

The 'university of holy war'

By Haroon Rashid  
BBC correspondent in North-West Frontier Province**Its students and principal call it the University of Jihad (Holy War).**

Last week the religious seminary of Darul Uloom Haqqania in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province turned out another class of young Pakistanis and Afghans ready to wage holy war against the enemies of their religion.

Among them was 15-year-old Afghan refugee, Javed Ullah.

"I wish to fight the infidels," he said as he left the seminary in Akora Khattak, 50 kilometres (31 miles) east of the provincial capital, Peshawar.

Javed is among 600 students who have completed studies in different fields over the past year.

Wearing white turbans and dress, all the new graduates looked satisfied and seemed to brim with hope for a bright future.

"I want to go back and fight the Americans," Javed said wearing a garland. "I can't wait anymore."

His Pakistani classmates had a similar desire.

"I will dedicate my whole life for jihad. It is compulsory for Muslims. I will kill enemies of Islam," said student Minhaj Uddin.

**Mullah Omar's words**

The whole convocation was full of slogans in support of Afghanistan's ousted Taliban regime, al-Qaeda's leader Osama Bin Laden and holy war.

Some of the banners adorning the seminary were decorated with pictures of Kalashnikov rifles and tanks.

In their speeches, teachers and religious scholars urged the students to put defending their faith before everything else.

"Being watchmen of your religion, you are naturally the first target of your enemies," said Maulana Sami ul-Haq, the principal of the seminary.

In the past, some Taliban officials, themselves graduates of the institution, have attended these convocations.

Even Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar's messages have been read out.

The school's support for the Taliban has been no secret.

The principal previously sent a batch of 2,000 Afghan students back to their homeland to aid the then ruling Taliban in its fight against the warlords of the Northern Alliance.

His words of advice for the Pakistani and Afghan students are now to wage holy war



The ceremony was adorned with pro-Taliban slogans

**“ I will dedicate my whole life for jihad. I will kill enemies of Islam**

Minhaj Uddin, student

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Students take a final oath at the graduation ceremony

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until the "evil force" is defeated.

TALEBAN ALUMNI

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"In the past, only conspiracies were hatched to end Islam, but now the enemy is in the battlefield challenging us," said Mr Sami.

Amir Khan Muttaqi - information and culture minister

Abdul Latif Mansoor - agriculture minister

"Islam, Muslim scholars and religious students were never under such a threat as today."

Maulvi Ahmad Jan - minister of mines and industries

Such messages emanating from seminaries ring alarm bells in Western countries and among moderates in Pakistan.

Mullah Jalaludin Haqani - minister of frontier affairs

Maulvi Qalamudin - head of the religious police

The government of President Pervez Musharraf wants to turn the tide and promote liberalism but is finding it difficult to change things with the speed the international community wants.

Arifullah Arif - deputy foreign minister

Mullah Khairullah Khaikhwa - interior ministry

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North-West Frontier Province has many tribal areas that have historically been autonomous, governed by tribal leaders and their own laws.

It is inhabited mostly by the Pashtun, the same ethnic group that dominated the Taleban, and has always been affected directly by events across the long, porous border with Afghanistan.

Some observers say the bad effects of over two decades of war - religious extremism, gun-running and drugs - cannot quickly be removed.

Certainly, the government's efforts to change the curriculum in the religious schools have failed to make any impact so far.

While such efforts go on, fresh batches of volunteers ready to confront what they see as the enemies of their faith continue to graduate.

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