensive over Balochistan, often pressuring Islamabad to rein in its counter-terrorism operations. The globalisation of the Baloch issue thus acts as a force multiplier for the terrorists' narrative warfare. It isolates Pakistan diplomatically and delegitimises its security efforts, painting every state action as oppression. In this sense, figures like Mahrang Baloch have become 'non-kinetic assets' in a hybrid war, *proxies* who weaken Pakistan through narrative and perception rather than direct violence. By invoking the rhetoric of human rights, they rally international sympathy, which in turn raises the political costs for Pakistan's anti-terror operations. BLA and other Baloch terrorist organisations deftly exploit this cover. Knowing that sympathetic civil society voices abroad will howl in protest, the terrorists gain breathing room on the ground. Moreover, this is the reason that the shell life of terrorists in Balochistan is longer than others.

BYC's high-profile protests are often timed and choreographed to align with the Baloch terrorist groups' strategy. When security forces squeeze the terrorists, the narrative wing (BYC and diaspora allies) ramps up international outrage, portraying the crackdown purely as repression of innocents. This dynamic severely complicates Pakistan's ability to combat groups like the BLA, which thrive on the space afforded by sympathetic media coverage abroad. As an example, the [weeks-long sit-ins that BYC organised in late 2024](#) in the port city of Gwadar were ostensibly about fishermen's rights, but it was designed to disrupt the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and to provide operational space for BLA terrorists under the cover of civil unrest. The protests blocked key roads, even stone-pelting Shia pilgrims travelling through and clashing with security forces, resulting in the death of a soldier. When the state moved to restore order, BYC activists blasted it as 'state brutality' and appealed to global audiences, conveniently obscuring the reality that the demonstrators had been [demanding the bodies of slain BLA terrorists](#) at Gwadar in the first place. The spectacle in Gwadar illustrated how a protest framed as a rights movement in Western media was, on the ground, intimately entwined with terrorist objectives.

The role of the exiled leadership in this narrative alliance is also noteworthy. The BLA's top leader, *Hyrbyair Marri*, operates from London and spearheads the *Free Balochistan Movement* abroad. Marri serves as a political architect for the narrative war, coaching activists and coordinating campaigns to erode Pakistan's credibility. BYC's emergence has coincided with open support from such exiled leaders. Notably, one of the 'missing persons' for whom BYC vehemently campaigned was [Zaheer Ahmad Baloch](#), a university student who disappeared in July 2024. It later emerged that Zaheer is the younger brother of Bashir Zeb Baloch, the current chief of the BLA. In other words, BYC was effectively mobilising on behalf of the family of a top terrorist commander. The Balochistan Home Minister revealed this linkage publicly, noting that Bashir Zeb's brother was inciting youth to rebel before he vanished. The *so-called human rights protests are being steered by terrorist leadership behind the scenes*. It is alleged that

Hyrbyair Marri and others funnel moral and material support to these campaigns, hoping to achieve through public opinion what the terrorists cannot through firepower.

In addition, *Dr. Naseem Baloch*, heading the Baloch National Movement (BNM), continues to advocate for an independent Balochistan and operates largely from exile. While BNM presents itself as a non-violent political platform focused on highlighting human rights concerns in the province, it simultaneously provides narrative cover for terrorist activities in Balochistan. The organisation is particularly active in international lobbying at the United Nations, European Union forums, and global human rights conferences, where it features issues such as enforced disappearances and military operations. However, BNM avoids addressing the ongoing wave of terrorism in Balochistan or the atrocities committed by terrorist groups, including the targeted killings of civilians and state officials. This selective focus means that BNM's discourse overlaps with, and indirectly reinforces, the ideological framework of banned organisations such as the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA).

Western recognitions of Mahrang Baloch (e.g. TIME100 Next and a Nobel Peace Prize nomination) are viewed with suspicion, seen not purely as honours for her activism, but as results of a concerted lobbying effort to legitimise the terrorist activities in Balochistan on the world stage. The ongoing terrorism in Balochistan is not purely homegrown but actively stoked by hostile foreign hands. In this view, narrative tools like BYC are part of a broader strategy by external actors to destabilise Pakistan from within.

Reclaiming the Narrative: Demanding Consistency and Truth

Countering the terrorists' anti-Pakistan narrative requires exposing its inconsistencies and insisting on a universal standard of truth and justice. True human rights advocacy demands moral consistency, condemning all violence against innocents. Here, BYC and its fellow travellers have manifestly failed the test. By remaining '[criminally silent](#)' on the BLA/BLF's atrocities while loudly denouncing the state, they reveal a partisan agenda, not a principled stand for human life. This double standard must be challenged at every forum. When Baloch activists abroad raise the issue of missing persons or alleged abuses, Pakistani representatives and independent observers should ask: *What about the teachers, labourers, and bus passengers blown apart by BLA bombs?* Are those victims any less human, their rights any less violated? The uncomfortable truth is that BYC's narrative has been selective, amplifying Baloch victimhood while erasing the terrorists' many victims. Highlighting this fact is key to undercutting their propaganda. It forces the conversation to acknowledge Balochistan's suffering at the hands of the Baloch terrorists, too, a topic BYC studiously avoids.

Pakistan can also reclaim ground by publicising the reality of Balochistan's development and reconciliation efforts, which the terrorists are desperate to derail. The BLA and BLF's campaign of blowing up roads, sabotaging power lines, and assassinating labourers is explicitly aimed at halting development projects in the province (especially those linked to CPEC). The terrorist organisations in Balochistan seek to '[return Balochistan's development to ancient times](#)' by threatening anyone working on infrastructure. Yet BYC and similar groups rarely, if

ever, mention these crimes against Balochistan's progress. By bringing these facts to international forums, Pakistan can demonstrate that the terrorist groups in Balochistan, not the state, are the true enemies of the Baloch people's welfare. The government's narrative must spotlight stories like the [2015 Turbat massacre](#), where BLF terrorists massacred 20 poor construction workers, explicitly because they considered development a threat to their terrorist agenda. No genuine civil society activist should have qualms about condemning such an act, yet BYC offered no protest or vigil in memory of those slain labourers and their families. The world should question why BYC does not condemn even the most heinous terrorist attacks. If BLA and BLF shootings of unarmed bus passengers or the point-blank execution of non-local labourers do not elicit outrage from BYC, can its silence be anything but complicity? Exposing this hypocrisy is vital. It robs BYC of the moral high ground and reveals their rhetoric as partisan propaganda rather than universal human rights advocacy.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's allies and international counterterrorism bodies have already formally acknowledged the BLA's terrorist character. This fact should be highlighted relentlessly: the group whose 'martyrs' BYC glorifies is internationally recognised as a terrorist. By reinforcing this message and by sharing evidence (like BYC's morgue raid or the *missing persons turned suicide bombers* phenomenon) with foreign governments and media, Pakistan can counter the romanticised 'activist' narrative. It must continue to *unmask the semiotics of subversion* at play, exposing how violent extremists and their soft-front enablers operate in tandem to weaken the state. Only by doing so can Pakistan address genuine grievances in Balochistan without falling prey to propaganda that ultimately serves terrorist ends.

Conclusion

The case of the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) highlights that the contemporary situation in Balochistan is no longer confined to physical battlegrounds but is increasingly fought in the realm of narratives. What BYC presents as activism and human rights advocacy frequently functions as an enabling discourse for terrorist organisations such as the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF). The BYC's refusal to condemn terrorist atrocities, its glorification of individuals directly involved in violent attacks, and its mobilisation around selective 'rights' discourses demonstrate that it is not an impartial civic platform but rather a facilitator of terrorist legitimacy. This convergence of propaganda and terrorism illustrates a coordinated hybrid strategy: while the BLA and BLF pursue open terrorism through bombings, assassinations, and attacks on infrastructure, BYC provides the narrative shield that frames such violence as resistance and cloaks terrorists as victims.

Recognising this reality requires a willingness to move beyond euphemisms. The situation in Balochistan is an organised campaign of terrorism aimed at destabilising Pakistan and obstructing national development projects such as CPEC and Gwadar port. Therefore, any genuine human rights framework must include the rights of ordinary Pakistanis, pilgrims, teachers, workers, and soldiers, who are systematically targeted by these terrorist outfits. Calling terrorism by its rightful name is not repression but a necessary step in defending the rule of law and public safety.

The path to durable peace in Balochistan thus requires a dual approach: countering terrorism with effective state security measures, while simultaneously reclaiming the narrative space through honest, fact-based engagement. By exposing the BYC's apologism for terrorism and re-centring the voices of Baloch citizens who desire development, security, and prosperity, Pakistan can weaken the propaganda infrastructure that sustains terrorism. Only by defeating both the gun of the terrorist and the narrative of the propagandist can Pakistan move toward a stable, inclusive, and peaceful Balochistan.



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