

U.S. MOVES TO GET CHINA'S SUPPORT FOR LISTING AZHAR

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Masood Azhar

The United States is working to convince China to allow the listing of Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) Chief Masood Azhar by the UNSC 1267 Committee, a senior administration official, who did not want to be named, said.

Speaking exclusively to *The Hindu*, the official said, "We are working hard to convince China. It is not in China's interest to shield terrorist groups operating in Pakistan. And as a responsible global power, China should take a clear stand against terrorism. So we expect China to join in designating Masood Azhar as a terrorist."

The official said the U.S. felt India's frustration and that Pakistan has been isolated over the February 14 Pulwama attack and its aftermath. The U.S. was looking for permanent action by Pakistan to end its support for terror.

Remains sceptical

Pakistan had last week reportedly detained more than 120 individuals connected to terror groups, taken over madrasas and seized assets of terror groups including those of Jamat-ud-Dawa (JuD) — a sister organisation of militant outfit Lakshar-e-Taiba and its charity arm, Falah-e-Insaniyat Foundation (FIF). Both organisations are headed by Hafiz Saeed, a UN designated terrorist, wanted by India in connection with the 2008 Mumbai attack.

"We are not going to be satisfied with half-measures or temporary steps like we've seen in the past. I do think Pakistan has to consider the reaction of the international community," the senior administration official said. "There has been a lot of solidarity with India and a lot of frustration with the fact that Pakistan has still not cracked down on these groups. Pakistan has been pretty isolated over this situation," the official said.

Following the ratcheting up of tensions after the Pulwama attack, the U.S. and other world powers have been quick to step forward to help de-escalate the situation between the two nuclear powers.

Nuclear threat

"Whenever there are crises like these between India and Pakistan, there is a great deal of concern because these are nuclear states. So there is the instinct to de-escalate the situation. But there is also less patience with Pakistan's support for these groups and more of a sense of sharing India's frustration over these groups' ability to operate freely inside Pakistan," the official said, characterising the U.S. reaction.

U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo met with British National Security Advisor Mark Sedwill on Friday and "support for reducing tension between India and Pakistan" was part of their discussion, the U.S. State Department spokesperson Robert Palladino said.

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