

Gunmen kill at least 26 visiting Kashmir resort, Indian authorities say

BY AIJAZ HUSSAIN

SRINAGAR, India — Gunmen killed at least 26 tourists at a resort in the Indian-controlled portion of Kashmir, police said Tuesday, in what appeared to be a major shift in the regional conflict in which tourists largely have been spared.

Police described the incident as a terrorist attack and blamed militants fighting against Indian rule. “This attack is much larger than anything we’ve seen directed at civilians in recent years,” Omar Abdullah, the region’s top elected official, wrote on social media.

Two senior police officers said at least four gunmen, whom they described as militants, opened fire on dozens of tourists at close range. The officers said at least three dozen others were injured, many in serious condition.

Most of the tourists killed were Indian, the officers said, speaking on condition of anonymity in keeping with departmental policy. Officials recovered at least 24 bodies in Baisaran meadow, about three miles from the disputed region’s resort town of Pahalgam. Two others died while being transported for medical treatment.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility. Police and soldiers were searching for the attackers.

“We will come down heavily on the perpetrators with the harshest consequences,” India’s home minister, Amit Shah, wrote on social media. He was heading to Srinagar, the main city in the Indian-held part of Kashmir. He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on an official visit in Saudi Arabia, has been briefed.

Modi was cutting short his visit and returning to New Delhi early Wednesday, the Press Trust of India news agency reported.

Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, a key opposition politician and Kashmir’s top religious cleric, condemned what he described as a “cowardly attack on tourists,” writing on social media that “such violence is unacceptable and against the ethos of Kashmir which welcomes visitors

with love and warmth.”

The gunfire coincided with the visit to India of Vice President JD Vance, who called it a “devastating terrorist attack.”

He added on social media: “Over the past few days, we have been overcome with the beauty of this country and its people. Our thoughts and prayers are with them as they mourn this horrific attack.”

President Trump on social media noted “deeply disturbing news out of Kashmir. The United States stands strong with India against terrorism.” Other global leaders, including Russian President Vladimir Putin and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, condemned the attack.

Nuclear-armed rivals India and Pakistan each administer part of Kashmir, but both claim the territory in its entirety.

Kashmir has seen a spate of targeted killings of Hindus, including immigrant workers from Indian states, after New Delhi ended the region’s semiautonomy in 2019 and drastically curbed dissent, civil liberties and media freedoms.

Tensions have been simmering as India has intensified its counterinsurgency operations. But despite tourists flocking to Kashmir for its Himalayan foothills and exquisitely decorated houseboats, they have not been targeted.

The region has drawn millions of visitors who enjoy a strange peace kept by ubiquitous security checkpoints, armored vehicles and patrolling soldiers. New Delhi has vigorously pushed tourism and touted it as a sign of normality returning.

The meadow in Pahalgam, surrounded by snow-capped mountains and dotted with pine forests, draws hundreds of tourists daily.

Opposition leader Rahul Gandhi, while condemning the attack, said the Modi government should take accountability instead of making “hollow claims on the situation being normal” in the region.

Hussain writes for the Associated Press. AP writer Sheikh Saaliq in New Delhi contributed to this report.



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POLICE blamed militants fighting against Indian rule in Tuesday’s attack. Above, tourists in Srinagar.