

Arrest Hafiz Saeed, U.S. tells Pakistan

Hafiz Saeed

Pakistan should ensure that Hafiz Saeed, mastermind of the 2008 Mumbai terror attack, is arrested and charged for his crimes, the U.S. said a day after he was released from house arrest. Saeed is a designated global terrorist and the U.S. has declared a bounty of \$10 million on his head.

The Pakistani authorities had put him under house arrest in January this year, which was widely interpreted as an attempt by them to ward off pressure from the Donald Trump administration that had just taken charge in the U.S. Pakistan had detained him several times since the Mumbai attack, but he has largely remained free, addressing rallies and giving interviews.

“The United States is deeply concerned that Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) leader Hafiz Saeed has been released from house arrest in Pakistan. The LeT is a designated foreign terrorist organisation responsible for the death of hundreds of innocent civilians in terrorist attacks, including a number of American citizens. The Pakistani government should make sure that he is arrested and charged for his crimes,” said State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert.

Saeed’s release came days after the Trump administration pushed back against attempts by U.S. lawmakers to put the LeT and the Haqqani Network in the same category in the recently passed National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA). A significant portion of U.S. aid to Pakistan is tied to certification by the Secretary of State that it is taking adequate action against the Haqqani Network. With the Secretary unable to issue this certification, the U.S. has held back large sums in recent years. The Senate version of the NDAA proposed such certification requirement with regard to action against the LeT also, but the Pentagon objected to it. The final version of the law does not have that provision.

‘Act against LeT’

The U.S. has, however, repeatedly asked Pakistan to act against the LeT. “In May 2008, the U.S. Department of the Treasury designated Saeed as a specially designated global terrorist under Executive Order 13224. Saeed was also individually designated by the UN under UNSCR 1267 in December 2008 following the November 2008 Mumbai attack in which 166 people, including six American citizens, were killed,” said Ms. Nauert. “The LeT and several of its front organisations, leaders and operatives remain under both State Department and Treasury Department sanctions. Since 2012, the U.S. has offered a \$10 million reward for information that brings Saeed to justice.”

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