

## A year after Hyderabad blast, wounds still wide open

The marble platform of the 17th century Mecca Masjid is still lying broken in the mosque courtyard, a grim reminder of the bomb blast that killed nine people during Friday prayers exactly a year ago.

The police are yet to make any arrest for the terror attack of May 18, 2007, that occurred at the mosque a few yards from Charminar, the symbol of Hyderabad.

Subsequent police firing on protesters nearby killed five more people.

It was the first major terror attack in the 400-year-old city, which then witnessed twin blasts August 25, 2007 at a park and an eatery, killing 43 people.

The first bomb, an Improvised Explosive Device (IED), went off in the courtyard, as the devotees were about to complete the Friday prayers around 1.10 p.m. Thousands, offering prayers at one of the largest mosques in the country, ran in panic.

Riyaz Khan, 12, still shudders when he recalls the dreadful events of that day. He lost his father Yousuf Khan and uncle Shafeeq-ur-Rehman in the blast. It was a double tragedy for the family as the two brothers were to offer 'Namaz-e-Janaza' of their relative whose body they had carried to the mosque earlier.

'I was a little distance from the scene of the blast. People were running in panic. I stopped to have a look at those lying in the pool of blood and I was shocked to find my father and uncle among the dead,' said Riyaz.

Yousuf and his brother, both rickshaw-pullers, were the only bread earners for their families, who are today struggling to survive. Their widows, recently given jobs of sweeper and attendant at a government-run hospital, are trying to pick up the threads of life and are struggling to bring up their four children.

Zainab Begum still keeps breaking down over the loss of her son Mohammed Saleem in police firing while trying to fetch medicines for her. Afroz, the youngest son of Saleem, still can't understand why his grandmother breaks down on seeing his father's photograph. The four-year-old boy still thinks that his father is in Dubai and will return one day.

Syed Tahir Ali can never forget the black day when his 19-year-old son Syed Adil Ali fell to police bullets while returning home after handing over a lunch box to his brothers, who work at a shop near Charminar.

'The innocents fell to police bullets. I can't understand why police target only the innocents,' said Tahir Ali.

As for the police, they admit the dozens picked after the blast had no direct involvement and the real culprits are still at large.

The police suspect the Bangladesh-based Harkatul Jihad-e-Islami (HuJI) is behind the blast, but are yet to find evidence against the outfit.

Though the state government had ordered a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigations (CBI), the investigators are yet to pinpoint those involved. CBI is yet to file a charge sheet in the case.

State Home Minister K. Jana Reddy recently told the state legislature that not a single person was arrested in connection with the three blasts in 2007. He said 97 people suspected of carrying out Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) activities were picked up for questioning, but 42 were let off subsequently. The remaining including some Bangladeshis were detained for passport related crimes.

The [Jaipur](#) blasts, which occurred days before the first anniversary of the mosque blast, has put the spotlight back on the investigations here. With investigators finding similarities between Tuesday's blasts at Jaipur and last year's blasts here, the police have resumed efforts to crack the case.

A two-member police team has left for Jaipur. The investigators are trying to find out if the same outfit is responsible for both blasts.

The judicial inquiry into the police firing on protesters after the blast is yet to be completed. The Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (MIM), a political party with strong support base in Muslim-majority old city, and the victims alleged that the police firing was unprovoked but the police claimed that they were forced to open the fire to quell a mob.

*Mohammed Shafeeq ( © IANS / India eNews)*