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[Subcontinent](#)

[World](#)

[News Feed](#)

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[Dubai](#)

[Sharjah](#)

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[NEWS IN PICS](#)

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[World](#)

[OPINION](#)

[LETTERS](#)

[ONLINE EXCLUSIVE](#)

[Newsmaker](#)

[Today's Feature](#)

[Weather](#)

[Prayer Timings](#)

[Overseas Reports](#)

[NRI Problems](#)

[CITY TIMES](#)

[WEEKEND](#)

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In the Subcontinent

Khaleej Times Online >> News >> SUBCONTINENT

No Al Qaeda link: Qazi

From our correspondents

24 August 2005

ISLAMABAD/LAHORE — The chief of Jamaate Islami, Qazi Hussain Ahmed has rebutted charges that his party has any links with Al Qaeda.

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Appearing on BBC's programme 'Hard Talk' yesterday, he acknowledged that he knew Osama bin Laden but did not believe that any credible evidence has been produced to implicate him in the 9/11 attacks in US.

Qazi said his party is a peaceful organisation which supports a peaceful worldwide struggle for political, economic and cultural freedoms in entire world. He said the JI condemned the 9/11 and 7/7 London bombings. Simultaneously it condemns the killing of Palestinian people by Israel, US bombing in Iraqi and Afghanistan which killed tens of thousands of people.

Asked if he supports Gen. Musharraf,s policy to support US-led war on terror, Qazi Hussain Ahmed who is also MMA president, said Musharraf is a usurper and the US must not side with him. Instead the US should encourage restoration of democracy in Pakistan because only true representatives of the people would be able to overcome problems of extremism and militancy.

He acknowledged that some madrassas might be involved in preaching sectarianism and extremism but rejected any US interference to combat these menaces.

Qazi rejected objections to Hasba Bill and said it is being misrepresented as an attempt at Talibanization of Pakistan. He said there are no restrictions on women,s participation in public life in the NWFP where the MMA rules.

Meanwhile, Qazi Hussain Ahmed has rejected as baseless news about possible UN sanctions against his party.

The JI has not been involved in any terrorist activity and has not been accused so far in this regard, he said in a statement in Lahore.

Qazi said that JI was a responsible organisation and there are no demands that the world body take any action against the party.

He argued the JI had never been accused of having links with any terrorist organisation.

"In fact people all over the world recognise our welfare projects. The JI is respected in the world due to its love for humanity and this is what Islam teaches us".

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