

# Gunmen kill and wound tourists in attack in Indian-administered Kashmir

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SRINAGAR, INDIA — A large number of tourists were killed or wounded Tuesday after suspected militants opened fire in a popular mountain town in Indian-administered Kashmir, according to officials in the region.

The death toll was still unclear late Tuesday, with estimates in local media outlets ranging from 20 to 27 and no official count provided.

Omar Abdullah, the chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, wrote on X that “the death toll is still being ascertained” but went on to describe the attack as “much larger than anything we’ve seen directed at civilians in recent years.”

The Indian government has recently sought to showcase Kashmir’s newfound stability and rising tourism numbers, and has cracked down harshly on dissent in the Muslim-majority enclave, but it has been unable to fully stamp out separatist violence.

The attack occurred during a visit to India by Vice President JD Vance, who was on a sightseeing



MUKHTAR KHAN/AP

**Tourists take pictures in Srinagar in Indian-administered Kashmir on Tuesday.**

trip to Jaipur on Tuesday, a day after meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi.

Modi wrote on X that “those

behind this heinous act will be brought to justice.”

“They will not be spared! Their evil agenda will never succeed,”

he wrote. “Our resolve to fight terrorism is unshakable and it will get even stronger.”

Visitors were snapping photos

and riding ponies in the meadows of Pahalgam, known here as “mini-Switzerland,” when assailants emerged from the nearby forest and fired indiscriminately, according to local media reports.

Rescue efforts were complicated by the remote terrain, witnesses said, which is accessible only on foot or horseback.

Abdul Waheed, a worker in the town who rushed to the scene when he heard about the attack, said he saw many bodies lying in the grass: “It was hard to tell if they were alive or dead. I could see women and kids crying.”

Unable to evacuate people by car, he helped ferry the injured on makeshift stretchers and on horseback to the nearest hospital, about 25 minutes away.

“I came home and have not left since,” he said. “Like everyone else, I feel scared.”

India and Pakistan both administer parts of Kashmir but claim the entire territory. For decades, armed insurgents have resisted Indian rule — some groups support full independence, while others seek to merge with Pakistan. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for Tuesday’s attack.

In 2019, the Indian government revoked Kashmir’s semiautonomous status and imposed sweeping security measures, which it credits with a reduction in political violence. Rights groups have documented serious abuses by Indian security forces, including arbitrary detention and extrajudicial killings.

Last year, elections were held in Kashmir, and many in the region are now clamoring for statehood.

Tuesday’s sudden violence comes at a politically sensitive moment for New Delhi. Modi is expected to inaugurate a multi-billion-dollar railway project soon that will connect the Kashmir Valley with mainland India — an effort billed as a boon for tourism and economic development.

The return of tourists to the area has been hailed by the government as a sign of renewed stability, and foot traffic peaks in places such as Pahalgam and Gulmarg during the summer months. In July, Pahalgam will begin to serve as a base camp for an annual Hindu pilgrimage.

Mehrotra reported from New Delhi.