



# MILITANT LEADERSHIP MONITOR

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### **The Post-Prison Resurrection of Indonesian Jemaa Islamiyah Founder Abubakar Baasyir**

*Jacob Zenn*

Abubakar Baasyir is an Indonesian Islamic preacher who became best known for his founding role in Jemaa Islamiyah (JI) in 1993 with, among others, Abdullahi Sungkar. Like other jihadist ideologues and founders of that era, the JI founders were inspired by the Afghan mujahidin's victory over the Soviet Union several years earlier. Baasyir, for his part, reportedly met Osama bin Laden, pledged allegiance to Bin Laden, and deployed his son to fight with al-Qaeda in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region under the command of future JI operations head Aris Sumarsono (also known as Zulkarnaen) and to study under Yemeni Islamist ideologue, Abdulmajid Zindani. After this, Baasyir's son reportedly led a JI training camp in Aceh, Indonesia ([Terrorism Monitor](#), December 16, 2005).

His son's activities in Aceh were followed by Baasyir's own establishment of a training

camp in Aceh, which in 2010 was raided by Indonesia's Densus 88 counter-terrorism unit ([kompas.com](#), August 9). That raid culminated in Baasyir's 2011 trial and his sentencing to 15 years in prison on terrorism charges, which was a shortened sentence that took into account his age of 73 at that time ([Terrorism Monitor](#), April 7, 2011). Baasyir, however, was not repentant and claimed after the trial that the Indonesian judicial system prosecuted him on terrorism charges because of "U.S orders" ([antaranews.com](#), October 6, 2012).

While in prison, Baasyir was separated from other JI militants because he was detained with prisoners in his own age group and had regular doctor visits to check on his health. To the disappointment of victims of JI's attacks, Indonesian authorities decided to release Baasyir after roughly ten years in prison in 2021, despite his earlier sentencing and the fact that Baasyir pledged allegiance to Islamic State (IS) caliph Abubakar al-Baghdadi while in prison ([balidiscovery.com](#), January 12, 2021). Baasyir hardly reformed his ideological views in prison.

Nevertheless, in the past several years, Indonesia has committed itself to de-radicalizing even the most notorious jihadists who have been imprisoned for large-scale terrorist attacks. Mar Patek, for example, is considered fully de-radicalized by both Indonesian and even Western experts and is set to be released early from prison in Indonesia, despite being convicted for a leading bomb-making role in the 2002 Bali bombing that killed more than 200 people ([canberratimes.com](http://canberratimes.com), October 10). Baasyir, however, differs from Patek and others like him because Baasyir's de-radicalization is much more questionable.

After his release from prison, Baasyir surprisingly attended an Indonesian Independence Day ceremony and praised how it was the first one ever to be held at the Baasyir-founded boarding school where a number of future jihadists had studied. He also noted that he used to believe that accepting or showing loyalty to state symbols was tantamount to "shirk (polytheism)." However, he now trusts Islamic scholars' "good faith" and that they are, in fact, monotheists ([jakartaglobe.id](http://jakartaglobe.id), August 17). Yet, months after that statement, in October, Baasyir declared that Indonesia must still impose Islamic law in the country ([jakartapost.com](http://jakartapost.com), October 11).

Rather than taking a peripheral role in societal affairs and recovering his health, which was apparently poor in prison, Baasyir is once again making his voice heard and challenging the secular identity of Indonesia. This also raises an important test for the credibility of Indonesia's lenient de-radicalization and early prison release programs.

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## **A Profile of Chief al-Shabaab Financial Facilitator: Khalif Adale**

*Sunguta West*

Al-Shabaab commander, Khalif Adale, whose real name is Khalif Mohammed Warsame, is one of the key financial architects of the Somalia based al-Qaeda affiliate in East Africa. In October, the U.S named Adale as one of the militant group's key financial intermediaries and imposed sanctions on this former telecom officer. Similar to other al-Shabaab members facing sanctions, Adale is accused of acting as a middleman linking the group with companies and other funding sources ([Hiiran Online](http://Hiiran Online), October 17, 2021).

### **Adale's Upbringing**

Adale's exact date of birth remains unclear, but some reports suggest that he was born on January 1, 1964. Records also indicate January 1, 1968 as his alternate date of birth. His nationality is listed as Djibouti, Somalia's neighbour to the north, although at some point he immigrated to Somalia.

His involvement with Somali militants can be traced to 2005, when a group of angry Muslim youth desecrated a colonial-era Italian cemetery in Mogadishu. This act brought the emergent al-Shabaab's notoriety to the forefront and was motivated by both commercial and ideological interests, with the cemetery area being turned into a "Salahuddin Ayubi Training centre," where future al-Shabaab recruits were accommodated and trained. Adale was seen as the mastermind behind the idea to desecrate the cemetery and sell the buried remains to the Italian government for 1.5 million euros ([ICG](http://ICG), June 26, 2014).

Around 2006-2007, some accounts describe Adale as an aide to Shaykh Sherif Ahmad, who was the head of al-Shabaab's predecessor, Islamic Courts Union (ICU), but Ahmad later became the President of

Somalia after leaving the jihadists and becoming their enemy. ICU, a loose grouping of Islamic courts, had taken control of Somalia in the aftermath of the fall of Siad Barre's authoritarian regime in 1991. In 2007, Adale arranged the travel of ICU leaders to Eritrea for an opposition summit against the newly formed Somali government of Shaykh Sherif Ahmed. Adale is, therefore, also considered one of the early leaders of al-Shabaab, which succeeded the ICU ([Somali Spot](#), January 21, 2022).

### **Adale's Position**

Adale played a role in al-Shabaab's internal security wing, the *amniyat*. Ahmed Abdi Godane (also known as Mukhtar Abu Zubair), who was formerly the al-Shabaab leader, appointed Adale to that position in Banaadir Region before Godane was killed in a U.S drone strike in 2014. Several years later, in 2018, while serving as al-Shabaab's finance officer, Adale brokered deals between al-Shabaab and various businesses. He was also in charge of the heavy taxes that the group imposed on businesses and acted as a liaison to settle disputes between clans and al-Shabaab, while also recruiting for the militant group ([Hiiran Online](#), October 17).

Adale currently heads al-Shabaab's department of Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) affairs. In this position, his task is to collect money from the NGOs operating or seeking to launch humanitarian operations in areas controlled by al-Shabaab. In addition, al-Shabaab collects taxes from individuals and businesses, including trucks that transport humanitarian aid. Although NGOs have been cautious about revealing "protection agreements" with al-Shabaab, some are known to pay fees or taxes to access areas under the group's control ([Garowe Online](#), April 2, 2019).

Al-Shabaab supplements the above-mentioned income with funding from other al-Qaeda-affiliated organizations and sponsors and from illegal activities, such as

piracy and kidnapping. Some of al-Shabaab's revenues, in turn, are used to fund attacks inside Somalia and in neighbouring countries, such as Kenya ([Garowe Online](#), October 18).

Most recently, in a reshuffle of al-Shabaab's administration, the group leader, Ahmed Diriye, appointed Adale as the governor of Lower Shabelle region, where he previously served as al-Shabaab's chief financial officer ([Somali Dispatch](#), September 18, 2020). Before that, he was also a senior official of the Hormuud Telcom. As Adale hailed from the Ayr clan, which is a sub-clan of the larger Habar Gidir Hawiye Clan, his connection to that company came through family ties. Further, Adale married the sister of Ahmed Nur Ali Jimale, who was at one time the chairman of the telecom company. Adale's wife, however, allegedly lives in the United Arab Emirates ([Waagacusub Media](#), October 19).

### **Conclusion**

Adale's familiarity with the telecom industry and finances, his early interactions with former leader ICU leaders, and his origins as a member of the Habar Gidir Hawiye clan prepared him for his role as an al-Shabaab commander and financial architect. At present, the interest in understanding, weakening, and disrupting al-Shabaab's financial sources is pertinent to undermining the group's strength. Limiting or cutting off al-Shabaab's cash flow would reduce the group's ability to carry out attacks in Somalia and beyond. Targeting financial leaders, such as Adale, would in the long run prove beneficial for counter terrorism efforts against the militant group. For the time being, however, he continues to remain at-large.

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## **In the Name of the Father: Ahmad Massoud's Continuing Struggle Against Taliban Rule in Afghanistan**

*Syed Fazl-e-Haider*

The 33-year old Ahmad Massoud is the leader of the National Resistance Front (NRF), which is an Afghan insurgent group waging an insurgency in the northern Panjshir Valley against the Taliban government in Kabul. Massoud, an ethnic Tajik, denounces the present Taliban government, which came to power last year following the withdrawal of U.S forces from Afghanistan. He claims the Taliban is "illegitimate" ([Dawn](#), September 16).

The NRF has become an anti-Taliban military alliance that formed after the fall of Kabul to the Taliban last year. It is referred to as the "Second Resistance" after the Northern Alliance and is composed of largely anti-Taliban Afghan factions and fighters. Founded and led by Massoud, the NRF is struggling to seek a political solution to the current Afghan crisis and build an inclusive government representing all ethnic groups and political factions in Afghanistan ([Khaama](#), July 7).

Massoud is currently striving to strengthen the NRF both militarily and politically. As a leader of a stronger, broad-based and multi-ethnic NRF, he would be able to play a key role in the power game in Kabul.

### **Early Life and Career**

Born in 1989 in Panjshir valley, Massoud is the only son of Ahmad Shah Massoud, who had five other daughters and was the leader of the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan and was known as the Lion of Panjshir (Massoud was only 12-years old when his father, the legendary anti-Soviet and anti-Taliban fighter, was assassinated in a suicide attack in September 2001 by al-Qaeda. This occurred two days before the 9/11 attacks on the U.S. His father

remains the most revered figure of Panjshir valley ([Afghan Bios](#), October 10).

After the assassination of his father in 2001, Massoud went abroad to complete his education and received high school education in Iran. He then graduated from the Sandhurst Military Academy in England and received a Master's degree in international relations in London. He also wrote his undergraduate and postgraduate theses on the Taliban and argued that it is a criminal franchise network which runs on the money that comes from organized crime, such as kidnapping for ransom and drug peddling. To study the Taliban from an Islamic perspective, he met with Islamic scholars in Turkey and the Arab world ([Afghan Bios](#), October 10). He further concluded that the Afghan mujahidin under the command of his father during the 1980s and 1990s were quite different from the Taliban, who have imposed an extremist form of Islam on Afghanistan ([Asia Times](#), September 5, 2019).

He later returned to his home country in 2016 ([RFI](#), September 6, 2019). Three years prior to this, in November 2013, Massoud was appointed the CEO of the Massoud Foundation ([Asia-Plus](#), July 7). This is an independent and non-profit organization promoting the political philosophy of the slain Ahmad Shah Massoud: his aspirations for peace, democracy, social justice, and sustainable development in Afghanistan ([Massoud Foundation](#), October 17).

It was eighteen years after the assassination of his father that Massoud stepped into the political fray as the successor of his father. At that time, in September 2019, Massoud pledged to continue his father's mission to unify the Afghan people against the Taliban at a ceremony held in Panjshir province. A number of former anti-Soviet "mujahideen" commanders, who were his father's staunch supporters, vowed to continue Ahmad Shah Massoud's legacy under his son's leadership ([Afghan Bios](#), October 10). Ahead of the ceremony,

Massoud stated, "At this moment, [the Taliban] are intoxicated. They think they are victorious.... Someone needs to detox them to bring them to reality that it is no longer their way, and will never be their way"([Asia Times](#), September 5, 2019).

Massoud was nevertheless clear about his goals even before his entry into Afghanistan's political scene. In 2012, for example, he expressed his views during an interview with an Iranian magazine when he said, "My goal is clear to continue on the path of the martyrs, especially my martyred father.... Becoming a Massoud is a very difficult task; I will do my best to be a *khalaf* (successor).... I just hope that one day they will remember me well ([Teribon. Ir](#), March 5, 2012)."

### **Uniting the anti-Taliban Afghan Diaspora in Diplomacy and War**

While currently in exile in France, Massoud is making efforts to unite the Afghan diaspora to end Taliban rule by building political pressure. He believes in finding a political solution to the Afghan problem through dialogue with all Afghan groups, including the Taliban. When he addressed a conference in Vienna, he stated "We want to unify the diaspora... and slowly expand the dialogue and reach to the point where we have a roadmap for the future of Afghanistan.... Our aim has never been to strengthen the war but to end the war. We are in the very beginning of a new phase" ([Dawn](#), September 16).

In a move to gather and strengthen anti-Taliban forces under NRF, Massoud held a meeting with Hazara leader Ismail Khan in exile in Iran last year. There he conveyed a message from Tajik President Emomali Rahmon to push for an inclusive government in Kabul. Additionally, the Massoud-led NRF registered with the U.S Justice Department to carry out political lobbying in the U.S against the Taliban government ([Economic Times](#), November 8, 2021).

However, following the fall of Kabul last year, Panjshir Province had become the last outpost for the Taliban to control. With few entry points, the mountainous Panjshir valley offers military advantages for guerrilla warfare. Under the leadership of Massoud, the local militia fighters and Afghan soldiers, who had not surrendered to the Taliban, regrouped in Panjshir to mount an effective resistance against the Taliban last year ([Dawn](#), September 1, 2021). In the first week of September 2021, the Taliban announced that they had taken complete control of Panjshir, which had been the stronghold of the Massoud family for 43 years ([Express Tribune](#), September 6, 2021).

After the Taliban took control of Panjshir, Massoud left Afghanistan and took refuge in Tajikistan. There he made efforts to garner support from regional countries against the Taliban. He sometimes also has visited Afghanistan to meet with resistance units in different regions and is striving to convince the Central Asian countries and the international community to support NRF's military struggle against the Taliban ([TASS](#), November 1, 2021).

### **Massoud's Milieu**

Besides his relations with Tajik President Emomali Rahmon, who is a strong critic of the Taliban, Massoud also met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Tajikistan during Putin's visit to the country in June ([Economic Times](#), November 8, 2021). Putin apparently showed interest in Massoud's vision for Afghanistan ([Asia-Plus](#), July 7). After this, In July, there were reports that Massoud was planning to hold a conference with Taliban representatives in Dushanbe. It was planned for some 50 people from Afghanistan's political parties, intelligentsia and public figures to be invited to participate in the conference ([Asia-Plus](#), July 7).

However, Massoud subsequently seems to have given up on the diplomatic approach to solve the Afghan problem after one year of Taliban rule in Afghanistan. He believes

that Afghanistan under the Taliban moved several steps back on all fronts in just one year. Massoud was also disappointed with the diplomatic option for forming an inclusive government in Kabul after the Taliban showed no interest in reforming their oppressive governance of women and minorities ([Indian Express](#), September 5).

Now Massoud believes that war against the Taliban is the only option to resolve the Afghan problem. He claimed in an interview with a Massoud Foundation representative that “there’s no other option but to resist until [Taliban members] understand and realize they need to also submit—as [do] all of us—to a legitimate process which brings a legitimate government which is accountable to the people of Afghanistan, and also to the world.” He added that, “Unfortunately, Taliban leaders have not changed. They are even more radical than before...They failed in fighting international terrorism because they share the same ideology as terrorist groups....They failed in creating inclusivity because they don’t believe in it ([Afghanistan International](#), August 13).”

## Conclusion

Resistance from the Panjshir valley during the 1980s against Soviet forces and against the previous Taliban government from 1996 to 2001 shaped Afghanistan's political and security landscape under the leadership of Ahmad Shah Massoud. However, will the resistance from Panjshir against the current Taliban government reshape the political landscape of Afghanistan under the leadership of his son—Ahmad Massoud? Will Massoud continue the legacy of his father? Certainly, Massoud faces hard challenges, but his leadership and his strategies both on the diplomatic and warfront against the Taliban indicate the answers to these questions in the years ahead may be affirmative.

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## Basavaraj: Inside the Mind of India’s Top Maoist Militant

*Soumya Awasthi*

In India, which has a sizable tribal population, the Maoist movement has become firmly established over the last several decades due to socioeconomic circumstances, such as India’s wealth disparities, unemployment level, and exploitation of natural resources. Following a schism among the Communist Party of India (CPI) Marxists, a new faction, the Maoists, initially appeared in the West Bengal region of Naxalbari in 1967. Since then, the Maoist movement, known as “Naxalism,” has been advancing its radical and revolutionary objectives using violent methods.

However, the violence levels and geographical spread of left-wing extremism (LWE) in India have still shrunk over the past decade, with the number of affected districts down to 70 in July 2021 from 126 in April 2018 ([Times of India](#), September 27, 2021). In addition, since offensive actions of as part of Operation Green Hunt and SAMADHAN commenced, where the state deployed police and paramilitary forces in areas where the movement was active, the country’s “Maoist belt” has receded ([Indian Express](#), September 2, 2019). Nevertheless, some new areas have been identified as potential locations for the emergence of Naxalism, including eight “districts of concern” that are under the expansion plans of the CPI (Maoist) ([Ministry of Home Affairs](#), February 6, 2019). This has resulted from the remaining Maoist leadership under “Basavaraj” formulating a strategy to mobilize and ensure constant agitation and

propaganda against the government in those areas.

### **Basavaraj: the Maoist Leader**

In 2017, after serving as the General Secretary for almost 25 years, Muppala Lakshman Rao, whose alias is "Ganapathi," left his position following a meeting of the CPI (Maoist) party central committee ([Indian Express](#), November 29, 2018). Ganapathi's successor became Nambala Keshav Rao, whose alias is "Basavaraj" (his other aliases include "Ganganna", "Prakash", "Krishna", "Vijay", "Darapu Narasimha Reddy", and "Narasimha"). An expert in handling explosives, Basavaraj was afterwards listed among India's Most Wanted ([Hindustan Times](#), November 29, 2018). Basavaraj has since then officially headed the CPI (Maoist) Central Military Commission (CMC), which was formed in 2004 ([News Laundry](#), October 4, 2017).

From 2004 to 2018, the major assassinations by the CPI (Maoist) were masterminded by Basavaraj as the head of the CMC, such as:

- Kidari Sarveswara Rao and Siveri Soma, who were Members of Legislative Assembly (MLA) in the YSR Congress Party in Andhra Pradesh from Araku and Vishakhapatnam and were accused of engaging in illegal mining contracts and corruption ([The Hindu](#), September 25, 2018).
- The former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Vidya Charan Shukla, who was a Veteran YSR Congress leader and visited the Maoists' areas despite being warned by fighters against doing so ([Indian Express](#), June 11, 2013).
- Mahendra Karma, who was famously known as "Bastard Tiger" and founded the "Armed Civilian Vigilante" Salwa Judum movement, which fought against the Maoists. He was assassinated when he was carrying out a political rally for the YSR Congress Party in the Naxal belt and protested

against the Maoists' violence in the Chhattisgarh region ([Hindustan Times](#), May 27, 2013).

Basavaraj operates extensively in the Maoist areas of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Dandakaranya in Chhattisgarh, which is the epicentre of the Maoist movement because it hosts dense jungles which cannot be accessed easily by security forces ([Firstpost](#), November 6, 2018). In particular, a deadly attack on security forces in Sukma town of Chhattisgarh in 2021, which led to 17 casualties, highlighted the shift in ideological moorings of the CPI-Maoist movement led by the new leader, Basavaraj ([Hindustan Times](#), March 22, 2020). That attack used more explosives and fighters (an estimated to 250 to 500 individuals, which is approximately two Maoist "companies") than any other attack ([CLAWS](#), April 6, 2021). Unlike the times of Ganapathi when the movement thrived on intelligentsia, under Basavaraj there has been more emphasis on militancy. Basavaraj's leadership, therefore, reflects a shift in tactics from ideology to a combination of ideology plus insurgency ([The Hindu](#), September 26, 2017).

### **Background on Basavaraj**

The now 66-year-old Basavaraj graduated with an engineering degree from Regional Engineering College (Warangal), which is known as the National Institute of Technology. Before then, he was raised in Jiyannapet village in the Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh and was a *kabbadi* (a physical contact sport involving tackling opponents) player in his youth ([Firstpost](#), November 6, 2018). In the early 1980s, Basavaraj became the first commander to enter East Godavari and Vishakhapatnam districts with fellow Maoists. There, he formed the militant group People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA), which in 2000 became the military wing of the CPI (Maoist).

In 1987, along with some senior members of the group, he underwent training in the

forests of Bastar in the district of Chhattisgarh under a group of former fighters of the Sri Lankan Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). During this time, he learned how to make and use improvised explosive devices (IEDs) ([The Hindu](#), May 19, 2019). Slightly after one decade of being a militant, in 1992, he was elected as a member of the central committee of the CPI (Maoist) when "Ganapathi" became its General Secretary.

In an article published in 2013 by the party's theoretical magazine, *People's War*, Basavaraj provided a roadmap for the revolution CPI (Maoist) would lead. He argued that "If we can mobilise the peasantry on a vast scale and militantly into an armed agrarian revolution to completely solve the land issue in our country, we will acquire the essential basic condition and preconditions to defeat all our enemies and complete the New Democratic Revolution ([Hindustan Times](#), November 29, 2018)." Typical of Maoist ideology, Basavaraj also discussed taking the ownership of the resource-rich land and not allowing capitalists to exploit the forests and land for natural resource extraction.

### **Basavaraj's Break from Tradition**

Unlike his predecessors, Basavaraj believes in using violence rather than focusing on building the party politically and ideologically. His tactic in the propaganda realm, however, does attempt to undermine the perception that the Maoist struggle is nearing its end in India, while Basavaraj's network of arms smugglers and illegal arms makers has resulted in the Maoists' having no dearth of ammunition and explosives, which they procure from the mining contractors that maintain stocks of explosives for blasting and detonators ([IDSA](#), February 17, 2014). As a result of Basavaraj's activities, the Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana governments have announced a bounty of 1.5 million Indian Rupees for his capture.

Under the leadership of Basavaraj in May 2019, the Maoists killed 15 commandos of the C-60 force of the Maharashtra Police and a civilian with an improvised explosive device (IED) in the Gadchiroli district ([The Hindu](#), December 3, 2021). Preceding the incident, the Maoists had torched 26 vehicles used for construction work at the National Highway-136 site to lure the security forces into their trap. Earlier on April 9, 2019, the Maoists also attacked the convoy of Chhattisgarh BJP legislator Bhima Mandavi, killing Mandavi and two others just before the first phase of the general election ([India Today](#), April 09, 2019). A critical commonality among all the attacks mentioned above is the surgical precision with which they were carried out.

Neither Basavaraj nor his fighters, however, have a presence in the mainstream media due to their reclusive approach and their desire to maintain a low profile. Furthermore, it is very challenging for the security forces to keep track of the movements of the CPI (Maoist) primary leaders or, for that matter, the media to follow the developments because all of the leaders move in multiple rings of protection with armed bodyguards. No known image of Basavaraj's face even exists.

### **Conclusion**

Basavaraj is among 34 of the top Naxalites active in Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, and other states, who are considered wanted by the Chhattisgarh police ([The Hindu](#), June 28, 2020). Since 2018, the CPI (Maoist) fighters have carried out four attacks under Basavaraj's Tactical Counter Offensive Campaign (TCOC), according to Indian security agencies ([The Pioneer](#), November 6). The Maoists' activities have been mostly subdued in broader perspective, however, and the new Indian administration wants to take military actions to regain lost territories from the Naxalites.

The Maoists paradoxically have managed to have a longer shelf-life the more the government uses force against them. In

hindsight, the state governments perhaps should have implemented more restorative measures to the public like security, development, surrender, rehabilitation, and securing residents' rights and entitlements. Owing to those government policies, the Maoists have not been able to gain widespread local support or assemble a reliable cadre. Therefore, even after five years under Basavaraj, he has not gotten any closer to the Maoist movement's goals of achieving legitimacy or autonomy.

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