



Pakistan – Country Focus

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Country of Origin Information Report

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- France, Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA), Information, Documentation and Research Division (DIDR)
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The review carried out by the mentioned departments, experts or organisations contributes to the overall quality of the report, but does not necessarily imply their formal endorsement of the final report, which is the full responsibility of the EUAA.





Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Contents	4
Disclaimer	8
Glossary and abbreviations	9
Introduction	14
Methodology.....	14
Defining the terms of reference.....	14
Collecting information.....	14
Quality control.....	14
Sources.....	15
Sources on security incidents and civilian casualties	15
Structure and use of the report.....	17
Map	18
1. Country overview	19
1.1. Geography.....	19
1.2. Demographics	20
1.3. State structure	21
2. Background and political developments	24
2.1. Recent political developments	24
2.2. International context.....	27
2.2.1. Relations with Afghanistan.....	27
2.2.2. Relations with India	28
2.2.3. Relations with Iran	29
3. Main actors involved in armed conflicts	30
3.1. State Actors.....	30
3.1.1. Pakistan Army	30
3.1.2. Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).....	30
3.1.3. Pakistani police.....	31
3.1.4. Frontier Corps (FC)	32
3.1.5. Pakistan Rangers	32





3.1.6. Levies and Khasadars.....	33
3.1.7. Pro-government armed militias	33
3.2. Main non-state armed groups.....	33
3.2.1. Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP)	34
3.2.2. Jamaat-ul Ahrar (JuA).....	37
3.2.3. Punjabi Taliban	37
3.2.4. Hafiz Gul Bahadur (HGB).....	38
3.2.5. Jamaat-ul Ansar Al-Sharia	38
3.2.6. Al-Qaeda	39
3.2.7. Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISKP) and Islamic State –Pakistan Province (ISPP).....	40
3.2.8. Haqqani Network.....	41
3.2.9. Sipah-e Sahaba Pakistan (SSP).....	42
3.2.10. Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ).....	42
3.2.11. Sipah-e Mohammed Pakistan (SMP).....	43
3.2.12. Balochistan nationalist groups	43
3.2.13. Other local/small militia groups.....	45
4. Security situation	46
4.1. General description of the security situation.....	46
4.1.1. Main conflict dynamics and drivers since the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan.....	46
4.1.2. Major security-related events and developments since 2023.....	48
4.1.3. Main areas of conflict and geographical overview of armed groups ..	53
4.2. Security situation per region	56
4.2.1. Punjab	56
4.2.2. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)	61
4.2.3. Balochistan	68
4.2.4. Sindh.....	75
4.2.5. Islamabad Capital Territory	81
4.2.6. Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.....	84
5. Structure and functioning of the judiciary.....	89
5.1. Formal and informal systems	89
5.2. Applicable laws (including <i>Sharia</i>).....	91
5.3. Blasphemy law	92





5.4. Anti-Terrorism Acts	94
5.5. Punishments under the law	96
5.6. Detention and death penalty	98
5.7. Effectiveness and integrity of law enforcement and judiciary	101
6. Treatment of certain profiles and groups of population	104
6.1. Ethnic minorities	105
6.2. Religious minorities.....	106
6.2.1. Hindus and Sikhs	109
6.2.2. Christians.....	111
6.2.3. Shia Muslims.....	113
6.2.4. Ahmadiyya	114
6.2.5. Zikris	118
6.3. Individuals accused of blasphemy.....	120
6.3.1. Vigilante justice and response by state authorities	121
6.4. Critical voices and individuals perceived as opposing the state	123
6.4.1. Members and supporters of opposition parties	123
6.4.2. Human rights defenders and activists.....	125
6.4.3. Journalists and media workers	128
6.5. Women	132
6.5.1. Violence against women	133
6.6. Children.....	138
6.7. LGBTIQ.....	139
6.8. Trafficking in Human Beings (THB).....	141
7. Socio-economic and humanitarian situation.....	143
7.1. Economy	143
7.2. Poverty and unemployment	144
7.3. Healthcare	145
7.4. Water and sanitation.....	147
7.5. Education.....	149
8. Situation of Afghan refugees.....	150
8.1. Background information	150
8.2. Implementation of the ‘Illegal Foreigners’ Repatriation Plan’ (IFRP) and returns to Afghanistan.....	151





8.3. Legal situation of PoR and ACC holders.....	154
8.4. Legal situation of undocumented Afghans	155
8.5. Arrest, detention and harassment	156
8.6. Socio-economic impact	159
Annex 1: Bibliography	161
Oral sources, including anonymous sources	161
Public sources.....	162
Annex 2: Terms of Reference.....	240





Disclaimer

This report was written according to the [EUAA COI Report Methodology \(2023\)](#). It is based on carefully selected sources of information. All sources used are referenced.

The information contained in this report has been researched, evaluated and analysed with utmost care. However, this document does not claim to be exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular application for international protection. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

'Refugee', 'risk' and similar terminology are used as generic terminology and not in the legal sense as applied in the EU Asylum Acquis, the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

Neither the EUAA, nor any person acting on its behalf, may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained in this report.

On 19 January 2022, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) became the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). All references to EASO, EASO products and bodies should be understood as references to the EUAA.

The drafting of this report was finalised on 25 October 2024. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this report. More information on the reference period for this report can be found in the methodology section of the Introduction.





Glossary and abbreviations

Term	Definition
ACC	Afghan Citizen Card
AJK	Azad Jammu and Kashmir
ANF	Anti-Narcotics Force
ASWJ	Ahle Sunnat wal Jamaat
ATA	Anti-Terrorism Act
ATCs	Anti-Terrorism Courts
BHUs	Basic Health Units
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BLA	Balochistan Liberation Army
BLF	Balochistan Liberation Front
BNA	Baloch National Army
BRG	Baloch Republican Guard
BYC	Baloch Yakjehti Committee
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
CPI	Consumer Price Index





Term	Definition
CrPC	Code of Criminal Procedure
CTD	Counterterrorism Department
ECP	Election Commission of Pakistan
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Area
FC	Frontier Corps
FIA	Federal Investigation Agency
FSC	Federal Shariat Court
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoP	Government of Pakistan
HGB	Hafiz Gul Bahadur
HM	Hizbul Mujahideen
HuA	Hizb-ul-Ahrar
HUJI	Harakat-ul Jihad Islami
HuM	Harakat ul-Mujahideen
ICT	Islamabad Capital Territory
IED	Improvised Explosive Device





Term	Definition
IFRP	Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan
IS	Islamic State
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISKP	Islamic State – Khorasan Province
ISPP	Islamic State – Pakistan Province
JeM	Jaish-e-Muhammad
JFM	Jaish Fursan Muhammad
JSQM-A	Jeay Sindh Qaumi Mahaz-Arisar
JuA	Jamaat-ul-Ahrar
JUI-F	Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam – Fazl
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
KPDMA	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Disaster Management Authority
LeJ	Lashkar-e Jhangvi
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Mol	Ministry of Interior





Term	Definition
MQM-L	Muttahida Qaumi Movement – London
NAB	National Accountability Bureau
NACTA	National Counter Terrorism Authority
NSC	National Security Committee
PBC	Pakistan Bar Council
PECA	Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act
PMA	Pakistan Medical Association
PML-N	Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz
PoR card	Proof of Registration card
PPC	Pakistan Penal Code
PPP	Pakistan People's Party
PTI	Tehreek-e-Insaf party
PTM	Pashtun Tahafuz Movement
SBP	State Bank of Pakistan
SCI	Sunni Ittehad Council
SLA	Sindhudesh Liberation Army





Term	Definition
SMP	Sipah-e-Muhammad
SNC	Single National Curriculum
SPA	Sindhudesh People's Army
SRA	Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army
SSP	Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan
TJP	Tehreek-e-Jihad Pakistan
TNP	Tehrik-e Namoos Pakistan
TTP	Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan
WPMPLA	West Pakistan Muslim Personal Law Act





Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide relevant information in view of the assessment of international protection, including refugee status and subsidiary protection.

The report covers the period of 1 October 2023 – 25 October 2024. Events taking place after the end of the reference period have not been included.

Methodology

This report was jointly drafted by ACCORD and EUAA and reviewed by EUAA and national COI departments in EU+ countries, as mentioned in the [Acknowledgements](#) section.

This report is produced in line with the EUAA COI Report Methodology (2023)¹ and the EUAA COI Writing and Referencing Style Guide (2023).²

Defining the terms of reference

The terms of reference (ToR) of this report were defined by EUAA based on identified information needs, and external consultations with COI experts in the EUAA COI Specialist Network on Pakistan. The ToR for this report can be found in [Annex 2: Terms of Reference](#).

Collecting information

The information gathered is a result of research using public, specialised paper-based and electronic sources, as well as interviews with experts until 25 October 2024. Some limited additional information was added during the finalisation of this report in response to feedback received during the quality control process, until 15 November 2024.

Quality control

To ensure that the authors respected the EUAA COI Report Methodology and that the ToR were comprehensively addressed, a review was carried out by COI specialists from the countries and organisations listed as reviewers in the [Acknowledgements](#) section. All comments made by the reviewers were taken into consideration and most of them were implemented in the final draft of this report, which was finalised on 15 November 2024. EUAA also performed the final quality review and editing of the text.

¹ EUAA, EUAA Country of Origin Information (COI) Report Methodology, February 2023, [url](#)

² EUAA, Writing and Referencing Guide for EUAA Country of Origin Information (COI) Reports, February 2023, [url](#)





Sources

In accordance with EUAA COI methodology, a range of different published documentary sources have been consulted on relevant topics for this report. These include: COI reports by governments; information from civil society, advocacy groups, humanitarian organisations, and NGOs; international and NGO human rights reports; reports produced by various bodies of the United Nations; Pakistan and regionally-based media and social media; academic publications and think tank reports and specialised sources covering Pakistan. All information from these sources was consulted within time constraints.

In addition to using publicly available documentary sources, several oral sources were contacted for this report. Some sources who were interviewed chose to remain anonymous for security reasons. Sources were assessed for their background, publication history, reputability and current ground-level knowledge. All oral sources are described in [Annex 1: Bibliography](#).

Sources on security incidents and civilian casualties

For this report, these three data sources, CRSS, PICSS and PIPS, were selected for their ability to provide specific information and datasets relevant to the analysis of the security situation in Pakistan. CRSS publishes annually a report on the security situation in Pakistan³ and also quarterly reports⁴ which contain statistical data on casualties caused by terrorism and counterterrorism.

The Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS) is an independent research think tank based in Islamabad studying terrorism and extremism in South Asia. PICSS collects statistical data regarding Pakistan-specific anti-state violence.⁵ It publishes annual security reports⁶ and divides incidents of violence mainly in two categories: 1. ‘violent militant attacks’ and ‘Security Forces Actions’. Sectarian violence, general crimes, ethnic or language-based violence are not recorded. The data collected is based on open sources such as newspapers, government sources and own correspondents.⁷ PICSS defines violent militant attacks as follows: a. ‘Militant Attacks against the government, public, or private targets. These targets can be against life or property e.g. government installations such as gas pipelines, electricity transmission lines etc.’, b. ‘Militant clashes among different militant groups.’⁸

The Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) is a research and advocacy organisation, established in Islamabad in 2006.⁹ PIPS monitors relevant incidents in Pakistan on a daily basis, from sources such as correspondents in the different regions, newspapers, magazines,

³ See, for example, CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan, 19 February 2024, [url](#); CRSS, Annual Security Report 2022 Pakistan, 2 February 2023, [url](#); CRSS, Annual Security Report 2021 Pakistan, 18 May 2022, [url](#)

⁴ See, for example, CRSS, 2024 violence-linked fatalities overtake full-year 2023 in just nine months, 30 September 2024, [url](#); CRSS, Terrorism Continues to Batter Pakistan, 1 July 2024, [url](#); CRSS, Balochistan and KP Dominate Violence Landscape in Pakistan’s Q1 2024: CRSS Security Report, 31 March 2024, [url](#)

⁵ PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. ii

⁶ See, for example, PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 57

⁷ PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 57

⁸ PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 57

⁹ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#)



journals and television news channels. The information is gathered in the PIPS conflict/security database and archives which form the basis for their annual and monthly reports.¹⁰ PIPS divides ‘attacks’ into five categories: ‘(i) terrorist attacks including militant attacks, nationalist insurgent attacks and sectarian-related attacks; (ii) incidents of ethno-political violence; (iii) cross-border attacks; (iv) drone attacks; and (v) operational attacks by security forces against militants’.¹¹ PIPS defines ‘casualties’ as follows: ‘casualties include both the number of people killed and injured’.¹²

Data of the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED)¹³ and the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)¹⁴ has been used for information on security events and fatalities.

ACLED is a project that collects, analyses and maps information on ‘dates, actors, locations, fatalities, and types of all reported political violence and protest events around the world’.¹⁵ The EUAA downloaded the ACLED curated data files on South Asia and Asia Pacific, including Pakistan, on 25 October 2024, which are used in this report.

ACLED records six event types: battles, explosions/remote violence, violence against civilians, protests, riots and strategic developments.¹⁶

For the analysis of the security situation in Pakistan in this report, only battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians were included as incidents. ACLED uses the following definitions of these event types:

- **Battle:** ‘a violent interaction between two politically organized armed groups’ which occur ‘at a particular time and location’, ‘between armed and organised state, non-state, and external groups, and in any combination therein’. There is no fatality threshold for an incident to be included. Sub-events associated with ‘battles’ are designated according to the events outcome and consist of ‘armed clash’, ‘government regains territory’, and ‘non-state actor overtakes territory’.¹⁷
- **Violence against civilians:** ‘violent events where an organized armed group deliberately inflicts violence upon unarmed non-combatants’ and includes attempts at inflicting harm (e.g. beating, shooting, torture, rape, mutilation) or forcibly disappearing civilian actors. Sub-events associated with ‘violence against civilians’ are: ‘sexual violence’, ‘attack’, and ‘abduction/forced disappearance’. It should be noted that all violence against civilians do not fall under this category, as civilians can also be harmed as ‘collateral damage’ in ‘explosions’ and ‘battles’ – in such cases a separate civilian-specific event is not recorded, although the number of fatalities is aggravated.¹⁸
- **Explosions/remote violence:** ‘one-sided violent events in which the tool for engaging in conflict creates asymmetry by taking away the ability of the target to respond’. The

¹⁰ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 7

¹¹ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 7

¹² PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 8

¹³ ACLED, The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project - Bringing clarity to crisis, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴ UCDP, Department of Peace and Conflict Research – Uppsala University, Sweden, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁵ ACLED, About ACLED, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁶ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 3 October 2024, [url](#), pp. 12-19

¹⁷ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 3 October 2024, [url](#), pp. 12-13

¹⁸ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 3 October 2024, [url](#), pp. 12-13



sub-event types associated with ‘explosions/remote violence’ are ‘chemical weapon’, ‘air/drone strike’, ‘suicide bomb’, ‘shelling/artillery/missile attack’, ‘remote explosive/landmine/IED’, and ‘grenade’.¹⁹

The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) is a ‘data collection project for civil war’.²⁰ UCDP provided EUAA with a Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) covering the reference period of the report. UCDP’s methodology is explained on its website as well as its GED Codebook.²¹ The unit of analysis of UCDP is the ‘event’²² which is defined as ‘[a]n incident where armed force was used by an organised actor against another organised actor, or against civilians, resulting in at least 1 direct death at a specific location and a specific date.’²³ This leads, among other things, to ‘seemingly low estimates’ because ‘a number of factors can preclude a potential conflict event from inclusion in the UCDP GED’, for example, unclear actors or uncertainty about whether fatalities occurred.²⁴ UCDP provides three estimates for fatalities for each event – a low estimate, a best estimate, and a high estimate. In addition, UCDP provides an estimate of the number of civilian deaths.²⁵ According to UCDP, ‘it is quite likely that there are more fatalities than given in the best estimate, but it is very unlikely that there are fewer’.²⁶

The stricter definition of an event of UCDP excludes violent incidents that are recorded by ACLED. This includes ACLED’s option to assign violent events to ‘unidentified armed groups’. The difference in definitions is one explanatory factor to why the number of events recorded by ACLED can be significantly higher than the number of events recorded by UCDP.²⁷ In this report, UCDP data has been used to contrast ACLED data and to provide figures on civilian deaths. To reflect the security dynamic in Pakistan, where the actor behind many security incidents is unknown, EUAA not only includes events that meet all UCDP’s set criteria (codified as ‘clear’ events in the UCDP dataset), but also include events codified as ‘unclear’ and ‘not applicable’.

Structure and use of the report

The report’s first chapter provides information on an overview of the country, covering aspects such as geography, ethnic groups, and the state structure. The second chapter focuses on political developments, while the third chapter details the main actors involved in the conflict, including Pakistan’s armed forces and non-state armed groups. The fourth chapter provides information on the security situation, with a focus on regional variations. The fifth chapter provides information on the structure and functioning of the judiciary. The sixth chapter focuses on the treatment of certain profiles and groups of population and the seventh chapter

¹⁹ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 3 October 2024, [url](#), pp. 16-18

²⁰ UCDP, About UCDP, n.d., [url](#)

²¹ UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., [url](#); UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook (Version 21.1), 2021, [url](#), p. 4

²² UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., [url](#)

²³ UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook (Version 21.1), 2021, [url](#), p. 4

²⁴ UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., [url](#)

²⁵ UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook (Version 21.1), 2021, [url](#), pp. 5, 11, 24

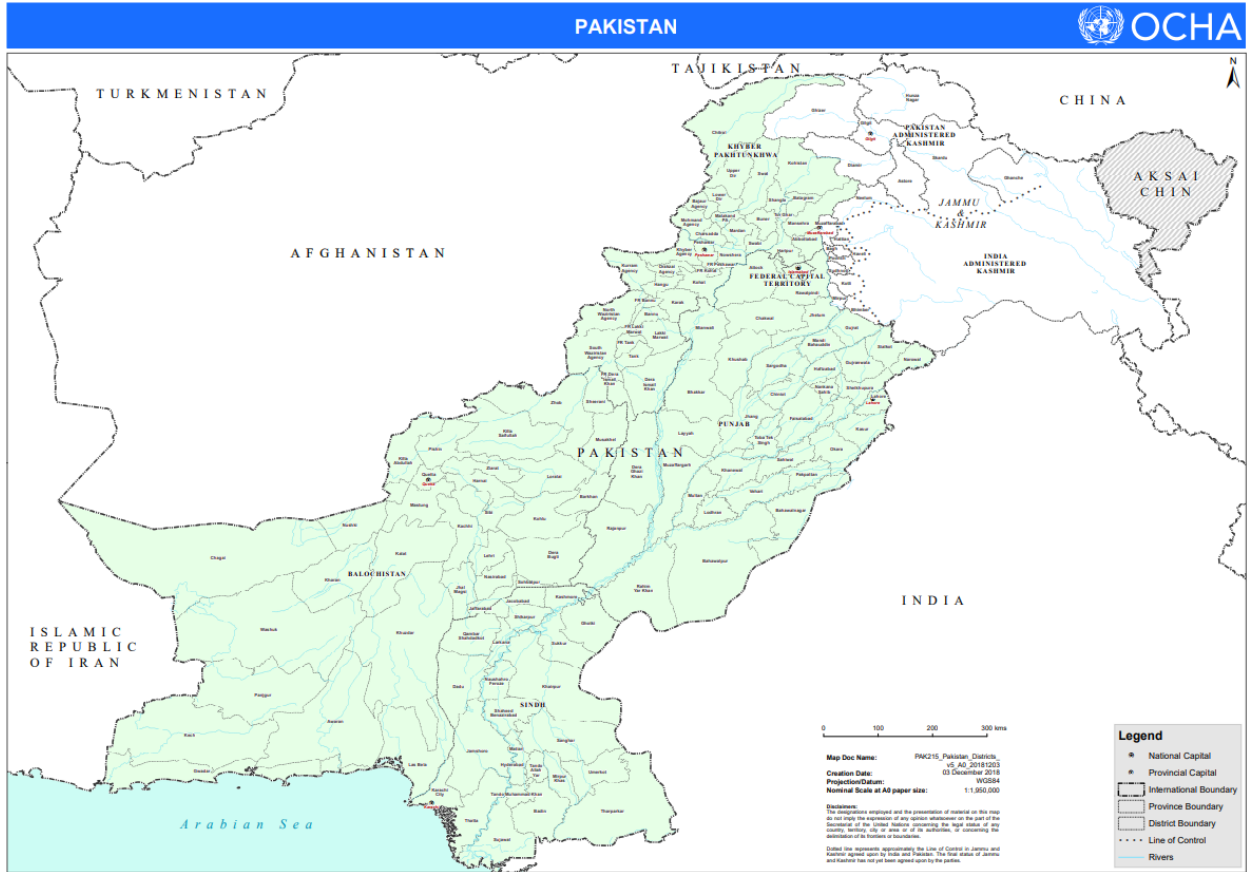
²⁶ UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., [url](#)

²⁷ ACLED, Comparing Conflict Data, Similarities and Differences Across Conflict Datasets, August 2019, [url](#), pp. 5–7



addresses the socio-economic and humanitarian situation, and the final chapter provides information on the situation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

Map



Map 1: Pakistan: Districts Map (as of 03 December 2018)²⁸

²⁸ UNOCHA, © United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, [url](#)



1. Country overview

1.1. Geography

Pakistan, located in Southern Asia north of the Arabian Sea,²⁹ borders Iran to the southwest, Afghanistan to the northwest, China to the northeast, and India to the east.³⁰ The country's total area of around 796 100 square kilometres³¹ can be segmented into three primary geographic zones: the highlands in the north, the Balochistan Plateau in the southwest, and the Indus river plain in central and eastern Pakistan.³² The Indus River is often referred to as Pakistan's lifeline,³³ playing an essential role for the country's agriculture, but is increasingly affected by climate change.³⁴ Pakistan is situated in the subtropical arid zone³⁵ and its climate varies greatly depending on the region:³⁶ hot and dry in the coastal areas and along the Indus River plain, and increasingly cooler in the northern highlands. Apart from the summer monsoons in the northern regions, most of the country receives minimal rainfall; inter-annual precipitation can vary widely, which often leads to alternating periods of drought and floods.³⁷

Pakistan has substantial natural gas and modest petroleum reserves;³⁸ however, domestic production does not meet the country's demand, necessitating supplementary imports.³⁹ Further natural resources comprise iron ore, salt, copper and limestone. Key agricultural products include wheat, rice and corn, as well as sugarcane and cotton,⁴⁰ with the cultivation of opium poppy being a major contributor to the informal economy.⁴¹

Administratively, Pakistan is divided into four provinces and one capital territory: Punjab (in the east, bordering India), Sindh (in the south, also bordering India), Balochistan (in the southwest, bordering Afghanistan and Iran), and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (the northernmost province, bordering Afghanistan); the Islamabad Capital Territory is located in the north of the country, between Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.⁴² Additionally, in the disputed⁴³ Kashmir region, there are two areas being administered by Pakistan, namely Azad Jammu and Kashmir (a narrow strip of land north of Punjab), and Gilgit-Baltistan (a comparatively larger area northeast

²⁹ FAO, Country profile – Pakistan, 2011, [url](#), p. 1

³⁰ UN, Geospatial, Pakistan, Map No. 4181, 1 January 2004, [url](#)

³¹ World Bank Group (The), Country Profile, Pakistan, n.d., [url](#); The website of the Pakistani Consulate in Los Angeles provides a higher figure, stating that the Pakistani territory covers 881 913 square kilometers: Pakistan, Consulate General of Pakistan Los Angeles, n.d., [url](#)

³² GlobalSecurity.org, Pakistan - Geography, n.d., [url](#); US, CIA, World Factbook – Pakistan, last updated 23 October 2024, [url](#)

³³ Express Tribune (The), Reviving the Indus, 1 September 2023, [url](#); Dawn, Health of the Indus, 5 June 2022, [url](#)

³⁴ Express Tribune (The), Reviving the Indus, 1 September 2023, [url](#)

³⁵ FAO, Country profile – Pakistan, 2011, [url](#), p. 3

³⁶ GlobalSecurity.org, Pakistan - Climate, n.d., [url](#)

³⁷ World Bank Group (The), Climate Change Knowledge Portal, Country Pakistan, n.d., [url](#)

³⁸ Encyclopedia Britannica, Pakistan, Economy of Pakistan, last updated 22 October 2024, [url](#)

³⁹ US, ITA, Pakistan – Oil and Gas, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁰ US, CIA, World Factbook – Pakistan, last updated 23 October 2024, [url](#); Encyclopedia Britannica, Pakistan, Economy of Pakistan, last updated 22 October 2024, [url](#)

⁴¹ Encyclopedia Britannica, Pakistan, Economy of Pakistan, last updated 22 October 2024, [url](#)

⁴² France, OFPRA, DIDR, Carte des provinces du Pakistan, June 2021, [url](#), p. 1; UK, PCGN, Pakistan, 2023, [url](#), pp. 3-4

⁴³ Encyclopedia Britannica, The Kashmir problem, last updated 23 October 2024, [url](#)



of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa).⁴⁴ The Kashmir region has been a contentious area between India and Pakistan for more than six decades, with both nuclear powers having fought two wars⁴⁵ over the territory; in addition, China controls a portion of the region.⁴⁶ Pakistan's four provinces are administratively divided into divisions, districts, and subdistricts (known as *tehsils*).⁴⁷

1.2. Demographics

The UN estimates Pakistan's population to be around 251 million in 2024, making it the fifth most populous country in the world.⁴⁸ The last census was conducted in 2023 by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics and resulted in a population number of about 241.5 million, with a growth rate of 2.55 % between 2017 and 2023. The urban population, which constituted about 39 % of the total population, grew at a pace of 3.67 % - approximately twice as fast as the rural population.⁴⁹ Only around 1 % of the people of Pakistan lived in the Islamabad Capital Territory in 2023,⁵⁰ while there are cities in the country that are considerably larger than its capital: the largest urban centre by far is Karachi with around 17,2 million inhabitants.⁵¹ Located on the coast of the Arabian Sea,⁵² it is the capital of the province of Sindh and serves as the main port and hub for commerce and industry. Lahore, capital of the province Punjab,⁵³ follows with 14 million inhabitants.⁵⁴ Punjab is Pakistan's most populous province with approximately 52.9 % of the total population, followed by Sindh, with around 23.1 %, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with around 16.9 %; the least populous of Pakistan's four provinces is Balochistan, with an approximate proportion of 6.2 % of the total population.⁵⁵

Pakistan is a culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse country,⁵⁶ with its division into the four provinces mirroring the country's traditional regions, each distinguished by its unique ethnic and linguistic identity.⁵⁷ According to the CIA World Factbook, 44.7 % of the population is Punjabi, 15.4 % Pashtun (predominantly residing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province),⁵⁸ 14.1 % are Sindhi, 8.4 % Saraiki, 7.6 % Muhajirs, and 3.6 % Balochi, with the remaining 6.3 % belonging to other ethnic groups. Languages spoken in Pakistan include Punjabi (38.8 %), Pashto (18.2 %), Sindhi (14.6 %), the Punjabi variant Saraiki (12.2 %), Urdu (7.1 %), Baloch (3 %),

⁴⁴ UK, PCGN, Pakistan, 2023, [url](#), pp. 3-4

⁴⁵ Source Encyclopedia Britannica additionally refers to the armed conflict in Kargil (subregion of Kashmir) in 1999 as a war: Encyclopedia Britannica, Kargil War, last updated 5 November 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁶ BBC News, Pakistan country profile, 15 March 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁷ Encyclopedia Britannica, Pakistan, Government and society, last updated 22 October 2024, [url](#); the names of divisions, districts and *tehsils* as of 2023 can be found in following source, Table-1, under the hyperlinks 'province wise' and 'district wise': Pakistan, PBS, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁸ UN, World Population Prospects 2024, 2024, [url](#), p. 43

⁴⁹ Pakistan, PBS, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results – Table 1: Area, Population By Sex, Sex Ratio, Population Density, Urban Population, Household Size And Annual Growth Rate, n.d., [url](#)

⁵⁰ Gallup Pakistan, Analysis of Census 2023 Results, n.d., [url](#), p. 6

⁵¹ US, CIA, World Factbook – Pakistan, last updated 23 October 2024, [url](#)

⁵² UN, Geospatial, Pakistan, Map No. 4181, 1 January 2004, [url](#)

⁵³ Encyclopedia Britannica, Pakistan, Urban settlement, last updated 22 October 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁴ US, CIA, World Factbook – Pakistan, last updated 23 October 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁵ Gallup Pakistan, Analysis of Census 2023 Results, n.d., [url](#), p. 6

⁵⁶ Encyclopedia Britannica, Pakistan, People of Pakistan, last updated 22 October 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁷ Encyclopedia Britannica, Pakistan, Religion of Pakistan, last updated 22 October 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁸ MRG, Pashtuns in Pakistan, June 2018, [url](#)



Hindko (2.4 %), and Brahui (1.2 %). 2.4 % of the population speak other languages.⁵⁹ (For more information, please see section [6.1 Ethnic minorities](#).) The 1973 constitution initiated a transition period from English to Urdu for official use, a change that has not been fully put into effect; English continues to be used, especially across educational and governmental institutions.⁶⁰ Official Pakistani websites describe Urdu as the national language and English as the official language.⁶¹

Pakistan as a Muslim-majority state was created through the partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947 and the subsequent secession⁶² of Bangladesh in 1971.⁶³ The 2023 national census found around 96.4 % of Pakistan’s population to be Muslim.⁶⁴ Sunnis are estimated to make up 80 to 85 % of the Muslims, while Shiites (comprising ethnic Hazara, Ismaili, and Bohra) are believed to constitute around 15 to 20 %.⁶⁵ Within the non-Muslim population, the predominant religious affiliations are Christian and Hindu, among other smaller religious groups.⁶⁶ For more information, please see section [6.2 Religious minorities](#).

1.3. State structure

The 1973 constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan establishes a federal parliamentary system of government with a bicameral parliament, consisting of the Senate and the National Assembly.⁶⁷ For a bill to become law, it has to be approved by both houses and requires the approval of the president.⁶⁸ The Senate has 96 members⁶⁹ (including 17 seats reserved for women, 4 seats for non-Muslims), who are indirectly elected by the four provincial assemblies and the federal capital territory, and serve a six-year term.⁷⁰ The National Assembly’s 336 representatives are directly elected and serve five year terms; while 266 of these members are elected in single-seat constituencies, the other 70 members are elected by proportional representation vote⁷¹ (comprising 60 women and 10 non-Muslims).⁷² The National Assembly elects the prime minister⁷³ whereas the country’s president is elected by an electoral college.

⁵⁹ US, CIA, World Factbook – Pakistan, last updated 23 October 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁰ Encyclopedia Britannica, Pakistan, People of Pakistan, last updated 22 October 2024, [url](#)

⁶¹ Pakistan, Consulate General of Pakistan Los Angeles, About Pakistan, n.d., [url](#); Pakistan, Embassy of the Islamic Republik of Pakistan - Berlin, Basic Facts, n.d., [url](#)

⁶² To fulfil the aspirations of the Indian Muslims for a homeland of their own, Pakistan initially consisted of two parts. In 1971, the Bengali-speaking eastern part seceded to form the independent nation of Bangladesh: BBC News, Pakistan country profile, 15 March 2024, [url](#)

⁶³ BBC News, Pakistan country profile, 15 March 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁴ Pakistan, PBS, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results – Table 9: Population By Sex, Religion And Rural/Urban, n.d., [url](#), p 1; the Ahmadi community is not included under the category ‘Muslim’ in the census but is listed separately.

⁶⁵ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 6

⁶⁶ Pakistan, PBS, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results – Table 9: Population By Sex, Religion And Rural/Urban, n.d., [url](#), p. 1

⁶⁷ Pakistan, Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services, Parliament in Brief, n.d., [url](#), p. 1

⁶⁸ Pakistan, Senate of Pakistan, About the Senate, n.d., [url](#), question 9

⁶⁹ In connection with the merger of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa the number of Senate members was reduced from 104 to 100 in 2021 and further reduced to 96 in 2024: Dawn, How do the Senate elections work?, 2 April 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁰ Pakistan, Senate of Pakistan, About the Senate – Senate Elections, n.d., [url](#)

⁷¹ US, CIA, World Factbook – Pakistan, last updated 23 October 2024, [url](#)

⁷² Pakistan, National Assembly of Pakistan, Composition, n.d., [url](#)

⁷³ Encyclopedia Britannica, Pakistan, Government and society, last updated 22 October 2024, [url](#)





The president then appoints the cabinet based on the advice of the prime minister,⁷⁴ who, in line with the constitution, holds most executive power, while the president, as the head of state, assumes a more symbolic role.⁷⁵ In the judicial branch, a chief justice and 16 judges make up the country's Supreme Court. Subordinate courts include the High Courts, (one for each of the four provinces and one for the Islamabad Capital Territory),⁷⁶ civil and criminal courts at provincial and district level, and specialised courts, as well as the Federal Shariat Court,⁷⁷ which primarily has the purpose to determine whether laws align with the principles of Islam.⁷⁸ Although a separation between the judiciary branch and the executive branch of the government is provided by the constitution,⁷⁹ especially in recent years the courts have adopted a more activist stance, intervening not only in legislation but also more broadly in the country's politics.⁸⁰ The recent passing of a constitutional amendment granting the parliament additional power in appointing the Supreme Court's chief justice is discussed in an Al Jazeera article in the context of an attempt to counteract the judiciary's influence and activist role.⁸¹

The most dominant player in Pakistan's politics, however, is considered by several actors to be the country's military,⁸² 'a powerful behind-the-scenes player', as labelled by BBC News.⁸³ Together with its influential intelligence agency Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI), the military has maintained a grip on the country,⁸⁴ at times by governing the country directly (more than 30 years of its 77-year history), or by exerting indirect influence, e.g. by playing a decisive role in the formation or downfall of governments.⁸⁵ Several sources report that the military and the ISI also have long covertly supported the Afghan Taliban⁸⁶ and other violent Islamist organisations, a policy which contributed to the spread of militant attacks within Pakistan itself.⁸⁷ In recent years, discontent with the military's excessive influence has fuelled anti-army sentiment especially among the younger population,⁸⁸ to an extent previously unknown to the military leadership,⁸⁹ which, in turn, has reacted with further repression.⁹⁰ On the Economist's 2023 Democracy Index Pakistan ranked 118th out of 167 countries and territories, with recent

⁷⁴ US, CIA, World Factbook – Pakistan, last updated 23 October 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁵ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 – Pakistan, 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁶ Hussain, F., The Judicial System of Pakistan, May 2015, [url](#), p 11

⁷⁷ US, CIA, World Factbook – Pakistan, last updated 23 October 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁸ Encyclopedia Britannica, Pakistan, Government and society, last updated 22 October 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁹ Encyclopedia Britannica, Pakistan, Government and society, last updated 22 October 2024, [url](#); Pakistan, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, [url](#), Art. 175

⁸⁰ Bertelsmann Foundation, BTI 2024 Country Report Pakistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 12; FES, State of Democracy in Pakistan 2023, December 2023, [url](#), p. ix

⁸¹ Al Jazeera, Pakistan passes amendment empowering parliament to pick top judge, 21 October 2024, [url](#)

⁸² Al Jazeera, Can Pakistan's politicians break the military's stronghold?, 30 January 2024, [url](#); Foreign Affairs, Pakistan's military still runs the show, 16 June 2023, [url](#)

⁸³ BBC News, Pakistan: Supreme Court halts military trials of Imran Khan supporters, 24 October 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁴ Independent (The), Pakistan allows powerful spy agency to tap phone calls and messages, 10 July 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁵ Reuters, Pakistan's army arrests three more ex-officers in former spy chief's graft case, 15 August 2024, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Can Pakistan's politicians break the military's stronghold?, 30 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁶ DW, Why did the Afghan Taliban sour on Pakistan?, 20 April 2024, [url](#); France24, Pakistan's 'good Taliban-bad Taliban' strategy backfires, posing regional risks, 9 February 2022, [url](#); Nadery, N., Unraveling Deception: Pakistan's Dilemma After Decades of Promoting Militancy in Afghanistan and Beyond [Blog], Wilson Center, 26 September 2023, [url](#); Foreign Affairs, Pakistan Reaps What it Sowed, 23 May 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁷ Nadery, N., Unraveling Deception: Pakistan's Dilemma After Decades of Promoting Militancy in Afghanistan and Beyond [Blog], Wilson Center, 26 September 2023, [url](#); Foreign Affairs, Pakistan Reaps What it Sowed, 23 May 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁸ New York Times (The), Shocking Opposition Victory Throws Pakistan Into Chaos, 10 February 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁹ Reuters, Pakistan in uncharted territory as army seeks to vanquish Imran Khan, 22 May 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁰ Diplomat, Imran Khan's Biggest Trial, 27 August 2024, [url](#)





downgrades having resulted in the country's reclassification from a 'hybrid system' to an 'authoritarian regime', a category the country finds itself in for the first time since 2006.⁹¹

⁹¹ EIU, Democracy Index 2023, n.d., [url](#), pp. 3, 5, 6, 12, 20



2. Background and political developments

2.1. Recent political developments

Former Prime Minister Imran Khan was ousted from office in April 2022 after losing a no-confidence vote in parliament. He was briefly arrested in May 2023 on corruption charges. The arrest was met with protests across the country.⁹² Supporters of Imran Khan reportedly rioted, attacking state installations and public property, in violent acts described by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) as ‘unprecedented’.⁹³ They further set fire to ambulances, police vehicles, and schools.⁹⁴ Amnesty International (AI) noted that protests were met with ‘unlawful use of force’ by the police and military.⁹⁵ More than 9 000 people were reportedly arrested,⁹⁶ and 105 people were tried before military courts in connection with the May 2023 protests.⁹⁷ According to media reports, at least ten people were killed and hundreds injured during the protests.⁹⁸ As of October 2024, 85 participants of the 9 May protests were still in military detention.⁹⁹ Khan was released a few days later but arrested again in August 2023 when a court found him guilty of illegally selling state gifts and sentenced him to three years in prison. The conviction barred him from running in the February 2024 general elections. In January and early February 2024, several other convictions followed: Imran Khan and his wife received 14-year prison sentences in the state gifts case and 7-year prison sentences for violating Islamic marriage law. Moreover, in the so-called state secrets or cypher case, Khan was sentenced to 10 years in prison for leaking a secret diplomatic document,¹⁰⁰ together with his foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi.¹⁰¹

In June 2024, Khan was acquitted of leaking state secrets but remained in prison due to other convictions. The conviction of Shah Mahmood Qureshi in the same case was also overturned.¹⁰² In July 2024, a court acquitted Khan and his wife of charges that they had violated Islamic marriage law. With this decision, all four prison sentences that Khan received before the elections had either been overturned or suspended, according to Reuters. Nevertheless, Khan remained in prison as new arrest warrants were issued on other charges,

⁹² BBC News, Imran Khan: The cricket star and former PM who is dividing Pakistan, 1 February 2024, [url](#)

⁹³ HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 5

⁹⁴ HRW, World Report 2024: Pakistan, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁵ AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Pakistan 2023, 24 April 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁶ Al Jazeera, Two mango seasons: A long wait for Pakistan families hit by May 9 violence, 10 May 2024, [url](#);

GeoNews, Fact-check: How many people have been arrested post May 9 riots?, 07 June 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁷ Dawn, Special Report: May 9, mayhem and military trials – a year on, 25 June 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁸ Al Jazeera, Two mango seasons: A long wait for Pakistan families hit by May 9 violence, 10 May 2024, [url](#); BBC, Imran Khan's arrest left deep wounds still to heal, 09 May 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁹ AI, Geneva: UN Human Rights Committee to review Pakistan's human rights records amid 'rampant rights abuses', 16 October 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰ Al Jazeera, A year since Pakistan's May 9 riots: A timeline of political upheaval, 9 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰¹ BBC News, Imran Khan acquitted in state secrets case, 3 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰² BBC News, Imran Khan acquitted in state secrets case, 3 June 2024, [url](#); RFE/RL, Pakistani Court Overturns Khan's Treason Conviction, But Ex-PM Remains In Prison, 3 June 2024, [url](#)



including violence against military and other state installations in the context of the protests in May 2023,¹⁰³ and corruption.¹⁰⁴

In January 2024, the Supreme Court also confirmed an earlier decision by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to ban Khan's Tehreek-e Insaf (PTI) party from using its cricket bat symbol, citing a lack of intraparty elections, a prerequisite for participating in the national election. The ruling meant that PTI candidates had to run as independent candidates using individual symbols.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, as independent candidates, they were not eligible for seats reserved for women and minorities.¹⁰⁶ Party members' speeches were not covered on television.¹⁰⁷ The election process itself reportedly witnessed irregularities, with party officials claiming that results at polling stations and constituency levels did not add up and delays in vote counting were left unexplained, while election observers noted not being allowed to observe results in about half of the constituencies.¹⁰⁸ PTI candidates nevertheless won the most seats in parliament. They failed, however, to win a majority, and a coalition government was formed by PTI's rivals, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), the second- and third largest parties.¹⁰⁹ Shehbaz Sharif of the PML-N, the younger brother of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, was elected Prime Minister.¹¹⁰ Protests erupted after the elections over allegations of election fraud,¹¹¹ and more than 100 PTI members were reportedly arrested during the protests.¹¹² However, the government rejected foreign calls to investigate such claims,¹¹³ and a petition by the PTI to the Supreme Court to form a judicial commission to investigate allegations of fraud was still pending as of June 2024.¹¹⁴

Following the elections, PTI members joined the Sunni Ittehad Council (SCI) in an attempt to claim their share of the reserved seats.¹¹⁵ The claim was rejected by the ECP, which argued that SCI was not entitled to the seats as it had not been a contestant in the elections, and this was upheld by the Peshawar High Court. The respective seats were distributed among other parliamentary parties. The SCI subsequently turned to the Supreme Court, which ruled¹¹⁶ in July 2024 that the PTI was entitled to claim its share of reserved seats. The court argued that the withdrawal of a party symbol did not disqualify a party from participating in elections and

¹⁰³ Reuters, Pakistan's Imran Khan to remain in jail despite acquittal in marriage case, 13 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴ VOA, Pakistan's ex-PM Khan still jailed despite acquittal in marriage case, 13 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵ DW, Pakistan: Imran Khan's party must drop cricket bat symbol, 13 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶ Afzal, M., Pakistan's surprising and marred 2024 election, and what comes next, The Brookings Institution, 29 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷ CNN, Pakistan's major parties formally announce ruling coalition that keeps Imran Khan shut out, 21 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸ Afzal, M., Pakistan's surprising and marred 2024 election, and what comes next, The Brookings Institution, 29 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹ Afzal, M., Pakistan's surprising and marred 2024 election, and what comes next, The Brookings Institution, 29 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁰ Al Jazeera, Shehbaz Sharif elected Pakistan PM for second term after controversial vote, 3 March 2024, [url](#)

¹¹¹ Guardian (The), Protests take place across Pakistan amid election vote-rigging allegations 12 February 2024, [url](#);

Afzal, M., Pakistan's surprising and marred 2024 election, and what comes next, The Brookings Institution, 29 February 2024, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Pakistan official admits involvement in rigging election results, 17 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹² Al Jazeera, Pakistan police crack down on PTI protests over alleged rigging in election, 11 March 2024, [url](#)

¹¹³ VOA, Pakistan's top court rules former PM Khan's party eligible for reserved seats, 12 July 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁴ Express Tribune (The), PTI wants poll rigging case hearing from 25th, 23 June 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁵ Al Jazeera, As Pakistan's newly elected parliament meets, a look at the PM candidates, 29 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁶ The full verdict is accessible under the following link: [url](#)





that the PTI 'was and is' a political party.¹¹⁷ In its verdict - decided with a majority of 8 of the 13 judges - the court asked PTI members of parliament to declare their party affiliation to the ECP and instructed the ECP to assign the party its share of reserved seats.¹¹⁸

A few days after the Supreme Court's ruling in favour of the PTI, the government announced plans to ban the PTI and declared it would bring the case before the Supreme Court. The HRCP reportedly called the plan a sign of 'political desperation', according to the Pakistani newspaper Dawn.¹¹⁹ Moreover, the National Assembly and Senate approved amendments to the election law that banned elected members of parliament from changing their party affiliation and introduced the obligation to submit lists of candidates for parliamentary reserved seats on time.¹²⁰ The amendments were challenged before the Supreme Court by the PTI¹²¹ and by the Pakistan Bar Council (PBC).¹²²

The government also adopted amendments to Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Local Government Act of 2015.¹²³ The amendments foresee an increase in the number of members in the ICT's 125 union councils and would require that local elections in Islamabad – scheduled for 9 October 2024 – be postponed.¹²⁴ By the end of August 2024, President Zardari had signed the amendment bill into law.¹²⁵ The matter was brought before the Islamabad High Court and was still pending as of 1 September 2024.¹²⁶

In December 2023, Manzoor Pashteen, the leader of the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (Pashtun Protection Movement, PTM), was detained in Chaman, Balochistan province, allegedly in connection with a shooting incident¹²⁷ and violation of an entry ban into the province.¹²⁸ Al Jazeera noted that the PTM, a Pashtun rights movement, was known for its critical stance on the military's alleged involvement in enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings targeting human rights activists and ethnic leaders.¹²⁹ Pashteen was released on bail but immediately re-arrested in early January 2024.¹³⁰ Several PTM members protesting for his release were reportedly arrested.¹³¹ On 7 February 2024, the PTM informed about his release on social media.¹³²

¹¹⁷ Firstpost, Is Imran Khan's PTI coming back? Pak SC overturns denial of reserved seats, 12 July 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁸ VOA, Pakistan's top court rules former PM Khan's party eligible for reserved seats, 12 July 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁹ Dawn, Govt to ban PTI, seek Article 6 proceedings against Imran, others, 15 July 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁰ Voicepk.net, President Zardari signs Election Bill 2024, 8 August 2024, [url](#)

¹²¹ Pakistan Today, Election Act Amendment Bill 2024 gets presidential assent amid legal wrangling, 8 August 2024, [url](#)

¹²² Express Tribune (The), Election Act tweak challenged in Supreme Court, 23 August 2024, [url](#)

¹²³ Pakistan, MOIB, President approves ICT Local Government Amendment Bill, 29 August 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁴ Business Recorder, ECP to consider Islamabad LG polls matter next week, 1 September 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁵ Pakistan, Radio Pakistan, President approves ICT Local Government Amendment Bill, 29 August 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁶ Business Recorder, ECP to consider Islamabad LG polls matter next week, 1 September 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁷ Al Jazeera, Prominent Pashtun activist critical of Pakistan army allegedly 'abducted', 5 December 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁸ VOA, Leader of Pakistan Ethnic Rights Group Detained, 5 December 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁹ Al Jazeera, Prominent Pashtun activist critical of Pakistan army allegedly 'abducted', 5 December 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁰ Dawn, Manzoor Pashteen arrested again, 6 January 2024, [url](#)

¹³¹ RFE/RL, Pakistanis Protesting Arrest Of Pashtun Rights Activist Detained, 28 January 2024, [url](#); Dawn, Four arrested for pro-Pashteen demo, Section 144 violation, 29 January 2024, [url](#)

¹³² PTM Islamabad Official, [X, formerly Twitter], posted on: 7 February 2024, [url](#)





Several Pashtun leaders have reportedly been arrested in the past on charges of making incendiary anti-state remarks,¹³³ treason and terrorism.¹³⁴ The USDOS noted in its human rights report for 2023 that according to the PTM and Pashtun leaders, Pashtuns have been targeted and killed by militant groups as well as by security forces. In addition, PTM leaders and activists claimed to have been threatened, illegally detained and imprisoned without trial.¹³⁵ In July 2024, prominent PTM activist and poet Hazra Naeem, better known as Gilaman Wazir, died a few days after having been attacked by armed men in a café in Islamabad.¹³⁶ Speaking at the funeral, PTM leader Manzoor Pashteen reportedly held the Pakistani government responsible for Wazir's death and declared that the Pashtun people were 'no longer with' the authorities.¹³⁷

In June 2024, PTM organised mass protests in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province following the authorities' decision to launch a new counter-terrorism military operation, Azm-e Istehkam.¹³⁸ In another rally in the Bannu area in July, at least two people were killed and dozens injured in a mass panic caused by gunfire.¹³⁹ Security forces rejected claims that they were responsible for the shooting.¹⁴⁰

In October 2024, the Pakistani government banned the PTM, declaring that the movement poses a threat to national security.¹⁴¹ Despite the ban, the PTM together with political leaders organised a Pashtun national *jirga* near Peshawar, which issued a 22 point declaration of demands for the government, calling for the withdrawal of Taliban as well as security forces from the region and an end to military interference in politics among other issues.¹⁴²

2.2. International context

2.2.1. Relations with Afghanistan

Despite cultural ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan, there has been a long-standing conflict between the two countries over the so-called Durand Line, the border line drawn up by the British in 1893, which crosses through Pashtun tribal territory.¹⁴³ While Afghanistan had never recognised the border, the current Taliban *de facto* government has developed a particularly aggressive stance on the issue, according to Michael Kugelman, the director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Center, quoted by Time magazine.¹⁴⁴ Pakistan accused the

¹³³ VOA, Leader of Pakistan Ethnic Rights Group Detained, 5 December 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁴ Al Jazeera, Prominent Pashtun activist critical of Pakistan army allegedly 'abducted', 5 December 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁵ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 77

¹³⁶ TNH, In Pakistan, a poet's killing fuels Pashtun fears ahead of a new security crackdown, 24 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁷ Tolo News, Manzoor Pashteen: Pashtuns No Longer With Pakistan, 13 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁸ Diplomat (The), Pakistan's New Military Operation Alarms Pashtuns, 11 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁹ DW, Pakistan: Why are many Pashtuns turning against Islamabad?, 24 July 2024, [url](#); Amu TV, Hundreds protest in Pakistan; organizers accuse army of opening fire, 19 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰ DW, Pakistan: Why are many Pashtuns turning against Islamabad?, 24 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴¹ RFE/RL, Pakistan's Ban On Prominent Civil Rights Group Will 'Alienate' Pashtun Minority, 12 October 2024, [url](#), Al

Jazeera, Pakistan bans prominent Pashtun rights group citing security concerns, 7 October 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴² Voicepk.net, Pashtun Qaumi Jirga issues 22-point declaration, 14 October 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴³ DW, Why did the Afghan Taliban sour on Pakistan?, 20 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴ Time, Why Pakistan-Afghanistan Tensions Are Soaring, 5 July 2024, [url](#)





Afghan Taliban of giving shelter to the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Pakistani Taliban who are fighting against the state of Pakistan.¹⁴⁵

Despite cooperating with the USA after 2001, 'some senior elements in Pakistan' had provided support to the Afghan Taliban insurgency. However, Pakistan's expectations that the Taliban, following their return to power in August 2021, would act against the TTP due to Pakistan's past support, were not fulfilled.¹⁴⁶ Conversely, the Taliban - by showing a tough stance towards Pakistan - hoped to increase their internal legitimacy among an Afghan population distrustful of the Pakistani government, according to Michael Kugelman.¹⁴⁷ DW noted that Pakistan's introduction of trade restrictions on Afghanistan, the expulsion of hundreds of thousands undocumented Afghan migrants and stricter visa policies at the border did not help to mitigate tensions.¹⁴⁸ Analysts gave different interpretations regarding the motivation of the Pakistani government to deport Afghan migrants, either to pressure the Afghan Taliban to tackle terrorism or out of a desire to reduce the Pashtun population which the Pakistani military considers a security threat.¹⁴⁹ Tensions further increased with Pakistan's announcement in July 2024 to conduct cross-border anti-terror military operations.¹⁵⁰

For more information on the situation of Afghan refugees please see section [8. Situation of Afghan refugees](#).

2.2.2. Relations with India

With regard to another neighbour, India, the European Foundation for South Asian Studies (EFSAS) noted that their relationship was defined by the partition of British India in 1947, the conflict over Jammu and Kashmir, as well as many by military conflicts in the past.¹⁵¹ Several wars were fought over the Jammu and Kashmir region, which became divided between the two countries in 1949 but which both countries have claimed in full.¹⁵² According to the International Crisis Group, Pakistan backed a separatist revolt in Jammu and Kashmir (India's only Muslim-majority state) in 1989 and has continued to support militant separatist groups, although that support seemingly decreased after a 2021 ceasefire agreement along the contested border.¹⁵³

Meanwhile, tensions escalated in 2019 over a deadly attack in Indian-controlled Jammu and Kashmir that India made Pakistan responsible for, followed by an Indian air strike on Pakistani territory and Pakistan's shooting down of an Indian Air Force jet and capturing of the pilot who was later released. The Indian election campaign later that year where incumbent prime minister Narendra Modi won a second term were reportedly marked by anti-Pakistani rhetoric.¹⁵⁴ In August 2019, India revoked Article 370 of the constitution, which granted

¹⁴⁵ Al Jazeera, 'Cousins at war': Pakistan-Afghan ties strained after cross-border attacks, 19 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁶ DW, Why did the Afghan Taliban sour on Pakistan?, 20 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷ Time, Why Pakistan-Afghanistan Tensions Are Soaring, 5 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸ DW, Why did the Afghan Taliban sour on Pakistan?, 20 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁹ CFR, Why Pakistan Is Deporting Afghan Migrants, 15 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰ Time, Why Pakistan-Afghanistan Tensions Are Soaring, 5 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵¹ EFSAS, Indo-Pak Relations – A brief history, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁵² BBC News, Kashmir: Why India and Pakistan fight over it, 8 August 2019, [url](#)

¹⁵³ International Crisis Group, Flare-Ups and Frustration as Kashmir Waits for a Vote, 8 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁴ Al Jazeera, Will India's Modi break the ice with Pakistan in his third term?, 17 Juni 2024, [url](#)





extensive autonomy to the Indian-controlled part of Jammu and Kashmir. That move, which had been an electoral promise by the governing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), was criticised by Pakistan, which reportedly called the move ‘illegal’ and stopped trade relations with India.¹⁵⁵ According to Irfan Nooruddin, a professor of Indian politics at Georgetown University quoted by Al Jazeera, both countries’ economies would profit from a ‘more rational relationship’. However, according to Ajay Darshan Behera, a scholar of international studies at the Jamia Millia Islamia University in New Delhi, improving relations was difficult as both countries had preconditions for that, including India’s demand that Pakistan end all support for militant groups and Pakistan’s demand that Article 370 be restored.¹⁵⁶

2.2.3. Relations with Iran

The Indian news website Firstpost noted that Pakistan’s relations with Iran were ‘cordial’ but ‘interspersed with’ tensions and border fights, and named religious differences, opposing positions regarding the Afghan Taliban, the Baloch insurgency, Pakistan’s close relation with the USA and some trade issues as some of the contentious issues between the two states.¹⁵⁷ Al Jazeera noted substantial trade movement between the two countries as well as cultural and religious ties, with tens of thousands of Pakistani Shia going to Iran on pilgrimage every year.¹⁵⁸

Chatham House pointed to the ‘relatively stable’ relationship between the two countries, compared with Pakistan’s ‘chronic instabilities’ with India and Afghanistan. However, the source noted that one longstanding point of dispute between Pakistan and Iran was the Baloch insurgency, with both countries accusing each other of harbouring Baloch militant groups that launch cross-border attacks.¹⁵⁹

In January 2024, tensions increased with Iranian missile strikes on Pakistani territory targeting Jaish Al-Adl (Army of Justice), a Baloch militant group claiming to fight for more rights for the ethnic Baloch minority living in Iran and responsible for a series of attacks in the Iranian Sistan and Balochistan province. Pakistan’s retaliatory strikes two days later targeted the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF).¹⁶⁰ Chatham House noted that Jaish Al-Adl was affiliated with the Islamic State (IS) group, had Sunni Islamist roots and had emerged from Jundullah, an Al-Qaeda-affiliated group. On the other hand, the Baloch insurgency in Pakistan had more secular and nationalist roots, with its calls for an autonomous or independent Baloch state going back to Pakistan’s establishment as a separate state in 1947.¹⁶¹ A few days after the strikes, which had initially led to a mutual withdrawal of ambassadors, both countries declared that they would restore diplomatic ties,¹⁶² and Iran’s late President Ebrahim Raisi paid a diplomatic visit to Pakistan in April 2024.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁵ BBC News, Kashmir: Why India and Pakistan fight over it, 8 August 2019, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶ Al Jazeera, Will India’s Modi break the ice with Pakistan in his third term?, 17 Juni 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁷ Firstpost, Iran’s Raisi visits Pakistan: A look at the rocky relations between the two nations, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁸ Al Jazeera, Why is Iran’s President Ebrahim Raisi visiting Pakistan?, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁹ Chatham House, Iran–Pakistan tensions: Why further escalation is unlikely, 23 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁰ New Arab (The), Where is the Iran-Pakistan relationship heading?, 23 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶¹ Chatham House, Iran–Pakistan tensions: Why further escalation is unlikely, 23 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶² Al Jazeera, Iran and Pakistan rebuilding diplomatic ties following tit-for-tat strikes, 22 January 2024, [url](#); BBC News, Pakistan-Iran diplomatic ties restored after missile and drone strikes, 19 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶³ Firstpost, Iran’s Raisi visits Pakistan: A look at the rocky relations between the two nations, 22 April 2024, [url](#)



3. Main actors involved in armed conflicts

3.1. State Actors

Pakistan's military and security forces are comprised of the Pakistan Armed Forces and the forces affiliated with the Ministry of Interior (MoI).¹⁶⁴ Various provincial and local police departments are tasked with internal security matters, while several paramilitary forces engage in security work as part of the Army¹⁶⁵ or under the MoI.¹⁶⁶ The Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) is the country's main intelligence agency.¹⁶⁷

3.1.1. Pakistan Army

According to the CIA, the Pakistan Armed Forces (army, navy, air force) comprised 630 000 active-duty personnel as of 2023, including 550 000 army members.¹⁶⁸ Each of these services is commanded by a chief of staff, with the chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff being the most senior officer of the country's armed forces. The troops serve on a voluntary basis.¹⁶⁹ As of late 2022, the army reportedly consisted of 11 corps and 25 divisions (including 19 infantry divisions, 2 artillery divisions, 2 armored divisions, and 2 mechanised divisions). Each division typically encompassed three brigades.¹⁷⁰ Paramilitary groups affiliated with the military include the Khyber Rifles (a force involved in security work, such as combating terrorism)¹⁷¹ and the National Guard. The latter is part of the army's reserve forces, which also includes the Pakistan Army Reserve and the MoI-affiliated Pakistan Rangers and Frontier Corps (FC).¹⁷²

3.1.2. Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)

The Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI), headquartered in Islamabad, consists of three wings (political, external, and administrative)¹⁷³ and has been described as being nominally under the control of the prime minister¹⁷⁴ but is in fact directly controlled¹⁷⁵ and run by the military.¹⁷⁶ It is tasked with gathering and analysing intelligence, running covert operations, and providing intelligence to the armed forces and other state entities. The ISI operates a network of agents and informants in the country. It is believed that the armed forces and the ISI frequently

¹⁶⁴ US, CIA, World Factbook – Pakistan, last updated 23 October 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵ Encyclopedia Britannica, Pakistan, Political Process, last updated 22 October 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁶ US, CIA, World Factbook – Pakistan, last updated 23 October 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁷ Reuters, Pakistan picks new chief of powerful spy agency ISI, say security source, TV channel, 24 September 2024, [url](#); Encyclopedia Britannica, Pakistan, Political Process, last updated 22 October 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸ US, CIA, World Factbook – Pakistan, last updated 23 October 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁹ Encyclopedia Britannica, Pakistan, Political Process, last updated 22 October 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷⁰ Najeeb, M. and Ibrahim, M., The Hierarchical Structure of the Pakistan Armed Forces, Paradigm Shift, 13 December 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷¹ Encyclopedia Britannica, Pakistan, Political Process, last updated 22 October 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷² US, CIA, World Factbook – Pakistan, last updated 23 October 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷³ Cremin, J., Pakistan's ISI: Rogue Intelligence Agency or State Within a State?, Grey Dynamics, 23 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷⁴ Guardian (The), Fear for democracy in Pakistan as ISI gets power over civil service, 12 June 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL, Who controls Pakistan's powerful ISI, 14 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷⁵ Times of India (The), ISI Pakistan, 30 January 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷⁶ VOA, Outrage follows as Pakistan allows spy agency to tape citizens' calls, 10 July 2024, [url](#)



collaborate on intelligence and security matters.¹⁷⁷ Sources have pointed out that given the military's strong influence on public life, the ISI is able to covertly shape the nation's domestic politics.¹⁷⁸ In July 2024, the government formally authorised the ISI to intercept messages and calls as well as to trace the origin of calls through any communication system on national security grounds.¹⁷⁹ In September 2024, Lieutenant-General Muhammad Asim Malik was appointed the new director general of the ISI.¹⁸⁰

3.1.3. Pakistani police

There were 15 police organisations in Pakistan as of mid-2016, of which nine were operating under the control of the federal administration.¹⁸¹ These included several police organisations operating under the Ministry of Interior (MoI), such as the National Police Bureau, the Federal Investigation Agency, the Frontier Constabulary, and the Islamabad Capital Territory Police.¹⁸² Meanwhile, six police organisations, namely the Punjab Police, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police, the Sindh Police, the Balochistan Police, the Gilgit-Baltistan Police and the Azad and Jammu and Kashmir Police, were operating under the control of the administrations of their respective provinces and territories.¹⁸³ In each district, the police is headed by a district police officer who reports to the city police officer or regional police officer, who in turn reports to a provincial police officer of the rank of inspector general.¹⁸⁴ Further organisations involved in policing include the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) and various provincial government departments,¹⁸⁵ including counterterrorism departments (CTDs).¹⁸⁶ The criminal justice processes laid down in the Code of Criminal Procedure of 1898 apply to all police organisations/agencies, but special legislations tailor this general scheme to their own specific requirements.¹⁸⁷

The provincial CTDs collaborate closely with the army and its paramilitary affiliates in regions such as Karachi and Balochistan. Overlapping responsibilities of civilian and military and paramilitary policing bodies have frequently created 'a dual policing mechanism' with militarised punitive structures.¹⁸⁸ The Dawn newspaper highlighted that Pakistan's police force suffers from 'severe lack of proper training' that is necessary for policing civilian communities, which results in increased 'reliance on force as a default response mechanism'. This situation

¹⁷⁷ Times of India (The), ISI Pakistan, 30 January 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷⁸ Cremin, J., Pakistan's ISI: Rogue Intelligence Agency or State Within a State?, Grey Dynamics, 23 July 2024, [url](#); Guardian (The), Fear for democracy in Pakistan as ISI gets power over civil service, 12 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁹ Telegraph (The) (India), Pakistan government authorises ISI to intercept and trace calls for national security, 10 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁸⁰ Reuters, Pakistan picks new chief of powerful spy agency ISI, say security source, TV channel, 24 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁸¹ RSIL, Frequently Applied Police Laws & Criminal Procedures, July 2016, [url](#), p. 12

¹⁸² Pakistan, Ministry of Interior, Organizations, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁸³ RSIL, Frequently Applied Police Laws & Criminal Procedures, July 2016, [url](#), p. 12

¹⁸⁴ Masood, I., Your Complete Guide to Police Force Ranks in Pakistan (Updated October) [Blog], Zameen.com, 13 October 2023, [url](#)

¹⁸⁵ Adil, K., System of Policing in Pakistan, RSIL, 26 December 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁶ Waseem, Z., Inside the Punitive State: Governance Through Punishment in Pakistan, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 20 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁸⁷ Adil, K., System of Policing in Pakistan, RSIL, 26 December 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁸ Waseem, Z., Inside the Punitive State: Governance Through Punishment in Pakistan, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 20 June 2024, [url](#)



is further exacerbated by poor working conditions, including inadequate compensation and long hours, which can lead to low morale and high levels of stress.¹⁸⁹

3.1.4. Frontier Corps (FC)

The Frontier Corps (FC) is a paramilitary force affiliated with the MoI¹⁹⁰ but overseen by army officers.¹⁹¹ As of the first half of 2024, the FC was operating in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces,¹⁹² including in the districts Lower Dir,¹⁹³ Dera Ismail Khan,¹⁹⁴ Chaman,¹⁹⁵ Dukki,¹⁹⁶ and in the city of Turbat¹⁹⁷. It was primarily tasked with securing the country's border with Afghanistan. While the CIA indicated that FC personnel were mostly recruited from the tribal areas,¹⁹⁸ researcher Sabawoon Samim in April 2024 quoted interviewees on the Afghanistan side of the border as saying that members of the FC tended to stem from non-Pashtun-majority provinces of Pakistan, replacing the ethnic Pashtun Pakistan security forces previously stationed in many places along the Durand Line.¹⁹⁹ According to the CIA, as of 2023, the FC and the Pakistan Rangers (see below) had a combined strength of around 150 000.²⁰⁰

3.1.5. Pakistan Rangers

The Pakistan Rangers are a federal paramilitary force²⁰¹ under the MoI²⁰² operating in Punjab and Sindh provinces²⁰³ where they are mainly tasked with providing border security.²⁰⁴ Rangers could also be deployed by the authorities to assist in internal security operations²⁰⁵ and were entrusted with securing key installations in various cities.²⁰⁶ According to the CIA, as of 2023 the Pakistan Rangers and the Frontier Corps (see above) had a combined strength of around 150 000.²⁰⁷ They have also been deployed outside Punjab and Sindh upon request. In

¹⁸⁹ Dawn, The Problem with Pakistan's Police, 7 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁹⁰ US, CIA, World Factbook – Pakistan, last updated 23 October 2024, [url](#)

¹⁹¹ Baloch, K., Two Years on, State of Pakistani Security Continues to Deteriorate After Taliban Seizure of Afghanistan, The Jamestown Foundation, 8 September 2023, [url](#); US, CIA, World Factbook – Pakistan, last updated 23 October 2024, [url](#)

¹⁹² Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen Ambtsbericht Pakistan [Country report Pakistan], 5 July 2024, [url](#), p. 21, footnote 62

¹⁹³ Dawn, Casualties feared in Dir clashes between FC, intruding militants: reports, 23 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁹⁴ PTI, One Frontier Corps soldier, two government officials killed in separate terror incidents in Pakistan's KPK, 21 April 2024

¹⁹⁵ RFE/RL, Pakistani Security Forces Reportedly Fire On Protesters Near Afghan Border, 4 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁹⁶ Xinhua, Soldier killed, 3 injured in terrorist attack in SW Pakistan, 30 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁹⁷ Dawn, FC soldier martyred, 4 terrorists killed as security forces thwart attack on naval base in Turbat: ISPR, 26 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁹⁸ US, CIA, World Factbook – Pakistan, last updated 23 October 2024, [url](#)

¹⁹⁹ Samim, S., The Durand Line and the Fence: How are communities managing with cross-border lives?, AAN, April 2024, [url](#), p. 23

²⁰⁰ US, CIA, World Factbook – Pakistan, last updated 23 October 2024, [url](#)

²⁰¹ HRCP, Civil unrest and violence in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, 1 June 2024, [url](#), p. 4

²⁰² US, CIA, World Factbook – Pakistan, last updated 23 October 2024, [url](#); Pakistan, Pakistan Rangers (Punjab), Homepage, n.d., [url](#)

²⁰³ US, CIA, World Factbook – Pakistan, last updated 23 October 2024, [url](#)

²⁰⁴ Encyclopedia Britannica, Pakistan, Political Process, last updated 22 October 2024, [url](#)

²⁰⁵ Pakistan, Pakistan Rangers (Punjab), Homepage, n.d., [url](#); Gulf News, Pakistan: Sindh ropes in Army and Rangers to tackle dacoits, 11 March 2023, [url](#); Nation (The), Interior Minister lauds Sindh Rangers for maintaining law, order, 1 May 2024, [url](#)

²⁰⁶ Pakistan, Pakistan Rangers (Punjab), Homepage, n.d., [url](#)

²⁰⁷ US, CIA, World Factbook – Pakistan, last updated 23 October 2024, [url](#)



May 2024, they were involved in the violent suppression of local protests in Azad Jammu and Kashmir.²⁰⁸

3.1.6. Levies and Khasadars

Until 2018, when the former Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA)²⁰⁹ merged with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province,²¹⁰ the tribal policing units of the Levies (appointed and commanded by the then FATA political administration) and Khasadars (appointed by tribal authorities on a patrilineal basis) exercised civilian law enforcement in the FATA.²¹¹ Following the merger, they were absorbed into the regular Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial police forces²¹² in a gradual process initiated by the provincial government in April 2019. However, as of early 2022, the International Crisis Group noted that the Levies were poorly trained, while the Khasadars still maintained loyal ties to *maliks* [male elders who constituted the tribal councils (*jirgas*)], rather than to the state.²¹³ The former Levies and Khasadars had a combined strength of 35 000²¹⁴ and were posted in all seven tribal districts as of May 2024.²¹⁵

3.1.7. Pro-government armed militias

As of summer 2023, armed private militias, ‘often referred to as death squads’, were operating in Balochistan province,²¹⁶ including across the cities of Turbat and Gwadar, the districts of Punjgur and Khara, and the Makran area.²¹⁷ They were allegedly acting with the support of the state, targeting locals suspected of being involved in the Baloch nationalist movement. According to the Asia Times, they have been engaged in the kidnapping, arbitrary arrest, torture, extrajudicial killing, and enforced disappearance of Baloch dissidents. According to this source, they were protected from accountability and seldomly faced judicial consequences for their actions.²¹⁸

3.2. Main non-state armed groups

According to the Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), over 20 armed militant groups were active in the country as of the end of 2023, with more than three-quarters of all militant attacks

²⁰⁸ HRCR, Civil unrest and violence in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, 1 June 2024, [url](#), p. 4

²⁰⁹ The Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) was a region bordering Afghanistan that was governed under the Frontier Crimes Regulation (not Pakistani laws) between 1947 and 2018. It comprised seven tribal districts: Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram, North Waziristan, and South Waziristan. Al Jazeera, Pakistan’s tribal areas: ‘Neither faith nor union found’, 2019, [url](#)

²¹⁰ Pakistan, MOHR, Establishment of Sub-Office of Human Rights in Newly Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, n.d., [url](#)

²¹¹ International Crisis Group, Women and Peacebuilding in Pakistan’s North West, 14 February 2022, [url](#), pp. 15-16

²¹² Dawn, Govt approves pension for former Levies, Khasadar personnel, 23 May 2024, [url](#)

²¹³ International Crisis Group, Women and Peacebuilding in Pakistan’s North West, 14 February 2022, [url](#), pp. 3, 16

²¹⁴ Dawn, Ex-Khasadar, Levies officials lock police offices in Khyber, 15 May 2024, [url](#); Express Tribune (The), Levies, khasadar force sit-in enters second day at Bab-e-Khyber, 11 May 2024, [url](#)

²¹⁵ Dawn, Ex-Khasadar, Levies officials lock police offices in Khyber, 15 May 2024, [url](#)

²¹⁶ Asia Times, Private militias behind violence in Balochistan, 3 August 2023, [url](#)

²¹⁷ Voicepk.net, Operating with Impunity: Death Squads in Balochistan, 16 July 2023, [url](#)

²¹⁸ Asia Times, Private militias behind violence in Balochistan, 3 August 2023, [url](#)





documented in 2023 conducted by Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISKP) and the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA).²¹⁹

3.2.1. Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP)

Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was established in 2007 as an umbrella organisation with the approbation of Taliban leaders from the former FATA.²²⁰ This Sunnite²²¹ and mainly Pashtun²²² collection of Islamist militant groups²²³ which the Pakistani government banned in 2008²²⁴ is known for its opposition to the state of Pakistan.²²⁵ According to the UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, it had an estimated strength of 6 000–6 500 fighters as of May 2024. It showed significant activity in Afghanistan and conducted cross-border operations from there into Pakistan, often using Afghan fighters. The group maintained close ties to the Afghan Taliban²²⁶ with whom they shared the same Islamic ideologies and the aim of implementing *Sharia* Law in their respective countries.²²⁷ The group also shared historical ties with Al-Qaeda²²⁸ and received support from that group, including fighters and training camps in Afghanistan.²²⁹ The TTP's main line has been described as 'not overtly sectarian', although some of the group's factions maintained an explicitly anti-Shia stance.²³⁰ But as the group expanded its operations from the tribal belt to the main cities in recent years, it strategically focused its attacks on the Pakistani security forces,²³¹ including sites of the Pakistan armed forces.²³²

²¹⁹ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11

²²⁰ Akhtar, S. and Ahmed, Z.S., Understanding the resurgence of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, 15 November 2023, [url](#), p. 288

²²¹ Al Jazeera, Pakistan Taliban reunites with two splinter groups, 18 August 2020, [url](#)

²²² SpecialEurasia, Unveiling the Complexities: Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, and Afghanistan's Turbulent Landscape, 17 July 2023, [url](#)

²²³ Nikkei Asia, Pakistani Taliban's 'shadow province' threatens China BRI projects, 21 June 2023, [url](#)

²²⁴ Dawn, Another militant organisation banned, 24 August 2020, [url](#)

²²⁵ SpecialEurasia, Unveiling the Complexities: Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, and Afghanistan's Turbulent Landscape, 17 July 2023, [url](#)

²²⁶ UN Security Council, Letter dated 3 July 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing Fifteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2716 (2023) concerning the Taliban and other associated individuals and entities constituting a threat to the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan], S/2024/499, 8 July 2024, [url](#), para. 24, 55

²²⁷ Bakhsh, N. et al., Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan's (TTP) Threat Spectrum: Assessing Pakistan's Counter-Terrorism Policy in Post-US Withdrawal Era, June 2024, [url](#), p. 174

²²⁸ PICSS, Pakistan's Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 13

²²⁹ UN Security Council, Letter dated 3 July 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing Fifteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2716 (2023) concerning the Taliban and other associated individuals and entities constituting a threat to the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan], S/2024/499, 8 July 2024, [url](#), para. 55

²³⁰ International Crisis Group, A New Era of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan, 5 September 2022, [url](#), p. 6

²³¹ Sayed, A. and Hamming, T., The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan After the Taliban's Afghanistan Takeover, CTC Sentinel, May 2023, [url](#), p. 5

²³² UN Security Council, Thirty-fourth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/556, 22 July 2024, [url](#), para. 82





The UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team noted that the TTP, with the acquiescence and occasional support from the Afghan Taliban,²³³ significantly escalated its attacks since 2021, from 573 attacks in 2021 to 1 210 attacks in 2023,²³⁴ after it ended a ceasefire with the government in November 2022.²³⁵ The TTP's attacks focused on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces,²³⁶ with the districts of Khyber, North Waziristan, and South Waziristan experiencing the majority of attacks claimed by the group in 2023,²³⁷ although attacks were recorded in all four of the country's provinces.²³⁸

Though driven out of Pakistan in 2014, in recent years the TTP has regained control in pockets of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. As of September 2024, research by RFE/RL showed that it was active in 10 of the province's 34 districts, namely Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Kurram, North and South Waziristan, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank and Dera Ismail Khan.²³⁹ The TTP has also extended its operational reach to areas outside its historical support zones, expanding into Baloch-dominated areas within Balochistan²⁴⁰ and into Punjab²⁴¹ and Sindh.²⁴² However, PIPS noted that the group lacked a significant operational presence the latter two provinces.²⁴³ By early 2024, the group had divided Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province into seven *wilayahs* ('provinces') and added five more *wilayahs* in Balochistan, North Punjab and Southern Punjab, and Gilgit-Baltistan.²⁴⁴ It appointed so-called 'shadow governors'²⁴⁵ and deputy governors for the *wilayahs* as well as intelligence chiefs for various regions.²⁴⁶ At the same time, a researcher on armed groups in Pakistan was quoted by Al Jazeera as saying that TTP did not maintain permanent bases in Pakistan, but instead operated out of makeshift bases, frequently moving from one place to another.²⁴⁷ According to locals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa interviewed by RFE/RL, TTP often asserted its control by night when the government forces retreated to

²³³ UN Security Council, Thirty-fourth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/556, 22 July 2024, [url](#), para. 82

²³⁴ UN Security Council, Letter dated 3 July 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing Fifteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2716 (2023) concerning the Taliban and other associated individuals and entities constituting a threat to the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan], S/2024/499, 8 July 2024, [url](#), para. 57

²³⁵ ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, June 21, 2023, 23 June 2023, [url](#)

²³⁶ Ahmad, O., TTP Activity Causes Continued Deterioration in Pakistani–Afghan Relations, The Jamestown Foundation, 1 March 2024, [url](#)

²³⁷ MEMRI, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) Attacks In Pakistan More Than Tripled Between 2021 And 2023, Following Taliban Takeover Of Afghanistan, 19 January 2024, [url](#)

²³⁸ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11

²³⁹ RFE/RL, 'No One Is Safe': Life Under The Rule Of The Pakistani Taliban, 10 September 2024, [url](#)

²⁴⁰ Basit, A., Questions Surround Pakistani Taliban's Inroads into Balochistan: Organizational Expansion or Propaganda Stunt?, The Jamestown Foundation, 11 July 2023, [url](#)

²⁴¹ Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen Ambtsbericht Pakistan [Country report Pakistan], 5 July 2024, [url](#), p. 18; ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, June 21, 2023, 23 June 2023, [url](#)

²⁴² Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen Ambtsbericht Pakistan [Country report Pakistan], 5 July 2024, [url](#), p. 18

²⁴³ PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options, 8 May 2024, [url](#), pp. 43-44

²⁴⁴ MEMRI, Looking Ahead In 2024 – The Taliban Factor In The Afghanistan-Pakistan Region, 1 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁴⁵ Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen Ambtsbericht Pakistan [Country report Pakistan], 5 July 2024, [url](#), p. 19; ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, June 21, 2023, 23 June 2023, [url](#)

²⁴⁶ MEMRI, Looking Ahead In 2024 – The Taliban Factor In The Afghanistan-Pakistan Region, 1 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁴⁷ Al Jazeera, 'Azim-e-Istehkam': Can new Pakistani military operation curb armed attacks?, 24 June 2024, [url](#)



their bases and outposts, with many civilians refusing to leave their houses for fear of the militants.²⁴⁸

A process of absorption of other armed militant groups by TTP that had begun in mid-2020²⁴⁹ (when more than 33 factions joined forces with TTP)²⁵⁰ was accelerated after the Taliban's takeover of power in Afghanistan in 2021. This enabled TTP to reinforce its organisational foothold in strategic areas such as the North Waziristan tribal district and Balochistan²⁵¹ and to escalate its attacks, especially from 2022 onwards.²⁵² Meanwhile, the think tank Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS) suggested that the notion of integrating all groups under the TTP banner was encountering 'some complications': the second half of 2023 witnessed the defection of a small TTP faction from South Waziristan to Hafiz Gul Bahadur (HGB),²⁵³ another militant group opposing the Pakistani state,²⁵⁴ and the emergence of a new militant group called Ansar-ul Jihad.²⁵⁵

Another new group that emerged in February 2023 under the name Tehreek-e-Jihad Pakistan (TJP) has claimed responsibility for attacks believed to be linked to TTP,²⁵⁶ including a large-scale attack on a military base in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in December 2023 that left 23 soldiers dead.²⁵⁷ PIPS described TJP as a TTP 'subsidiary or coverup group'.²⁵⁸ In an interview with the EUAA in September 2024, Abdullah Khan, Managing Director of PICSS similarly emphasised that TJP was not a militant organisation of its own but rather a proxy name used by the TTP to distance themselves from high-profile attacks. In 2024, TJP has not claimed any major attacks, according to the PICSS representative.²⁵⁹ Meanwhile, a newly-launched TTP militant wing called 'Istrna' reportedly posed a threat to several check posts in Dera Ghazi Khan district, increased its influence in these tribal areas, and made contacts with a local criminal gang, inviting it to join its ranks, according to a senior government official quoted by the Dawn newspaper.²⁶⁰

²⁴⁸ RFE/RL, 'No One Is Safe': Life Under The Rule Of The Pakistani Taliban, 10 September 2024, [url](#)

²⁴⁹ Sayed, A. and Hamming, T., The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan After the Taliban's Afghanistan Takeover, CTC Sentinel, May 2023, [url](#), p. 3

²⁵⁰ Khan, Abdullah, Managing Director of PICSS, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

²⁵¹ Sayed, A. and Hamming, T., The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan After the Taliban's Afghanistan Takeover, CTC Sentinel, May 2023, [url](#), p. 3

²⁵² Khan, Abdullah, Managing Director of PICSS, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

²⁵³ PICSS, Pakistan's Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 16

²⁵⁴ RFE/RL, Pakistan Adds 2 More Militant Groups To Its 'Terror' List, 1 August 2024, [url](#)

²⁵⁵ PICSS, Pakistan's Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 16; RFE/RL, The Azadi Briefing: Deadly Attack Further Inflames Tensions Between Pakistan And Afghan Taliban, 15 December 2023, [url](#)

²⁵⁶ UN Security Council, Letter dated 3 July 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing Fifteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2716 (2023) concerning the Taliban and other associated individuals and entities constituting a threat to the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan], S/2024/499, 8 July 2024, [url](#), para. 43; PICSS, Pakistan's Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), pp. 15-16; RFE/RL, The Azadi Briefing: Deadly Attack Further Inflames Tensions Between Pakistan And Afghan Taliban, 15 December 2023, [url](#)

²⁵⁷ RFE/RL, The Azadi Briefing: Deadly Attack Further Inflames Tensions Between Pakistan And Afghan Taliban, 15 December 2023, [url](#)

²⁵⁸ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 23

²⁵⁹ Khan, Abdullah, Managing Director of PICSS, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

²⁶⁰ Dawn, TTP launches new militant wing to target police in Punjab, 29 January 2024, [url](#)



3.2.2. Jamaat-ul Ahrar (JuA)

Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA), a group banned by the Pakistani government in 2016,²⁶¹ has been described as a hardline²⁶² TTP ‘breakaway’ faction²⁶³ that defected from the TTP in 2014 over leadership issues but rejoined the group in 2020²⁶⁴ (along with a JuA splinter group named Hizb-ul-Ahrar [HuA]).²⁶⁵ In the past, JuA’s leadership has called for the establishment of a world-wide Islamic caliphate and expressed its desire to gain control of Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal as a means of defending Islam, but later disavowed some of its international goals.²⁶⁶ The group has a history of targeting civilians, religious minorities, and military and police personnel.²⁶⁷ Between 2014 and 2023, Action on Armed Violence (AOAV)²⁶⁸ documented 13 instances of use of explosive weapons in Pakistan that were attributed to JuA.²⁶⁹ In early 2023, a new conflict emerged between JuA and the TTP leadership. However, there were some signs of reconciliation as of September 2023, with the TTP apparently inclined to alleviate mutual tensions in order to prevent another defection.²⁷⁰

3.2.3. Punjabi Taliban

The term ‘Punjabi Taliban’ is an unofficial term referring to militants from non-Pashtun backgrounds who joined the TTP, including those who did not actually hail from Punjab. Within this broad category, there was a distinct group led by Asmatullah Muawiya, a former commander of Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM). Many militants in this Punjabi group came from militant groups such as JeM and Harakat ul-Mujahideen (HuM), which were primarily focused on anti-India operations in Kashmir. Initially, these militants had defected to TTP but were later regrouped under Muawiya’s leadership.²⁷¹ The group’s proclaimed aim was the implementation of *Sharia*. In September 2014, Muawiya declared that the group had abandoned its armed struggle in Pakistan.²⁷² The group’s focus shifted to Afghanistan, with many followers laying down their arms. The managing director of PICSS told the EUAA in September 2024 that ‘while the group still exists in name, its activities in Pakistan have ceased’.²⁷³

²⁶¹ VOA, Pakistan Hails UN for Listing Jamaat-ul-Ahrar as Global Terrorist, 7 July 2017, [url](#)

²⁶² ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, September 7, 2023, 8 September 2023, [url](#)

²⁶³ Express Tribune (The), Is TTP being blamed for Jamaat-ul-Ahrar attacks?, 1 February 2024, [url](#)

²⁶⁴ ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, September 7, 2023, 8 September 2023, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Pakistan Taliban reunites with two splinter groups, 18 August 2020, [url](#)

²⁶⁵ Al Jazeera, Pakistan Taliban reunites with two splinter groups, 18 August 2020, [url](#)

²⁶⁶ Roul, A., Pakistan’s Jamaat-ul-Ahrar: A Violent Domestic Threat, The Jamestown Foundation, 16 September 2016, [url](#)

²⁶⁷ SpecialEurasia, Unveiling the Complexities: Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, and Afghanistan’s Turbulent Landscape, 17 July 2023, [url](#)

²⁶⁸ Action on Armed Violence (AOAV) is a London-based non-profit organisation that documents and investigates armed violence against civilians worldwide. AOAV, What do we do?, n.d., [url](#)

²⁶⁹ AOAV, Explosive violence by Jamaat-ul Ahrar, n.d., [url](#)

²⁷⁰ ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, September 7, 2023, 8 September 2023, [url](#)

²⁷¹ Khan, Abdullah, Managing Director of PICSS, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

²⁷² Dawn, Punjabi Taliban give up ‘armed struggle’, 14 September 2014, [url](#)

²⁷³ Khan, Abdullah, Managing Director of PICSS, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024



3.2.4. Hafiz Gul Bahadur (HGB)

Hafiz Gul Bahadur (HGB) is a TTP-aligned²⁷⁴ umbrella organisation named after its leader,²⁷⁵ a former TTP commander. In ways similar to the TTP, the HGB aims to establish an Islamic system in Pakistan's Pashtun-majority areas.²⁷⁶ The group maintained links to the Haqqani Network and Al-Qaeda.²⁷⁷ Like the TTP, it is believed to be based in Afghanistan.²⁷⁸ It was active in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's tribal areas,²⁷⁹ mainly in North Waziristan district²⁸⁰ but also posed a potential threat to security forces in neighbouring districts like Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Dera Ismail Khan, and Tank.²⁸¹ The HGB comprised a large number of subgroups²⁸² and HGB-affiliated militants have recently been linked to a number of high-profile attacks against security forces in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,²⁸³ carried out under various banners such as Da Sufiyano Karawan, Da Ghazyano Karwan, and Jaish Fursan Muhammad (JFM).²⁸⁴

3.2.5. Jamaat-ul Ansar Al-Sharia

Jamaat-ul Ansar Al-Sharia was formed in 2017²⁸⁵ by individuals linked to Al-Qaeda.²⁸⁶ Many Al-Qaeda members in Pakistan had joined the Islamic State (ISIL) group, but some later defected to create Jamat Ansar Al-Sharia²⁸⁷ with the apparent aim of re-establishing Al-Qaeda's influence in Pakistan by luring ISKP and other IS members back to Al-Qaeda.²⁸⁸ Jamaat-ul Ansar Al-Sharia was a small organisation, and since 2017, most of its key leaders have been arrested, some in Karachi, and others in Quetta. Khan, managing director of PICSS told the EUAA that the group was 'largely dysfunctional' as of September 2024, with some remnants that lacked the capacity to cause major violence.²⁸⁹

²⁷⁴ TKD, Pakistan Blames Hafiz Gul Bahadur Group for Bannu Attack, Vows Action Against Terrorist Threats from Afghanistan, 15 July 2024, [url](#)

²⁷⁵ Valle, R., Jabhat Ansar al-Mahdi Khorasan Emerges as Prominent Faction of Hafiz Gul Bahadur in Pakistan, The Jamestown Foundation, 22 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁷⁶ PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 45

²⁷⁷ Rehman, Z., Good Taliban, bad Taliban: The case of Hafiz Gul Bahadur, Dawn, 21 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁷⁸ RFE/RL, New Extremist Groups -- At Least In Name -- Enter Pakistan's Militant Scene, 25 July 2024, [url](#)

²⁷⁹ RFE/RL, Pakistan Adds 2 More Militant Groups To Its 'Terror' List, 1 August 2024, [url](#)

²⁸⁰ PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 45;

Rehman, Z., Good Taliban, bad Taliban: The case of Hafiz Gul Bahadur, Dawn, 21 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁸¹ Rehman, Z., Good Taliban, bad Taliban: The case of Hafiz Gul Bahadur, Dawn, 21 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁸² Valle, R., Jabhat Ansar al-Mahdi Khorasan Emerges as Prominent Faction of Hafiz Gul Bahadur in Pakistan, The Jamestown Foundation, 22 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁸³ Valle, R., Jabhat Ansar al-Mahdi Khorasan Emerges as Prominent Faction of Hafiz Gul Bahadur in Pakistan, The Jamestown Foundation, 22 March 2024, [url](#); Rehman, Z., Good Taliban, bad Taliban: The case of Hafiz Gul Bahadur, Dawn, 21 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁸⁴ Rehman, Z., Good Taliban, bad Taliban: The case of Hafiz Gul Bahadur, Dawn, 21 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁸⁵ Zahid, F., Jamaat ul Ansar al-Sharia: The New al-Qaeda Threat in Pakistan, The Jamestown Foundation, 22 September 2017, [url](#)

²⁸⁶ Khan, Abdullah, Managing Director of PICSS, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024; Zahid, F., Jamaat ul Ansar al-Sharia: The New al-Qaeda Threat in Pakistan, The Jamestown Foundation, 22 September 2017, [url](#)

²⁸⁷ Khan, Abdullah, Managing Director of PICSS, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

²⁸⁸ Zahid, F., Jamaat ul Ansar al-Sharia: The New al-Qaeda Threat in Pakistan, The Jamestown Foundation, 22 September 2017, [url](#)

²⁸⁹ Khan, Abdullah, Managing Director of PICSS, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024



3.2.6. Al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda's core organisation was formed in 1988 by Osama bin Laden and the group's cells operated in a number of provinces of Afghanistan.²⁹⁰ The UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team assessed that its status was dormant in Afghanistan as of June 2024,²⁹¹ with the group's core 'seriously degraded' since the death of its leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in a US airstrike in Afghanistan in July 2022.²⁹² Al-Qaeda's structure remained strictly hierarchical²⁹³ and Sayf al-Adl was believed to be the group's overall leader as of mid-2024.²⁹⁴ Al-Qaeda's affiliate organisations had greater autonomy but still sought authorisation from the core leaders on important questions.²⁹⁵ While Al-Qaeda's ability to carry out large-scale attacks was limited, it disseminated propaganda to increase recruitment and was working to rebuild its operational capacities.²⁹⁶ It maintained ties with numerous militant organisations based in Pakistan.²⁹⁷ In Pakistan, the group's operations historically centered around Karachi and the country's south²⁹⁸ and a presence of suspected Al-Qaeda operatives continued to be reported in these areas,²⁹⁹ but was also reported in Punjab.³⁰⁰

Al-Qaeda's affiliate group Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent had a strength of 180–200 fighters. Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent assisted TTP in carrying out terrorist attacks inside Pakistan. Facilities in Afghanistan associated with Al-Qaeda were primarily used for the purpose of training TTP and local fighters.³⁰¹ In July 2024, Pakistan's Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) arrested a senior Al-Qaeda figure, Amin ul Haq,³⁰² in Sarai Alamgir town of

²⁹⁰ UN Security Council, Letter dated 3 July 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing Fifteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2716 (2023) concerning the Taliban and other associated individuals and entities constituting a threat to the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan], S/2024/499, 8 July 2024, [url](#), para. 39

²⁹¹ UN Security Council, Thirty-fourth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/556, 22 July 2024, [url](#), para. 79

²⁹² US, CRS, Terrorist and Other Militant Groups in Pakistan, last updated 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

²⁹³ UN Security Council, Thirty-fourth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/556, 22 July 2024, [url](#), para. 79

²⁹⁴ LWJ, Al Qaeda leader calls foreign fighters to Afghanistan, 8 June 2024, [url](#)

²⁹⁵ UN Security Council, Thirty-fourth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/556, 22 July 2024, [url](#), para. 79

²⁹⁶ UN Security Council, Letter dated 3 July 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing Fifteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2716 (2023) concerning the Taliban and other associated individuals and entities constituting a threat to the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan], S/2024/499, 8 July 2024, [url](#), para. 37

²⁹⁷ US, CRS, Terrorist and Other Militant Groups in Pakistan, last updated 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

²⁹⁸ Khan, Abdullah, Managing Director of PICSS, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

²⁹⁹ SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2023 – November 2023, n.d., [url](#)

³⁰⁰ Reuters, Pakistan arrests Al-Qaeda leader listed by United Nations, 19 July 2024, [url](#); PTI, 15 terrorists arrested during intelligence operations in Pakistan's Punjab, 8 June 2024; SATP, Punjab: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – June 2024, n.d., [url](#); SATP, Punjab: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#)

³⁰¹ UN Security Council, Letter dated 3 July 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing Fifteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2716 (2023) concerning the Taliban and other associated individuals and entities constituting a threat to the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan], S/2024/499, 8 July 2024, [url](#), para. 39, 43

³⁰² Reuters, Pakistan arrests Al-Qaeda leader listed by United Nations, 19 July 2024, [url](#)





Gujrat district (Punjab province),³⁰³ accusing him of planning to sabotage key installations in the province.³⁰⁴ During the reference period, security operations by the CTD led to the arrest of several other alleged Al-Qaeda³⁰⁵ and Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent fighters.³⁰⁶

3.2.7. Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISKP) and Islamic State – Pakistan Province (ISPP)

Two branches of Islamic State (ISIL) were operating in the country, namely Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISKP) and Islamic State – Pakistan Province (ISPP).³⁰⁷ ISKP was mainly active in Afghanistan but also in parts of Pakistan,³⁰⁸ primarily in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan³⁰⁹ but also, to a lesser extent, in Punjab.³¹⁰ While the group, which first emerged in 2015, used to focus its attacks on targets in Afghanistan (the Taliban, forces of the former Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and international troops), by early 2022 experts consulted by RFE/RL noted that ISKP was ‘shifting its war’ to Pakistan due to mounting military pressure from the Afghan Taliban. In recent years, the group has carried out large-scale attacks targeting a Shiite mosque³¹¹ and political party activists in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,³¹² while also attacking security forces.³¹³

Meanwhile, ISPP, an independent network that formally splintered from ISKP in May 2019,³¹⁴ mainly operated in southwestern Pakistan with an exclusive mandate for operations within the borders of Pakistan.³¹⁵ In Balochistan, ISKP’s activities were difficult to distinguish from those of ISPP. While ISPP generally used to conduct attacks on a smaller scale than ISKP³¹⁶ and according to confidential sources consulted by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs was even considered to be ‘dormant’ in the past,³¹⁷ it claimed two bombings in Balochistan province with dozens of casualties on the eve of the national elections in February 2024.³¹⁸

ISIL’s ultimate objective in Pakistan is to overthrow its government and to establish a transnational caliphate. In 2023, ISKP intensified its propaganda efforts to shape narratives against the state and its political representatives, signalling ambitions that went beyond the exclusive realm of militancy.³¹⁹ The group increasingly relied on artificial intelligence to

³⁰³ AA, Pakistan arrests senior al-Qaeda terrorist, 19 July 2024, [url](#)

³⁰⁴ Reuters, Pakistan arrests Al-Qaeda leader listed by United Nations, 19 July 2024, [url](#)

³⁰⁵ PTI, 15 terrorists arrested during intelligence operations in Pakistan’s Punjab, 8 June 2024; SATP, Punjab: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – June 2024, n.d., [url](#); SATP, Punjab: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#)

³⁰⁶ SATP, Punjab: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2023 – December 2023, n.d., [url](#)

³⁰⁷ PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), pp. 16-17

³⁰⁸ PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 16

³⁰⁹ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11

³¹⁰ CSIS, The Islamic State Threat in Pakistan: Trends and Scenarios, 3 August 2023, [url](#)

³¹¹ RFE/RL, Pakistan Confronts Growing Threat From Islamic State-Khorasan, 11 March 2022, [url](#)

³¹² Rehman, Z., Why is the militant ISKP attacking the JUI-F in Bajaur?, Dawn, 2 August 2023, [url](#)

³¹³ AP, Islamic State claims responsibility for weekend bombing that killed 2 police officers in Pakistan, 16 September 2024, [url](#)

³¹⁴ CSIS, The Islamic State Threat in Pakistan: Trends and Scenarios, 3 August 2023, [url](#)

³¹⁵ PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 17

³¹⁶ CSIS, The Islamic State Threat in Pakistan: Trends and Scenarios, 3 August 2023, [url](#)

³¹⁷ Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen Ambtsbericht Pakistan [Country report Pakistan], 5 July 2024, [url](#), p. 21

³¹⁸ CNN, At least 30 dead in Balochistan explosions, day before Pakistan election, 7 February 2024, [url](#)

³¹⁹ PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 19





disseminate propaganda, broadcasting multilingual news bulletins featuring AI-generated anchor-persons.³²⁰ Its agenda remains firmly sectarian and targeted non-Sunni Muslims (including Shias), Sufis, Sikhs, and Christians in both Pakistan and Afghanistan.³²¹ For information on the treatment of religious minorities, see also section [6.2 Religious minorities](#).

The tactics predominantly used by both groups in attacks in Pakistan consisted of targeted killings and IED attacks, causing casualties both among civilians and security forces.³²² The US Congressional Research Service (CRS) noted that ISKP's strength was estimated at 3 000–5 000 fighters,³²³ while several UN member states assessed that ISKP had a strength of 2 000–3 500. Other UN member states were reported to have estimated that ISKP and two other ISIL affiliates in the South Asia region, ISPP and Islamic State Hind Province (ISHP), had a combined strength of around 6 000 fighters. Given that ISKP has sought to covertly embed its operatives in other militant groups such as the TTP and Tehreek-e-Jihad Pakistan (TJP), the UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pointed to the difficulties involved in assessing numbers of ISKP fighters and to which group individuals were loyal.³²⁴ ISKP's network in Pakistan was mainly comprised of former militants from the TTP (primarily from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ) (mostly from Balochistan and parts of Sindh).³²⁵ Daesh's urban presence has been largely dismantled as result of counter-terrorism operations, but the group still has sympathisers across major cities such as Islamabad and Lahore, as well as Sialkot district of Punjab.³²⁶

3.2.8. Haqqani Network

The Haqqani Network, founded in the late 1980s by Jalaluddin Haqqani,³²⁷ is a primarily clan-based organisation integrated within Afghan-Pakistani tribal societies. The group has maintained interpersonal ties to militant groups like Al-Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban and TTP. Since the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in 2021, several of its members were appointed to key positions in the *de facto* Afghan government, including the network's current leader Sirajuddin Haqqani.³²⁸ The Haqqani network was estimated to have several hundred core members and 3 000-5 000 armed militants with various degrees of affiliation. Many of them reportedly operate in the vicinity of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.³²⁹ As of 2024, Sirajuddin Haqqani, who previously acted as a mediator between the Pakistani government

³²⁰ VOA, IS turns to artificial intelligence for advanced propaganda amid territorial defeats, 23 May 2024, [url](#); HSToday, ISIS Supporters Harness the Power of AI to Ramp Up Propaganda on Facebook, X and TikTok, 15 July 2024, [url](#)

³²¹ CSIS, The Islamic State Threat in Pakistan: Trends and Scenarios, 3 August 2023, [url](#)

³²² PICSS, Pakistan's Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 17

³²³ US, CRS, Terrorist and Other Militant Groups in Pakistan, last updated 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2

³²⁴ UN Security Council, Letter dated 3 July 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing Fifteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2716 (2023) concerning the Taliban and other associated individuals and entities constituting a threat to the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan], S/2024/499, 8 July 2024, [url](#), para. 47

³²⁵ Rehman, Z., Inside Balochistan's sectarian shift — the rise of IS from Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, Dawn, 3 October 2023, [url](#)

³²⁶ Khan, Abdullah, Managing Director of PICSS, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

³²⁷ US, CRS, Terrorist and Other Militant Groups in Pakistan, last updated 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2

³²⁸ Ramakrishnan, A., A Network of Possibilities: How the Haqqani Network Changed the Face of Global Terrorism Forever, Georgetown Security Studies Review, 13 November 2023, [url](#)

³²⁹ US, CRS, Terrorist and Other Militant Groups in Pakistan, last updated 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2





and TTP, appeared to have been sidelined when a loyalist of Afghan Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada was appointed to head a delegation to Pakistan for negotiations.³³⁰

3.2.9. Sipah-e Sahaba Pakistan (SSP)

Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) was founded as a Sunni Deobandi³³¹ group³³² in Jhang district of Punjab province in 1985 with the specific aim of targeting the country's Shia population.³³³ In the early 2000s, the group was renamed Millat-e Islamiyya and later Ahle Sunnat wal Jamaat (ASWJ). The Pakistani government banned the successive incarnations of the group in 2002, 2003,³³⁴ and 2012³³⁵ but it continued to engage in political and militant activities.³³⁶ Operating in the former FATA as well as in Punjab and Karachi,³³⁷ the group has targeted Shia community members and Shia places of worship.³³⁸ According to the US Congressional Research Service (CRS), the SSP had between 3 000 and 6 000 members.³³⁹

3.2.10. Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ)

Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ) is a militant group primarily focused on sectarian violence against Shia Muslims.³⁴⁰ It was created as a separate militant wing of Sipah-e-Sahaba (SSP) in 1996³⁴¹ and initially focused on countering Iranian influence and attacking individual Shia leaders and scholars.³⁴² The group was banned by the Pakistani government in 2001.³⁴³ From 2013 onwards, the group conducted multiple mass casualty attacks targeting the country's Shia community, including Shia Hazaras.³⁴⁴

LeJ's highly trained commanders, who had expertise in urban combat, forged close links with members of Al-Qaeda and, later, the TTP, providing indirect support to their operations. With

³³⁰ UN Security Council, Letter dated 3 July 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council [containing Fifteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2716 (2023) concerning the Taliban and other associated individuals and entities constituting a threat to the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan], S/2024/499, 8 July 2024, [url](#), para. 61

³³¹ Deobandism (Deobandi Hanafism) is an Islamic movement that originated in India and is currently strongly influenced Salafism. It has provided the intellectual foundations for religious extremism across South and Central Asia. Salehi, A.K., An Inquiry into Taliban Theology: Deobandism with a Pashtunwali flavor, AISS, 2024, [url](#), pp. 6, 8

³³² International Crisis Group, A New Era of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan, 5 September 2022, [url](#), p. 2

³³³ Sayed, A. and Jadoon, A., Lashkar-e-Jhangvi's Role in the Afghanistan-Pakistan Militant Infrastructure, Hudson Institute, 30 March 2023, [url](#)

³³⁴ International Crisis Group, A New Era of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan, 5 September 2022, [url](#), p. 3

³³⁵ Dawn, Another militant organisation banned, 24 August 2020, [url](#)

³³⁶ Diplomat (The), How Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat Uses Politics to Support Its Campaign of Anti-Shia Terror in Pakistan, 20 September 2016, [url](#)

³³⁷ US, CRS, Terrorist and Other Militant Groups in Pakistan, last updated 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2

³³⁸ Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen Ambtsbericht Pakistan [Country report Pakistan], 5 July 2024, [url](#), pp. 50, 60

³³⁹ US, CRS, Terrorist and Other Militant Groups in Pakistan, last updated 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2

³⁴⁰ Khan, Abdullah, Managing Director of PICSS, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

³⁴¹ International Crisis Group, A New Era of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan, 5 September 2022, [url](#), p. 2

³⁴² Khan, Abdullah, Managing Director of PICSS, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

³⁴³ USDOS, Country Report on Terrorism 2022, 30 November 2023, [url](#), p. 299; Dawn, Another militant organisation banned, 24 August 2020, [url](#)

³⁴⁴ Sayed, A. and Jadoon, A., Lashkar-e-Jhangvi's Role in the Afghanistan-Pakistan Militant Infrastructure, Hudson Institute, 30 March 2023, [url](#); USDOS, Country Report on Terrorism 2022, 30 November 2023, [url](#), pp. 299-300; International Crisis Group, A New Era of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan, 5 September 2022, [url](#), p. 4





the emergence of ISKP, LeJ again served as a connecting node by creating operational linkages with the nascent group with which it became ‘deeply intertwined’ over the years.³⁴⁵ LeJ eventually splintered into smaller factions. One of these factions was Lashkar-e-Jhangvi Al-Alami, which became particularly active among Baloch militants and whose leaders and members in regions such as Balochistan and the upper parts of Sindh mostly pledged allegiance to ISIL.³⁴⁶ After the killing of LeJ’s leader Malik Ishaq by Punjab police in mid-2015, the group was forced to go underground,³⁴⁷ although its attacks continued at least until 2021.³⁴⁸ With Lashkar-e-Jhangvi’s leadership ranks decimated due to government security operations, many of its fighters joined other militant groups, including TTP or ISKP.³⁴⁹ As of late 2023, the number of LeJ members was estimated by the US Department of State to be in the low hundreds.³⁵⁰ The group mostly operated in the former FATA and in Balochistan, Punjab and Karachi.³⁵¹ A PICS’s Managing Director told the EUAA in September 2024 that LeJ, although weakened, still maintained networks enabling it to collaborate with other militant factions such as ISPP and the Iranian Sunni militant group Jaish-al-Adl.³⁵²

3.2.11. Sipah-e Mohammed Pakistan (SMP)

In an interview with the EUAA in September 2024, Abdullah Khan, Managing Director of PICSS, stated that Sipah-e-Muhammad (SMP) is a Shia militant group supported by Iranian intelligence, primarily operating in central Punjab and Karachi, although its activities have decreased over the years. Abdullah Khan further indicated that while the group ‘still exists, its influence is much smaller than in the 1990s’. Currently, more prominent Shia groups were operating in Pakistan, including the Zainabiyoun Brigade, which recruited Pakistani Shia militants to fight in Syrian and Iraq.³⁵³

3.2.12. Balochistan nationalist groups

The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), banned by the Pakistani government in 2006,³⁵⁴ has been deemed the largest among the armed groups operating in Balochistan province,³⁵⁵ with estimates of its strength ranging from 1 000³⁵⁶ to several thousand members.³⁵⁷ Since the Taliban’s takeover of power in Afghanistan in August 2021, the BLA has been acquiring and using more sophisticated weaponry. The BLA is divided into two factions, led by Harbiyar Marri and Bashir Zeb.³⁵⁸ The BLA’s Bashir Zeb faction with its ‘suicide squad’ Majid Brigade is the most potent and active among the Baloch militant groups, whereas the BLA’s Harbyar

³⁴⁵ Sayed, A. and Jadoon, A., Lashkar-e-Jhangvi’s Role in the Afghanistan-Pakistan Militant Infrastructure, Hudson Institute, 30 March 2023, [url](#)

³⁴⁶ Khan, Abdullah, Managing Director of PICSS, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

³⁴⁷ International Crisis Group, A New Era of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan, 5 September 2022, [url](#), p. 4

³⁴⁸ USDOS, Country Report on Terrorism 2022, 30 November 2023, [url](#), pp. 299-300

³⁴⁹ International Crisis Group, A New Era of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan, 5 September 2022, [url](#), p. 6

³⁵⁰ USDOS, Country Report on Terrorism 2022, 30 November 2023, [url](#), p. 300

³⁵¹ US, CRS, Terrorist and Other Militant Groups in Pakistan, last updated 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2

³⁵² Khan, Abdullah, Managing Director of PICSS, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

³⁵³ Khan, Abdullah, Managing Director of PICSS, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

³⁵⁴ Dawn, Another militant organisation banned, 24 August 2020, [url](#)

³⁵⁵ RFE/RL, The Rise Of The Baloch Liberation Army In Pakistan, 1 September 2024, [url](#)

³⁵⁶ US, CRS, Terrorist and Other Militant Groups in Pakistan, last updated 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2

³⁵⁷ RFE/RL, The Rise Of The Baloch Liberation Army In Pakistan, 1 September 2024, [url](#)

³⁵⁸ PIPS, Pakistan’s Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options, 8 May 2024, [url](#), pp. 33, 47



faction has only ‘very limited’ operational capabilities and personnel, according to a PICSS’ Managing Director, Abdullah Khan, interviewed by the EUAA in September 2024.³⁵⁹ The BLA has been seeking independence from Pakistan, accusing the government of exploiting the province’s natural resources and committing human rights violations.³⁶⁰ The BLA, like various other Baloch separatist groups, was furthermore opposed to Chinese investment projects in the province, perceiving China as complicit in the Pakistani government’s alleged ‘oppression’ of ethnic Balochs.³⁶¹ The group has claimed recent attacks against security forces³⁶² and Chinese citizens and interests in Balochistan³⁶³ and Sindh.³⁶⁴ In late August 2024, the BLA orchestrated a series of attacks across several districts of Balochistan, targeting security forces and Pakistanis of non-Baloch ethnicity, leaving 57 people dead.³⁶⁵

The Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF), formed in 2004, is a banned armed militant group led by its co-founder Allah Nazar Baloch³⁶⁶ that has been seeking independence from Pakistan.³⁶⁷ The BLF has been present in the coastal Makran division and Awaran district for two decades.³⁶⁸ Its numerical strength was unknown. According to a confidential source consulted by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the group did not share such information, rather operating secretly in places located far from the cities.³⁶⁹

The Baloch National Army (BNA) was formed in January 2022 as Gulzar Imam, a former leader of a faction of the Baloch Republican Army, aligned with Sarfaraz Bangulzai of the United Baloch Army. Under the leadership of Gulzar Imam, the BNA became the third most powerful militant organisation in Balochistan (after the BLA and the BLF). In 2023, Gulzar Imam was arrested, and his public denouncement of violence led to the surrender of several other BNA commanders. In mid-December 2023, Gulzar Imam’s successor Sarfaraz Bangulzai and 70 other key BNA commanders and their family members similarly renounced violence and surrendered their weapons, after which the BNA essentially ceased to exist. Following this, the BLA and the BLF competed to enlist the remaining BNA fighters into their own ranks.³⁷⁰

³⁵⁹ Khan, Abdullah, Managing Director of PICSS, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

³⁶⁰ RFE/RL, The Rise Of The Baloch Liberation Army In Pakistan, 1 September 2024, [url](#)

³⁶¹ Valle, R. and Webber, L., Rising Anti-China Sentiment in Balochistan Threatens Increased Attacks on Chinese Interests in Pakistan, The Jamestown Foundation, 12 January 2024, [url](#)

³⁶² Reuters, Six killed in militant attack on Pakistan naval base, say officials, 26 March 2024, [url](#); Aziz, S., Baloch Separatists Continue to Launch More Sophisticated, Coordinated Attacks Against Pakistan, The Jamestown Foundation, 6 May 2024, [url](#)

³⁶³ Al Jazeera, March of ‘terror’: Pakistan grapples with deadly attacks on China interests, 29 March 2024, [url](#)

³⁶⁴ BBC News, Blast kills two Chinese near Pakistan’s Karachi airport, 7 October 2024, [url](#)

³⁶⁵ PIPS, Balochistan plunges into terrorist violence in August 2024, 2 September 2024, [url](#)

³⁶⁶ Baloch, K., Possible Merger of Baloch Militant Groups Threatens Pakistani and Chinese Interests, The Jamestown Foundation, 1 December 2023, [url](#)

³⁶⁷ Baloch, K., Two Years on, State of Pakistani Security Continues to Deteriorate After Taliban Seizure of Afghanistan, The Jamestown Foundation, 8 September 2023, [url](#)

³⁶⁸ Baloch, K., Possible Merger of Baloch Militant Groups Threatens Pakistani and Chinese Interests, The Jamestown Foundation, 1 December 2023, [url](#)

³⁶⁹ Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen Ambtsbericht Pakistan [Country report Pakistan], 5 July 2024, [url](#), p. 37

³⁷⁰ PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), pp. 20-21



3.2.13. Other local/small militia groups

Further local armed militant groups include Kashmir/India-oriented groups such as Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), Harakat-ul Jihad Islami (HUJI), Harakat ul-Mujahidin (HuM) and Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) that mainly seek annexation of Indian-administered Kashmir into Pakistan.³⁷¹ Sindh nationalist militant groups included the Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army (SRA) and the Sindhudesh Liberation Army (SLA), as well as the newly formed Sindhudesh People's Army (SPA). The SRA, the most important among the Sindh militant groups, was operating in Karachi and some interior parts of Sindh province³⁷² and has been targeting civilians with perceived links to the security and intelligence agencies, including those of Punjabi ethnicity.³⁷³

³⁷¹ US, CRS, Terrorist and Other Militant Groups in Pakistan, last updated 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2

³⁷² PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 51

³⁷³ PICSS, Pakistan's Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), pp. 21-22



4. Security situation

4.1. General description of the security situation

4.1.1. Main conflict dynamics and drivers since the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan

The Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) in its May 2024 report on militant movements in Pakistan described how the two years following Taliban takeover in neighbouring Afghanistan (August 2021 to July 2023) had witnessed a 64 % increase in ‘terrorist’ attacks and an increase of 73 % in fatalities caused by such attacks in Pakistan, with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces most affected by the violence.³⁷⁴ The Islamabad-based think tanks PIPS, Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), and Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), who monitor security-related events in the country, all noted a further deterioration of the security situation in 2023, with a spike in violence and resulting fatalities compared to 2022, still mostly affecting the same two provinces.³⁷⁵ ACLED figures show a steady increase of security-related incidents (battles, explosions/remote violence, riots and violence against civilians), containing both civilian and non-civilian targeting between 2020 and 2023, from about 700 incidents to nearly 1 800 incidents per year. For the first half of 2024, more than 1 100 incidents had already been recorded.³⁷⁶

(a) Rise in TTP activities attacks on security personnel and counterattacks

According to Abdullah Khan, Managing Director of PICSS, Pakistan has witnessed a rise in militant activity since 2020 when various TTP splinter groups merged back into the TTP, with a particular increase noted since the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan in August 2021. This uptick followed a significant drop in attacks between 2014 and 2019 which was due to effective counter-terrorism operations and the implementation of the National Action Plan in Pakistan. In 2020, various factions of the TTP unified with over 33 smaller militant groups joining forces, leading to a surge in attacks, particularly in 2022, 2023 and 2024, where the average rose to 54 attacks per month by 2023 and escalated to 80 per month in 2024.³⁷⁷ By the third quarter of 2024, CRSS referring to unverified reports indicated the number of groups aligned with the TTP to have reached up to 60.³⁷⁸ After the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, the TTP reportedly changed its focus from an Al-Qaeda aligned global jihadist rhetoric to a more Pakistan-focused outlook with the aim of addressing Pashtun grievances and aiming to implement a *Sharia* system akin to the Taliban in Afghanistan. The rise to power of the Afghan Taliban enabled the TTP to operate more

³⁷⁴ PIPS, Pakistan’s Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 14

³⁷⁵ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan, 19 February 2024, [url](#), pp. 4, 7; PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), pp. 1-2; PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), pp. 15, 17

³⁷⁶ ACCORD, ACCORD Analysis of ACLED Data - PAKISTAN, Q2 2024 [Graph], 19 September 2024, [url](#), p. 3

³⁷⁷ Khan, Abdullah, Managing Director of PICSS, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

³⁷⁸ CRSS, 2024 violence-linked fatalities overtake full-year 2023 in just nine months, 30 September 2024, [url](#)



freely and launch attacks in Pakistan.³⁷⁹ It further reportedly boosted militant groups in Pakistan, especially the TTP, who received support as well as on-the-ground support from the Afghan Taliban, obtaining military equipment taken over from US troops after their withdrawal from Afghanistan.³⁸⁰ Even though peace talks between the TTP and the Pakistani government, which were brokered by the Afghan Taliban, led to a ceasefire in June 2022, TTP attacks continued and eventually witnessed an upsurge when the TTP declared an end to the ceasefire in November 2022.³⁸¹

For a more detailed description of the TTP and its affiliated groups, please see section [3.2 Main non-state armed groups](#).

(b) Balochistan separatist insurgency

The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) together with other militant groups has for decades led a campaign against the Pakistani government, accusing it of exploiting Balochistan's gas and mineral reserves while the population of the province lives in poverty.³⁸² The BLA, which seeks independence from Pakistan and the expulsion of Chinese economic activities in the region, has carried out attacks against Pakistani security forces and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project,³⁸³ as well as foreign and Punjabi migrant workers.³⁸⁴ Two analysts pointed out an evolution of the BLA, from a movement led by tribal leaders to a growing involvement of educated middle-class professionals using modern methods to create a broader appeal.³⁸⁵ According to an Islamabad-based expert, Baloch separatist organisations have seen a sharp increase in recruitment and a rise in attacks against the backdrop of the February 2024 elections which deprived the Baloch of real political representation.³⁸⁶ Similarly to the TTP, Baloch insurgent factions were said to have come into the possession of advanced weapons following the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan.³⁸⁷ The Pakistani government has repeatedly accused the Afghan Taliban of supporting both the TTP and the BLA and suspected coordination between the two groups.³⁸⁸

For a more detailed description of the BLA and other Baloch groups, please see section [3.2.12. Balochistan nationalist groups](#).

³⁷⁹ Basit, A., A Peshawar Bombing Reveals Pakistan's Worsening Terrorism Predicament, *New Lines Magazine*, 10 February 2023, [url](#)

³⁸⁰ PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options, 8 May 2024, [url](#), pp. 15-16

³⁸¹ USDOS, Country Report on Terrorism 2022, 30 November 2023, [url](#), p. 301; RFE/RL, 'Clouds Of War Are Gathering': Pakistanis Brace For Bloody Year As TTP Ends Cease-Fire, Intensifies Attacks, 31 December 2022, [url](#)

³⁸² Shaikh, F., Why brute force will not end Pakistan's Balochistan insurgency, Chatham House, 3 September 2024, [url](#)

³⁸³ DW, What's behind armed insurgency in Pakistan's Balochistan?, 27 August 2024, [url](#)

³⁸⁴ AFP, 20 Pakistan coal miners shot dead in attack: police, 11 October 2024; TKD, Pakistan Struggles to Protect Chinese Interests Amidst Consistent Attacks, 7 October 2024, [url](#)

³⁸⁵ Shaikh, F., Why brute force will not end Pakistan's Balochistan insurgency, Chatham House, 3 September 2024, [url](#); RFE/RL, What's Behind The Deadly Surge Of Violence In Pakistan's Balochistan?, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

³⁸⁶ RFE/RL, What's Behind The Deadly Surge Of Violence In Pakistan's Balochistan?, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

³⁸⁷ PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 16; RFE/RL, What's Behind The Deadly Surge Of Violence In Pakistan's Balochistan?, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

³⁸⁸ Dawn, BLA-TTP collaboration in Balochistan: alliance or anomaly?, 12 September 2024, [url](#); Shaikh, F., Why brute force will not end Pakistan's Balochistan insurgency, Chatham House, 3 September 2024, [url](#)



4.1.2. Major security-related events and developments since 2023

The three Pakistani think tanks PIPS, PICSS and CRSS all continuously track security related incidents in Pakistan based on slightly varying methodologies and publish annual reports detailing the recorded events.³⁸⁹

According to PIPS, which documents terrorism-related incidents (militant attacks, nationalist insurgent attacks and sectarian-related-attacks),³⁹⁰ terrorist attacks in 2023 increased for the third year in a row with 306 terrorist attacks documented across the country causing 693 fatalities (among them 260 civilians) and 1 124 casualties (among them 559 civilians).³⁹¹ For the same period, it registered 129 operational attacks carried out by security forces leading to 425 deaths and 51 cases of injuries.³⁹² PIPS identified the TTP, the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and the Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISKP) as the main perpetrators responsible for 78 % of terrorist attacks in 2023 and causing 82 % of terrorism-related deaths.³⁹³

PICSS, which records militant attacks (anti-state violence and related response) while not documenting sectarian or ethnic violence,³⁹⁴ in its 2023 annual report similarly noted a deterioration of the security situation with a ‘notable escalation in militant activities’.³⁹⁵ According to PICSS, 645 militant attacks were recorded in 2023, representing a surge of 70 % compared to 2022. These attacks led to 976 deaths and 1 354 cases of injuries, amounting to an 81 % increase in fatalities and a 62 % increase in injuries compared to 2022.³⁹⁶

CRSS, documenting incidents of terror attacks and counter-terror operations during 2023, recorded an overall 784 incidents (585 terrorist attacks and 199 security forces’ operations)³⁹⁷ with 1 533 fatalities and 1 462 injuries (among them 481 killed and 675 injured civilians), the highest overall fatalities recorded since 2017.³⁹⁸ For the first three quarters of 2024 alone, CRSS recorded 817 violent incidents resulting in 1 534 fatalities and 1 211 injuries.³⁹⁹

During the period between 1 October 2023 to 18 October 2024 ACLED recorded 1 952 security incidents at national level including 889 (40 %) were coded as battles, 506 (26 %) as explosions/remote violence and 557 (28 %) as incidents of violence against civilians. In 727 instances civilians were the primary or only target.⁴⁰⁰

³⁸⁹ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#); PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#); CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan, 19 February 2024, [url](#)

³⁹⁰ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 7

³⁹¹ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 15

³⁹² PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 19

³⁹³ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11

³⁹⁴ PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 57

³⁹⁵ PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 2

³⁹⁶ PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 2

³⁹⁷ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan, 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 10

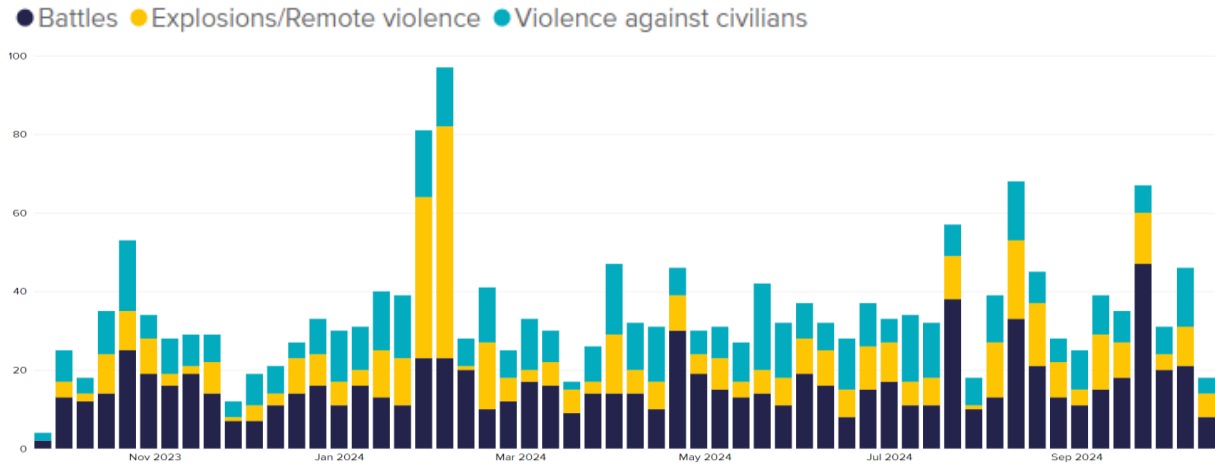
³⁹⁸ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan, 19 February 2024, [url](#), pp. 4, 12

³⁹⁹ CRSS, 2024 violence-linked fatalities overtake full-year 2023 in just nine months, 30 September 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁰ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Pakistan, data covering 1 October 2023 to 18 October 2024, as of 24 October 2024, [url](#)



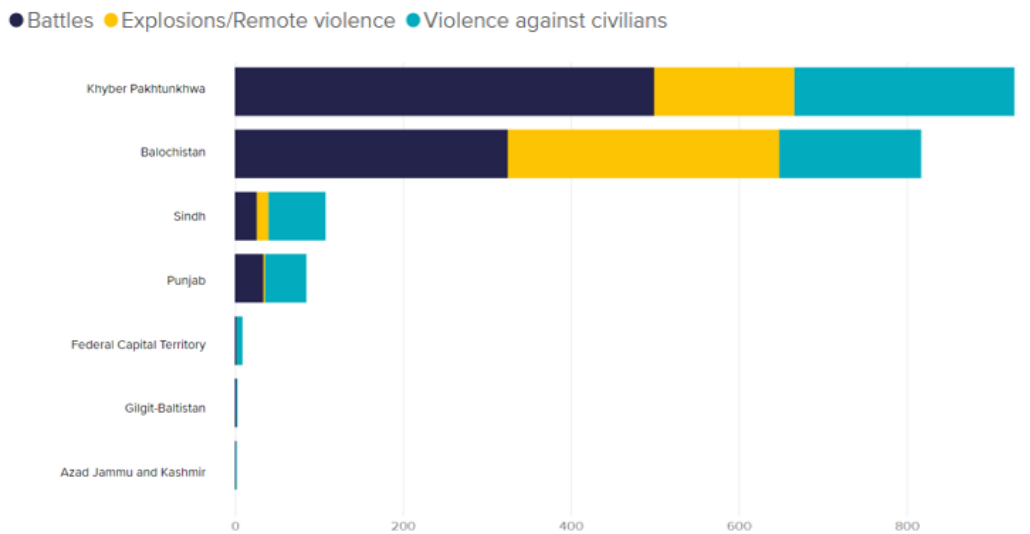
Figure 1. Events by type and month, 1 October 2023 – 18 October 2024, based on ACLED data.⁴⁰¹



Source: EUAA chart based on ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Pakistan, data covering the period from 1 October 2023 to 18 October 2024, as of 24 October 2024, [url](#)

Both ACLED and UCDP data reported security incidents in all provinces, with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces registering the highest numbers during the reference period. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa reported the highest overall number of incidents (928, 47 %) and the overall higher number of incidents per month in September 2024 (106).⁴⁰²

Figure 2. Events by province, 1 October 2023 – 18 October 2024, based on ACLED data.⁴⁰³



Source: EUAA chart based on ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Pakistan, data covering the period from 1 October 2023 to 18 October 2024, as of 24 October 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁰¹ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Pakistan, data covering 1 October 2023 to 18 October 2024, as of 24 October 2024, [url](#)

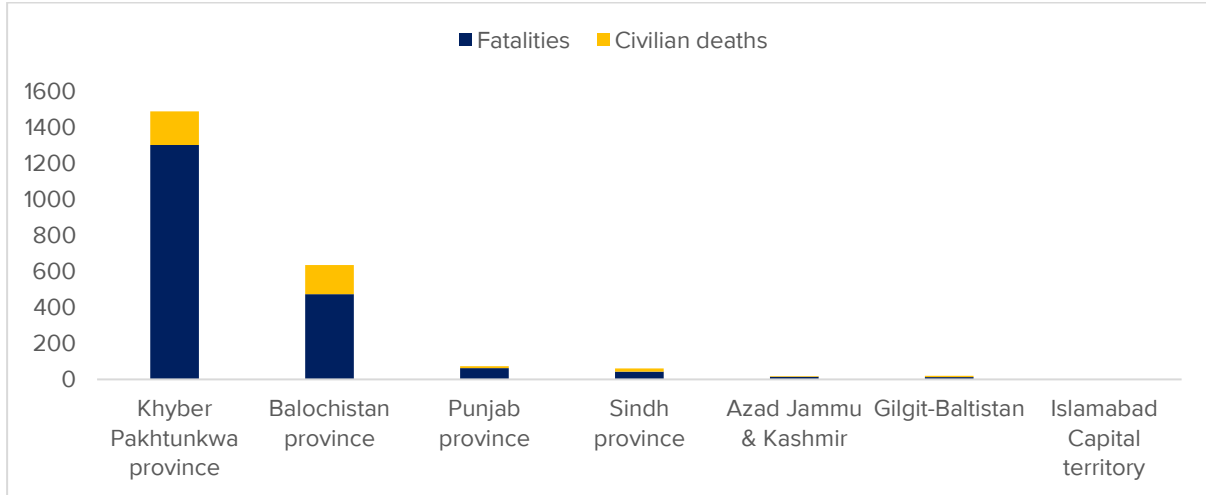
⁴⁰² EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Pakistan, data covering 1 October 2023 to 18 October 2024, as of 24 October 2024, [url](#); UCDP, Department of Peace and Conflict Research – Uppsala University, Sweden, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁰³ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Pakistan, data covering 1 October 2023 to 18 October 2024, as of 24 October 2024, [url](#)



From 1 October 2023 to 18 October 2024, ACLED reported 2 638 fatalities.⁴⁰⁴ For the period 1 October 2023 to 4 October 2024, UCDP recorded 1 905 fatalities of which 387 were civilian fatalities.⁴⁰⁵

Figure 3. Fatalities by province, 1 October 2023 and 4 October 2024, based on UCDP data.⁴⁰⁶



Source: EUAA chart based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering the period from 1 October 2023 to 4 October 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 21 October 2024.

According to UCDP, the largest number of civilian fatalities were recorded in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, followed by Balochistan and Punjab provinces. The highest number of fatalities was recorded in August in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.⁴⁰⁷

(a) TTP and affiliated groups

Attacks by the TTP and affiliated groups on security forces as well as military operations against these groups were reported throughout the reference period,⁴⁰⁸ with intensifications noted in October 2023 and June 2024.⁴⁰⁹ For the first half of 2024, the UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team reported an intensification of TTP activity in Pakistan with more than 800 attacks, primarily targeting military installations.⁴¹⁰

The Pakistani government in July 2024 announced the launch of a comprehensive anti-terror campaign named ‘Azm-e-Istehkam’ with the aim of targeting the TTP and its allied groups.⁴¹¹ A

⁴⁰⁴ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Pakistan, data covering 1 October 2023 to 18 October 2024, as of 24 October 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁵ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 October 2023 to 4 October 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 21 October 2024

⁴⁰⁶ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 October 2023 to 4 October 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 21 October 2024

⁴⁰⁷ UCDP, Department of Peace and Conflict Research – Uppsala University, Sweden, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁰⁸ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Pakistan: October 2023-October 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁰⁹ ACLED, Regional Overview Asia-Pacific – June 2024, 5 July 2024, [url](#); ACLED, Regional Overview Asia-Pacific – October 2023, 9 November 2023, [url](#)

⁴¹⁰ UN Security Council, Thirty-fourth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities], S/2024/556, 22 July 2024, [url](#), para. 82

⁴¹¹ TKD, Pakistan Blames Hafiz Gul Bahadur Group for Bannu Attack, Vows Action Against Terrorist Threats from Afghanistan, 15 July 2024, [url](#)



researcher interviewed by Al Jazeera voiced scepticism over the potential success of the operation, given the lack of public support for the security forces in the areas worst affected by the violence.⁴¹²

For more information on TTP and affiliated groups, please see section [3.2.1 Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan \(TTP\)](#), for more information on militant activity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, please see section [4.2.2 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa \(KP\)](#).

(b) Baloch insurgent groups

Throughout the reference period, Baloch separatist groups targeted Pakistani security forces, state infrastructure as well as civilians, mostly in Balochistan province.⁴¹³ In the first quarter of 2024 alone, Baloch militant groups launched 62 such attacks according to RFE/RL.⁴¹⁴ For the first four months of 2024, ACLED noted a stark increase of attacks perpetrated by Baloch separatists targeting ethnic Punjabis, with more incidents of this kind recorded in this period than in all of 2023.⁴¹⁵ The BLA, known for launching mostly small-scale attacks against the Pakistani government for over two decades, in August 2024 carried out a major coordinated operation across Balochistan province, involving the bombing of a railway bridge, attacks on police and military posts, and targeting of buses and trucks on a major highway.⁴¹⁶ The Khorasan Diary noted that the BLA increasingly employed suicide attacks as a tactic, with at least four attacks of this kind reported between February and August 2024, demonstrating increased operational capabilities and lethality.⁴¹⁷

For more information on Balochistan militant groups, please see section [3.2.12 Balochistan nationalist groups](#), for more information on militant activity in Balochistan, please see section [4.2.3 Balochistan](#).

(c) Election violence

Militant attacks surged in the period before and during the general election in February 2024, with a 50 % rise in election-related violence in that month compared to January 2024.⁴¹⁸ In the run-up to the election, at least 28 people were killed and over 40 were injured in violence, which included two explosions targeting election candidate offices, and on election day at least nine people were killed in militant attacks while thousands of troops being deployed in the streets and at polling stations.⁴¹⁹ Baloch separatist groups reportedly targeted multiple polling stations with grenades and explosives.⁴²⁰ Islamic State Pakistan Province (ISPP), an affiliate of ISKP, claimed responsibility for two bomb blasts outside election offices in Balochistan

⁴¹² Al Jazeera, 'Azm-e-Istehkam': Can new Pakistani military operation curb armed attacks?, 24 June 2024, [url](#)

⁴¹³ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Pakistan: October 2023-October 2024, n.d., [url](#); RFE/RL, The Rise Of The Baloch Liberation Army In Pakistan, 1 September 2024, [url](#); RFE/RL, What's Behind The Deadly Surge Of Violence In Pakistan's Balochistan?, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

⁴¹⁴ RFE/RL, What's Behind The Deadly Surge Of Violence In Pakistan's Balochistan?, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

⁴¹⁵ ACLED, Regional Overview Asia-Pacific – April 2024, 9 May 2024, [url](#)

⁴¹⁶ RFE/RL, The Rise Of The Baloch Liberation Army In Pakistan, 1 September 2024, [url](#)

⁴¹⁷ TKD, Pakistan Struggles to Protect Chinese Interests Amidst Consistent Attacks, 7 October 2024, [url](#)

⁴¹⁸ ACLED, Regional Overview Asia-Pacific – February 2024, 8 March 2024, [url](#)

⁴¹⁹ Arab News, Pakistani election to test democracy marred by violence, allegations of meddling, 8 February 2024, [url](#)

⁴²⁰ ACLED, Election-related violence in Pakistan | ACLED Insight, 14 February 2024, [url](#)





province.⁴²¹ Ahead of the general election, on 31 January 2024, Rehan Zeb Khan, an independent candidate affiliated with the PTI party was shot dead in a targeted killing.⁴²² The attack was claimed by ISKP.⁴²³ Another surge in election-related violence was noted in April 2024 during by-elections,⁴²⁴ with Baloch separatists targeting ethnic Punjabis, politicians, alleged government employees, and electoral infrastructure.⁴²⁵

(d) Sectarian violence

PIPS recorded a rise in sectarian violence in 2023 with 16 incidents (12 sectarian-related terrorist attacks and four sectarian clashes) leading to 43 deaths and 61 cases of injuries.⁴²⁶ CRSS documented 38 incidents of sectarian violence in 2023 (21 of which in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 8 in Sindh and 4 in Balochistan and Punjab respectively), leading to 202 fatalities and 395 injuries (mainly security personnel affiliated with specific religious sects), the majority of which being recorded in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.⁴²⁷ The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) in its annual report 2023 documented arson attacks on churches and Christian homes in August 2023 as well as recurrent attacks on Ahmadiyya places of worship in Punjab.⁴²⁸ In July 2024, a longstanding conflict between Shia and Sunni tribal communities in Kurram district bordering Afghanistan broke out into weeklong deadly clashes with at least 46 people killed and nearly 200 injured.⁴²⁹ Intermittent fighting reportedly continued in Kurram in September and October, with an attack on a convoy of Sunnis protected by paramilitary soldiers killing 14 people, including three women and two children.⁴³⁰ For more information, please see section [6. Treatment of certain profiles and groups of population](#).

(e) Conflict with regional actors including the Afghan Taliban and Iran

In January 2024, Iran launched strikes on Panjgur district in Balochistan, claiming to strike an anti-Iranian Baloch militant group there, while according to Pakistani authorities two children were killed.⁴³¹ Pakistan responded with strikes on Iran's Sistan and Balochistan province, purporting to target hideouts of anti-Pakistani insurgents.⁴³² Reuters described these tit-for-tat strikes as the 'highest-profile cross-border intrusions in recent years'.⁴³³ In a de-escalation effort, both countries at the end of January agreed to coordinate between the Foreign Ministries and to deploy military liaison officers at the border.⁴³⁴

⁴²¹ CNN, At least 30 dead in Balochistan explosions, day before Pakistan election, 7 February 2024, [url](#)

⁴²² Dawn, Independent candidate shot dead while canvassing in Bajaur: police, 31 January 2024, [url](#); Express Tribune (The), HRCP condemns killing of PTI-affiliated poll candidate in Bajaur, 31 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴²³ CNN, Pakistan election candidate shot dead as violence escalates ahead of nationwide vote, 1 February 2024, [url](#); SATP, Detail of Terrorism Update, Pakistan, 1 February 2024, [url](#)

⁴²⁴ Pakistan Today, By-elections violence claims one life, leaves many injured, scores arrested, 21 April 2024, [url](#)

⁴²⁵ ACLED, Regional Overview Asia-Pacific – April 2024, 9 May 2024, [url](#)

⁴²⁶ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), pp. 11, 24

⁴²⁷ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan, 19 February 2024, [url](#), pp. 39-40

⁴²⁸ HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), pp. 23, 26

⁴²⁹ Al Jazeera, Kurram clashes: How a Pakistani land dispute led to a deadly tribal battle, 2 August 2024, [url](#)

⁴³⁰ AFP, 16 killed in latest northwest Pakistan sectarian clash, 13 October 2024

⁴³¹ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Pakistan: October 2023-October 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁴³² USIP, Making Sense of Iran-Pakistan Cross-Border Strikes, 19 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴³³ Reuters, Pakistan fires retaliatory strike at Iran, stoking regional tension, 18 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴³⁴ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Pakistan: October 2023-October 2024, n.d., [url](#)





From March through September 2024, the International Crisis Group noted continuing tensions between the Pakistani government and the Afghan Taliban, initially marked by the fact that for the first time since 2021 Pakistan acknowledged strikes on Afghan territory. In March 2024, the Pakistani military launched airstrikes in the Afghan provinces Paktika and Khost, accusing the Taliban of harbouring and supporting TTP militants, the Taliban responded by shelling Kurram district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Deadly clashes broke out in May between Taliban and Pakistani security forces once more in Kurram district, a ceasefire eventually being negotiated by tribal elders. Further armed clashes were reported along the border in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Kurram district in August and September 2024.⁴³⁵

For more information on tensions with neighbouring countries, please see section [2.2 International context](#).

4.1.3. Main areas of conflict and geographical overview of armed groups

According to CRSS, 84 % of all attacks (incidents of terrorism and security forces operations) and over 90 % of the overall fatalities documented by the institution in 2023 were recorded in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces (64 % and 27 % of overall fatalities respectively).⁴³⁶ According to Abdullah Khan, Managing Director of PICSS, as of September 2024 both provinces remained the most affected by terrorist activities in the country, with Balochistan overtaking Khyber Pakhtunkhwa regarding the number of terrorist incidents for the month of August 2024. Within Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Khan identified the Pashtun areas, which include regions formerly part of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) as well as Malakand district as areas most affected by violence.⁴³⁷ The International Crisis Group repeatedly reported militant attacks and clashes with security forces in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa districts North and South Waziristan and Dera Ismail Khan.⁴³⁸ For the first three quarters of 2024, CRSS assessed state authority to have considerably deteriorated in areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan despite an ongoing anti-terror campaign. Political leaders, local residents and even members of security forces especially in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa districts Lakki Marwat, Bannu, and Swat reportedly voiced their indignation regarding the rising number of targeted killings and the helplessness of civilian law enforcement.⁴³⁹ In October 2024, the Peshawar High Court ordered all courts in South Waziristan and Tank to relocate to Dera Ismail Khan due to multiple attacks targeting judges.⁴⁴⁰

In its annual report for 2023, PICSS reports that while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan remained the provinces most affected by violence, violence levels also increased in Punjab and Sindh.⁴⁴¹ Sindh province in 2023 reportedly recorded the third highest number of casualties (73

⁴³⁵ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Pakistan: October 2023-October 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁴³⁶ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan, 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 4

⁴³⁷ Khan, Abdullah, Managing Director of PICSS, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

⁴³⁸ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Pakistan: October 2023-October 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁴³⁹ CRSS, 2024 violence-linked fatalities overtake full-year 2023 in just nine months, 30 September 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁰ Express Tribune (The), PHC orders shifting of all courts in Tank and South Waziristan to DI Khan, 3 October 2024, [url](#)

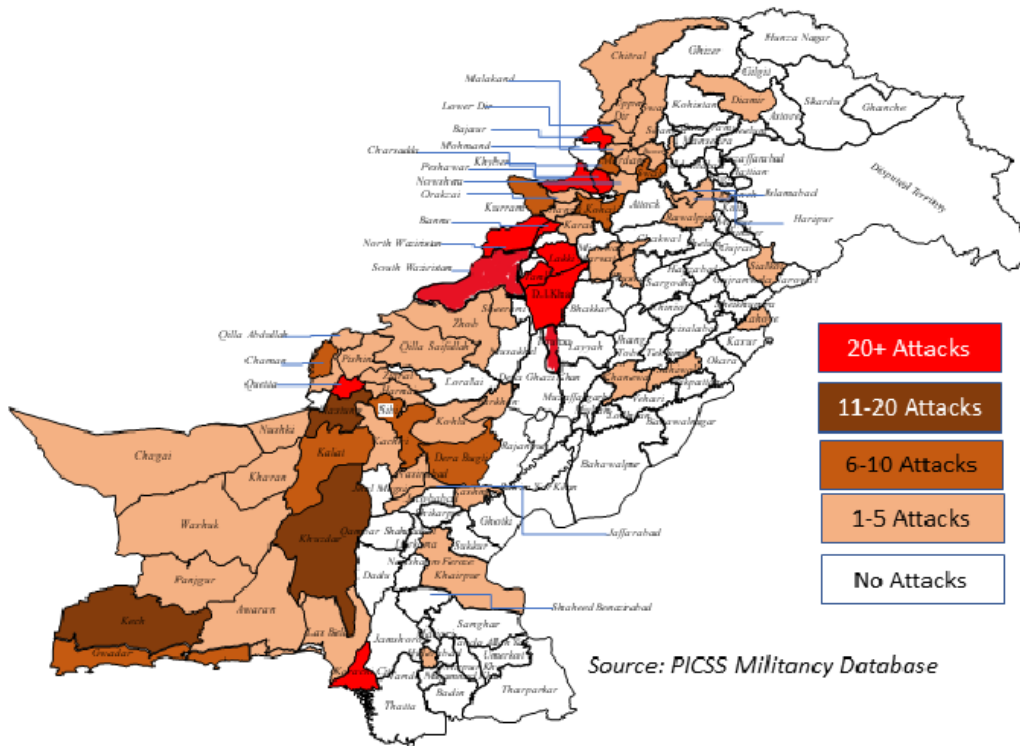
⁴⁴¹ PICSS, Pakistan's Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 1



fatalities and 87 injuries) resulting from terror attacks and counter-terrorism operations, by Punjab, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Punjab and Sindh together only made for about 8 % of the countrywide recorded fatalities in 2023.⁴⁴² During the year, militants attempted to affect the security situation in Punjabi districts adjacent to the southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.⁴⁴³ For the year 2023, CRSS separately recorded incidents of terrorism and counter-terrorism security operations at the province level. As for incidents of terrorism, 314 were recorded in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (with 585 fatalities), 161 such incidents in Balochistan (with 292 fatalities), 61 in Sindh (with 60 fatalities), 34 in Punjab (with 30 fatalities), 7 incidents in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan (with 18 fatalities) and 1 incident in ICT (with no fatality).⁴⁴⁴ Regarding counter-terrorism operations, CRSS recorded 139 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (with 392 fatalities), 44 in Balochistan (with 120 fatalities), 12 in Punjab (with 22 fatalities), 4 in Sindh (with 10 fatalities) and one in ICT (with no fatality).⁴⁴⁵ The third quarter of 2024 according to CRSS figures saw a decline in attacks and fatalities in Punjab and Sindh compared to the second quarter.⁴⁴⁶

In its 2023 profile of the national security situation, PICSS features the following map, identifying in red districts which witnessed more than 20 militant attacks (anti-state violence and related response) throughout the year, namely Bajaur, Khyber, Peshawar, Bannu, North Waziristan, South Waziristan, Tank, Lakki Marwat, Dera Ismail Khan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the neighbouring Taunsa district in Punjab, as well as the provincial capitals Quetta in Balochistan and Karachi in Sindh:

Map 1: Militancy Affected Districts in Pakistan – 2023, © PICSS⁴⁴⁷



⁴⁴² CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan, 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 4

⁴⁴³ PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 1

⁴⁴⁴ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan, 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 24

⁴⁴⁵ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan, 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 18

⁴⁴⁶ CRSS, 2024 violence-linked fatalities overtake full-year 2023 in just nine months, 30 September 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁷ PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023 [Map], 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 5



(a) TTP and associated groups

PIPS reported for the year 2023 that attacks perpetrated by the TTP and its associated groups were recorded across all provinces but mostly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.⁴⁴⁸ As of mid-2024, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa districts Lakki Marwat, North Waziristan, Dera Ismail Khan and Tank were described as ‘restive’, the first of which witnessing complex attacks by TTP factions and Intelligence-Based Operations (IBOs) by security forces in response.⁴⁴⁹ A September 2024 article by RFE/RL described TTP as being active in 10 of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s 34 districts, namely Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Kurram, North Waziristan, South Waziristan, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank and Dera Ismail Khan.⁴⁵⁰ The presence of the group was described as being evident in assassinations, kidnappings, extortion, and harassment which heavily affected daily life in some areas, with TTP rule often being established during the night when security forces retreat to their posts and bases.⁴⁵¹

Moreover, the TTP and its affiliates increasingly carried out attacks outside their traditional areas of operation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and to a lesser extent Balochistan, with ACLED documenting ten attacks by the TTP in Punjab in 2023 and an attack by allied Tehrik-e Jihad Pakistan (TJP) on an airbase in Punjab in November 2023.⁴⁵²

(b) BLA and other Baloch separatist groups

PIPS reported for the year 2023 that the BLA concentrated its attacks in Balochistan.⁴⁵³ The organisation recorded 78 terrorist attacks carried out by various Baloch separatist groups spread over 19 districts in the central, southern and southwestern parts of the province and mainly targeting security forces.⁴⁵⁴ At the end of January 2024, the BLA announced that it had taken over control of Mach city and nearby areas in Balochistan’s Bolan district, controlling entry and exit into the city and planting landmines to prevent reinforcement by Pakistani forces.⁴⁵⁵ The following day, state sources declared security forces to have regained control of Mach and the clearance operation to be completed.⁴⁵⁶ In October 2024, the BLA claimed a vehicle-borne IED attack on a convoy carrying Chinese citizens outside the airport in Karachi, the provincial capital of Sindh.⁴⁵⁷

(c) ISKP

PIPS reported for the year 2023 that ISKP was reportedly active both in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.⁴⁵⁸ PIPS identified Bajaur district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as a flashpoint for

⁴⁴⁸ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11

⁴⁴⁹ TKD, Lakki Marwat: A Hotbed of Militancy, Claims Six Security Forces Lives, 9 June 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁰ RFE/RL, 'No One Is Safe': Life Under The Rule Of The Pakistani Taliban [Map], 10 September 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁵¹ RFE/RL, 'No One Is Safe': Life Under The Rule Of The Pakistani Taliban, 10 September 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁵² ACLED, Regional Overview Asia-Pacific – November 2023, 8 December 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁵³ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11

⁴⁵⁴ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 17

⁴⁵⁵ South Asia Press, Baloch Liberation Army says it has taken over Mach city and nearby areas under its control. Pak Army refutes the claim, 31 January 2024, [url](#); India Today, Mach city and nearby areas under our control for past 15 hours: Baloch Liberation Army, 31 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁶ Dawn, Mach operation complete, highway traffic restored, 1 February 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁷ TKD, Pakistan Struggles to Protect Chinese Interests Amidst Consistent Attacks, 7 October 2024, [url](#); AP, A Pakistani separatist group claims bombing that killed 2 Chinese near Karachi airport, 7 October 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁸ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11



terrorist violence mainly committed by ISKP in 2023.⁴⁵⁹ According to Abdullah Khan, Managing Director of PICSS, as of September 2024 ISKP was predominantly active in Bajaur and Khyber districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with expansion of operations into North and South Waziristan, while its affiliated chapter Islamic State – Pakistan Province (ISPP) operated mainly in Mastung area and Quetta in Balochistan. He described the presence of these groups to have been ‘largely dismantled’ in urban areas due to counterterrorism operations.⁴⁶⁰ The South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), a project run by the New Delhi-based NGO Institute for Conflict Management, which compiles lists of terrorist activities based on news reports, mirrors the trend described by Khan. Between January and October 2024, it documented several attacks claimed by ISKP, most of them in Bajaur, Khyber and South Waziristan districts, involving assassinations of members of security forces, political party members and an attack on workers from a polio team.⁴⁶¹ In 2023, seven attacks in Balochistan were attributed to ISKP, including a suicide attack that killed over 63 people in Mastung in September.⁴⁶² In February 2024, one day before the election, ISKP reportedly carried out two suicide bombings in front of election candidate offices in Balochistan, causing dozens of fatalities.⁴⁶³

4.2. Security situation per region

4.2.1. Punjab

(a) General description of the governorate

Punjab province is located in eastern Pakistan and shares internal borders with Sindh province in the south, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces in the west and the Islamabad Capital Territory and the Azad Jammu and Kashmir region in the north.⁴⁶⁴ Externally, it shares borders with India and the Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir region in the east and northeast.⁴⁶⁵

Punjab is comprised of nine divisions and 36 districts as of 2023⁴⁶⁶ and can be divided into a northern, central and southern zone,⁴⁶⁷ with the city of Lahore serving as provincial capital.⁴⁶⁸ The military headquarters of the Pakistan Armed Forces (Joint Staff Headquarters)⁴⁶⁹ and the

⁴⁵⁹ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 17

⁴⁶⁰ PICSS-Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

⁴⁶¹ SATP, Pakistan: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – October 2024, n.d., [url](#); SATP, Pakistan: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – September 2024, n.d., [url](#); SATP, Pakistan: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – June 2024, n.d., [url](#); SATP, Pakistan: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – April 2024, n.d., [url](#); SATP, Pakistan: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#); SATP, Pakistan: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – February 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁶² PIPS, Pakistan’s Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 30

⁴⁶³ ACLED, Election-related violence in Pakistan | ACLED Insight, 14 February 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁴ UK, PCGN, Pakistan, 2023, [url](#), p. 4; France, OFPRA, DIDR, Carte des provinces du Pakistan, June 2021, [url](#), p. 1; Pakistan, Survey of Pakistan, Political Map Pakistan, 2020, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁵ Pakistan, Survey of Pakistan, Political Map Pakistan, 2020, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁶ Pakistan, PBS, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results – Table-1: Punjab Province Wise, n.d., [url](#), pp. 1-2

⁴⁶⁷ Elahi, M.H., South Punjab – Neglected and Politicized, The McGill International Review, 4 April 2019, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁸ Encyclopedia Britannica, Lahore, last updated 17 October 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁹ Express Tribune (The), Turkish FM calls on COAS, discuss matters of mutual interest, 20 May 2024, [url](#)



Pakistan Army (General Headquarters) were both located in Rawalpindi,⁴⁷⁰ a garrison city⁴⁷¹ in the province's north.⁴⁷² The province has a large Sunni and Shia population.⁴⁷³ The Sunni Barelvi sect was well-established in the province,⁴⁷⁴ with southern Punjab also marked by a presence of communities adhering to the Sunni Deobandi sect. Both sects followed the Hanafi school of thought.⁴⁷⁵ Punjab was the site of sect-based education headquarters and numerous sectarian religious institutions and their affiliated supporters, enabling the province to spearhead Pakistan's sectarian, religious and *Jihadi* narratives.⁴⁷⁶ Moreover, 16 of the province's districts included villages with sizeable Christian communities.⁴⁷⁷ Smaller non-Muslim religious minorities included Hindus, Ahmadis and Sikhs.⁴⁷⁸

Punjab is the country's most populous⁴⁷⁹ and most densely inhabited province⁴⁸⁰ and the second largest by area.⁴⁸¹ Pakistan's digital Population and Housing Census of 2023 found that Punjab had a population of around 127.68 million.⁴⁸² The CIA estimated that Lahore, the country's second-largest city, had a population of 13.979 million in 2023, while Faisalabad had 3.711 million inhabitants and Gujranwala 2.415 million.⁴⁸³

(b) Conflict background and armed actors

Southern Punjab was characterised by 'competing sectarian identities' that constituted a challenge to political and religious peace.⁴⁸⁴ From the 1980s, the province experienced Sunni-Shia sectarian violence driven by Deobandi militant groups like Sipah-e Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), its military wing Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ), and the Iran-supported Shia group Sipah-e Muhammad Pakistan. While SSP publicly distanced itself from violence in the mid-1990s and LeJ was forced underground in the mid-2010s,⁴⁸⁵ these two groups continued to operate in Punjab,⁴⁸⁶ maintaining a potentially strong presence in parts of southern Punjab, including in

⁴⁷⁰ Arab News, Pakistan PM pledges full support to armed forces on first military headquarters visit since election, 16 March 2024, [url](#); Express Tribune (The), COAS, British CGS discuss regional security issues at GHQ, 31 May 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁷¹ Reuters, Bus falls into ravine in Pakistan's far north, killing 20, 3 May 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁷² PIPS, Understanding North Punjab in the Context of Pakistani Diaspora in Britain, January-March 2011, [url](#), p. 94

⁴⁷³ Umar, M. and Hippler, J., Sectarian Infrastructure and Sunni-Shia Parties in Punjab and their Links with Jihadi and Extremist Organizations, July-December 2020, [url](#), p. 280

⁴⁷⁴ Jain, R., Changes in Sectarian Profile of Pakistan, VIF, 29 December 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁵ Khan, N. et al., The Rise of Sectarianism: An Ethnography of Religious Intolerance in Southern Punjab, January-March 2021, [url](#), pp. 319-320

⁴⁷⁶ Umar, M. and Hippler, J., Sectarian Infrastructure and Sunni-Shia Parties in Punjab and their Links with Jihadi and Extremist Organizations, July-December 2020, [url](#), p. 281

⁴⁷⁷ CSJ, How Green Was My Village! Development Profile of Villages Having Sizable Christian Population in Punjab, Pakistan, October 2023, [url](#), p. 5

⁴⁷⁸ PBS, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results – Table-9: Punjab Province Wise, [url](#), p. 1

⁴⁷⁹ Pakistan, PBS, Announcement of Results of 7th Population and Housing Census-2023 'The Digital Census' [Table], 5 August 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁴⁸⁰ US, CIA, World Factbook – Pakistan, last updated 23 October 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁸¹ Pakistan, Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan – Berlin, About Pakistan: Basic Facts, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁸² Pakistan, PBS, Announcement of Results of 7th Population and Housing Census-2023 'The Digital Census' [Table], 5 August 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁴⁸³ US, CIA, World Factbook – Pakistan, last updated 23 October 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁴ Khan, N. et al., The Rise of Sectarianism: An Ethnography of Religious Intolerance in Southern Punjab, January-March 2021, [url](#), p. 318

⁴⁸⁵ International Crisis Group, A New Era of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan, 5 September 2022, [url](#), pp. 2-4

⁴⁸⁶ US, CRS, Terrorist and Other Militant Groups in Pakistan, last updated 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2



the districts of Dera Ghazi Khan, Rajan Pur and Layyah.⁴⁸⁷ In recent years, the province saw several sectarian attacks targeting Christians accused of ‘blasphemy’,⁴⁸⁸ the Ahmadiyya community⁴⁸⁹ and Shiites⁴⁹⁰. The province also witnessed Baloch militant activity, as seen in the January 2022 bombing of a crowded market in Lahore, which left three dead and was claimed by the Baloch National Army (BNA).⁴⁹¹

The TTP and its allied groups expanded their reach into Punjab in recent years⁴⁹² and in mid-2023 announced the creation of two *wilayahs* (‘provinces’) in Punjab: North Punjab and South Punjab.⁴⁹³ The group claimed that it had deployed between 200 and 300 of its fighters to these *wilayahs*. The northern *wilayah* was led by Syed Hilal Ghazi, who has a history of closely collaborating with the former TTP splinter group Jamat-ul Ahrar (JuA). The southern *wilayah* was led by a lesser-known figure named Umar Muavia who was believed to be affiliated with Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ). The TTP’s South Punjab faction purportedly encompassed at least 10 sub-groups of unknown strength. Some groups such as the Nawaz Ustarana faction and the Dera Ghazi Khan-based Adil Buzdar and Ali Muavia factions have not claimed any attacks as of May 2024.⁴⁹⁴ Besides Dera Ghazi Khan,⁴⁹⁵ TTP factions were also reported to be operating around Mianwali. According to the Khorasan Diary, the TTP’s ideological influence was more widespread in southern Punjab than in the north, with the border areas between Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa showing higher levels of TTP infiltration. However, some TTP affiliate factions were also found in Rawalpindi.⁴⁹⁶

According to the Khorasan Diary (TKD),⁴⁹⁷ the former TTP splinter group Jamat-ul Ahrar (JuA) that reportedly reconciliated with TTP, possessed operational capabilities to strike targets within Punjab province.⁴⁹⁸ In January 2024, it was reported that the TTP had launched a new militant wing called ‘Istrna’ to specifically conduct attacks targeting law enforcement personnel in Punjab. Government sources consulted by the Dawn newspaper estimated that the group had around 50 fighters.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁸⁷ Khan, N. et al., The Rise of Sectarianism: An Ethnography of Religious Intolerance in Southern Punjab, January-March 2021, [url](#), p. 318

⁴⁸⁸ HRCF, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 32; HRW, Pakistan: Mob Attacks Christian Settlement, 22 August 2023, [url](#); International Crisis Group, A New Era of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan, 5 September 2022, [url](#), p. 1

⁴⁸⁹ HRCF, Attacks on religious minorities’ sites of worship in Gujranwala and Wazirabad, 12 February 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁴⁹⁰ PTI, 13 injured as radical Islamist group attacks Shia procession in Pakistan, 18 September 2022; Al Jazeera, Deadly blast hits Ashura procession in Pakistan, 19 August 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁹¹ Dawn, Bomb blast in Lahore market leaves three dead, 21 January 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁹² Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen Ambtsbericht Pakistan [Country report Pakistan], 5 July 2024, [url](#), p. 18

⁴⁹³ Express Tribune (The), New wilayas of TTP, 5 July 2023, [url](#); TKD, Deciphering the TTP’s Strategy To Revive in Punjab, 7 May 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁴ TKD, Deciphering the TTP’s Strategy To Revive in Punjab, 7 May 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁵ Print (The), Two terrorists from banned Taliban faction killed in Punjab province of Pakistan, 13 September 2024, [url](#);

⁴⁹⁶ TKD, Deciphering the TTP’s Strategy To Revive in Punjab, 7 May 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁷ The Khorasan Diary (TKD) is a platform that provides information and analysis on conflict-related issues in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region in joint collaboration with journalists, researchers, and academics. TKD, Welcome to The Khorasan Diary, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁹⁸ TKD, Deciphering the TTP’s Strategy To Revive in Punjab, 7 May 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁹ Dawn, TTP launches new militant wing to target police in Punjab, 29 January 2024, [url](#)



According to current and former police officials who had monitored sectarian militancy and were interviewed by International Crisis Group in April 2022, ISKP was present in several districts of western and northern Punjab, including Rawalpindi, Dera Ghazi Khan, Gujranwala, and Faisalabad.⁵⁰⁰ The group's activities in the province continued into the reference period of this report,⁵⁰¹ with (dismantled) ISIL hideouts reported in the cities of Faisalabad, Jehlum and Chakwal.⁵⁰² Further Punjab-based armed militant groups included Lashkar-e Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e Mohammed (JeM).⁵⁰³

(c) Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

Security trends

CRSS describes Punjab as 'relatively peaceful' in 2023.⁵⁰⁴ Nevertheless, the year 2023 witnessed an increase in militant attacks in Punjab with 14 attacks resulting in 20 people killed (among them 2 civilians) and 14 injured (including 8 civilians) compared to just three attacks in 2022.⁵⁰⁵ TTP militants carried out several attacks in Mianwali district over the reference period,⁵⁰⁶ including on police posts in Mianwali district,⁵⁰⁷ leaving one officer dead in October 2023.⁵⁰⁸ In early November 2023, a high-profile gun and explosives assault targeting a training base of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF)⁵⁰⁹ was claimed by Tehreek-e Jihad Pakistan (TJP). The attack was thwarted by the armed forces, who killed nine of the assailants.⁵¹⁰ Security posts were also attacked by TTP in Dera Ghazi Khan⁵¹¹ and Taunsa districts,⁵¹² resulting in several law enforcement personnel being injured in April/early May 2024.⁵¹³

The spring of 2024 also witnessed several individual police officers being killed or injured in targeted assassinations in Lahore (claimed by TTP)⁵¹⁴ and Rawalpindi (by unidentified militants).⁵¹⁵ In one of the deadliest attacks on police in the province in recent years,⁵¹⁶ a group

⁵⁰⁰ International Crisis Group, A New Era of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan, 5 September 2022, [url](#), p. 7

⁵⁰¹ PTI, ISIS commander among three arrested in Pakistan's Punjab province, 3 August 2024; PTI, Major terror bid foiled in Pakistan's Punjab province: 14 TTP, ISI terrorists arrested, 2 December 2023; SATP, Punjab: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2023 – December 2023, n.d., [url](#)

⁵⁰² PTI, ISIS commander among three arrested in Pakistan's Punjab province, 3 August 2024

⁵⁰³ US, CRS, Terrorist and Other Militant Groups in Pakistan, last updated 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁵⁰⁴ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan, 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 4

⁵⁰⁵ PICSS, 2023 ends with 70% Increase in Militant Attacks, 81% Rise in Deaths: PICSS Report, 1 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁶ Dawn, 2 policemen injured in late-night TTP attack on Mianwali checkpost, 2 September 2024, [url](#); SATP, Punjab: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – February 2024, n.d., [url](#); Al Jazeera, Pakistan troops 'thwart' attack on air force base, killing 9 fighters, 4 November 2023, [url](#); AP, Pakistani Taliban attack a police post in eastern Punjab province, killing 1 officer, 1 October 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁷ Dawn, 2 policemen injured in late-night TTP attack on Mianwali checkpost, 2 September 2024, [url](#); SATP, Punjab: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – February 2024, n.d., [url](#); AP, Pakistani Taliban attack a police post in eastern Punjab province, killing 1 officer, 1 October 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁸ AP, Pakistani Taliban attack a police post in eastern Punjab province, killing 1 officer, 1 October 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁹ PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options [Table], 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 34

⁵¹⁰ Al Jazeera, Pakistan troops 'thwart' attack on air force base, killing 9 fighters, 4 November 2023, [url](#)

⁵¹¹ SATP, Punjab: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – April 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁵¹² SATP, Punjab: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – May 2024, n.d., [url](#); SATP, Punjab: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – January 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁵¹³ SATP, Punjab: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – May 2024, n.d., [url](#); SATP, Punjab: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – April 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁵¹⁴ SATP, Punjab: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – May 2024, n.d., [url](#); SATP, Punjab: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – April 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁵¹⁵ SATP, Punjab: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – April 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁵¹⁶ RFE/RL, Gang Kills 11 Police Officers In Restive Pakistani Region, 23 August 2024, [url](#)





of bandits ambushed a vehicle carrying police forces in Rahim Yar Khan district in August 2024. The attack, carried out with guns and rocket-propelled grenades, left 12 police officers dead and another eight injured.⁵¹⁷ The same month, dozens of unidentified militants attacked police at a border post in Dera Ghazi Khan situated between Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.⁵¹⁸

Meanwhile, the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) conducted security operations in multiple cities in the province, resulting in the arrest of dozens of suspected members of various militant groups, including ISIL, TTP,⁵¹⁹ LeJ,⁵²⁰ Jamaat-ul Ahrar (JuA), SSP⁵²¹ and Al-Qaeda⁵²²/ Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent,⁵²³ and in the killing of several militants.⁵²⁴ Notably, a leader of Al-Qaeda, Amin ul Haq, was arrested in July 2024.⁵²⁵

Punjab, along with Balochistan, ranked third among the country's provinces in terms of frequency of sectarian attacks that caused fatalities (four incidents with one person killed), as the CRSS noted with regard to the year 2023.⁵²⁶ Sectarian mob violence against Christians accused of desecration or blasphemy was reported in Sargodha district in May⁵²⁷ and Toba Tek Singh district in August 2024,⁵²⁸ with the May attacks resulting in the death of a Christian man.⁵²⁹ A Sunni-Shia armed clash in Kalabagh town of Mianwali district in late August 2024 left at least two Shia men dead and more than 30 others injured,⁵³⁰ while a member of the Ahmadiyya community was shot dead by unidentified assailants in Gujrat district in July 2024.⁵³¹ For information on the treatment of members of religious minorities, see section [6.2 Religious minorities](#).

Security incidents

According to CRSS, the province witnessed 47 violent incidents over the year 2023 (comprising both militant attacks and violence linked to counter-terrorism operations) resulting in 53 fatalities and 32 injuries.⁵³² With specific regard to 'terrorist attacks' (which may include militant, nationalist, insurgent and sectarian attacks),⁵³³ PIPS recorded six incidents in 2023 causing 16 deaths and 8 injuries. Four of these attacks were carried out by TTP and TJP,

⁵¹⁷ AP, Death toll from bandit attack on police in Pakistan rises to 12, 23 August 2024, [url](#)

⁵¹⁸ Dawn, Terrorists' attack on Punjab-KP border check post thwarted, 16 August 2024, [url](#)

⁵¹⁹ PTI, ISIS commander among three arrested in Pakistan's Punjab province, 3 August 2024; PTI, 15 terrorists arrested during intelligence operations in Pakistan's Punjab, 8 June 2024; PTI, Major terror bid foiled in Pakistan's Punjab province: 14 TTP, ISI terrorists arrested, 2 December 2023

⁵²⁰ PTI, 15 terrorists arrested during intelligence operations in Pakistan's Punjab, 8 June 2024; PTI, Major terror bid foiled in Pakistan's Punjab province: 14 TTP, ISI terrorists arrested, 2 December 2023

⁵²¹ SATP, Punjab: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2023 – December 2023, n.d., [url](#)

⁵²² SATP, Punjab: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁵²³ SATP, Punjab: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2023 – December 2023, n.d., [url](#)

⁵²⁴ PTI, Two terrorists from banned Taliban faction killed in Punjab province of Pakistan, 13 September 2024; SATP, Punjab: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – August 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁵²⁵ Reuters, Pakistan arrests Al-Qaeda leader listed by United Nations, 19 July 2024, [url](#)

⁵²⁶ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan [Table], 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 40

⁵²⁷ Dawn, Christian man attacked by Sargodha mob succumbs to injuries after 9 days, 3 June 2024, [url](#)

⁵²⁸ SATP, Punjab: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – August 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁵²⁹ Dawn, Christian man attacked by Sargodha mob succumbs to injuries after 9 days, 3 June 2024, [url](#)

⁵³⁰ PTI, Two Shias killed in sectarian violence in Pakistan's Punjab province, 28 August 2024

⁵³¹ Dawn, Ahmadiyya community member slain in Lalamusa, 28 July 2024, [url](#)

⁵³² CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan [Table], 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 6

⁵³³ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 9





including three in Mianwali district.⁵³⁴ Meanwhile, PICSS documented 14 militant attacks during 2023, resulting in 20 deaths and 14 injuries.⁵³⁵

During the first nine months of 2024, the same source recorded 38 incidents (both militant attacks and violence during counter-terrorism operations) resulting in 35 fatalities and 87 injuries.⁵³⁶

Civilian fatalities

PICSS reported that militant attacks in the province in 2023 resulted in two civilian fatalities.⁵³⁷

Displacement and return

In August 2024, it was reported that a group of 21 Pakistani Hindus fled from Punjab's Rahim Yar Khan district to India due to concerns about potential attacks against Hindus.⁵³⁸ For further information on the treatment of Hindus, please see section [6.2.1 Hindus and Sikhs](#). No further information could be found on conflict-related IDP or return movements from or into Punjab province during the reference period.

4.2.2. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)

(a) General description of the governorate

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province is located in northwestern Pakistan and shares internal borders with Punjab province and the Islamabad Capital Territory in the south, and the Pakistan-administered Kashmir regions of Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir in the northeast and east.⁵³⁹ Externally, the province borders Afghanistan to the north and west,⁵⁴⁰ with most of the country's 2 600 kilometre border with Afghanistan running through Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.⁵⁴¹

As of 2023, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa included 7 divisions and 34 districts,⁵⁴² with the city of Peshawar serving as provincial capital.⁵⁴³ Western Pakistan and Peshawar are dominated by the Sunni Deobandi sect.⁵⁴⁴ Several areas of the province, including Peshawar, the western Dera Ismail Khan and Kohat districts and the tribal Kurram and Orakzai districts, have sizeable

⁵³⁴ PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options [Table], 8 May 2024, [url](#), pp. 28, 34

⁵³⁵ PICSS, 2023 ends with 70% Increase in Militant Attacks, 81 % Rise in Deaths: PICSS Report, 1 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵³⁶ CRSS, 2024 violence-linked fatalities overtake full-year 2023 in just nine months [Table], 30 September 2024, [url](#)

⁵³⁷ PICSS, 2023 ends with 70% Increase in Militant Attacks, 81 % Rise in Deaths: PICSS Report, 1 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵³⁸ Times of India (The), 21 Hindus flee Pakistan, enter India through Attari border, 8 August 2024, [url](#)

⁵³⁹ UK, PCGN, Pakistan, 2023, [url](#), p. 4; France, OFPRA, DIDR, Carte des provinces du Pakistan, June 2021, [url](#), p. 1; Pakistan, Survey of Pakistan, Political Map Pakistan, 2020, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁰ France, OFPRA, DIDR, Carte des provinces du Pakistan, June 2021, [url](#), p. 1; Pakistan, Survey of Pakistan, Political Map Pakistan, 2020, [url](#)

⁵⁴¹ Abdullah et al., Terrorist Attacks and Conflict Intensity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa since the August 2021 Taliban Takeover: Pakistan's Response and Operation Azm-e-Istehkam, July-September 2024, [url](#), p. 652

⁵⁴² Pakistan, PBS, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results – Table-1: KP Province Wise, n.d., [url](#), pp. 1-2

⁵⁴³ Encyclopedia Britannica, Peshawar, last updated 22 October 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁴ Jain, R., Changes in Sectarian Profile of Pakistan, VIF, 29 December 2023, [url](#)





Shiite populations.⁵⁴⁵ Non-Muslim religious minorities include Christians and smaller populations of Hindus and Sikhs.⁵⁴⁶ Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's population is predominantly of Pashtun ethnicity. The main Pashtun tribes Shinwari, Mohmand and Safi, as well as the tribes Dzadran, Gurbaz, Mangal, Turi, Wazir, Muqbal and Dzazi inhabit both sides of the Durand Line.⁵⁴⁷ Smaller ethnic groups include the Kalash, an indigenous group known for practising animism and ancestor worship⁵⁴⁸ whose traditional areas are located around Chitral, a district also home to Ismaili communities.⁵⁴⁹ The Seraiki-speaking Ustarana community lives in the border area between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and southern Punjab and has historically been linked to TTP and LeJ.⁵⁵⁰

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the country's third most populous province. Pakistan's digital Population and Housing Census of 2023 found that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had a population of around 40.85 million.⁵⁵¹ The CIA estimated that Peshawar had a population of 2.412 million as of 2023.⁵⁵²

(b) Conflict background and armed actors

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has long been known to be a 'hotbed of militancy'.⁵⁵³ While the Taliban's seizure of power in Afghanistan in August 2021 led to a deterioration of the security situation in various parts of Pakistan, it most severely affected Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,⁵⁵⁴ which witnessed a marked intensification of attacks⁵⁵⁵ by the TTP and ISKP.⁵⁵⁶ Since 2022, militants have shown greater visibility in the province, erecting checkpoints, extorting fees and abducting police and military personnel.⁵⁵⁷ Many religious *madrassas* in the province were indoctrinating children with militant ideology and supplying recruits to insurgent groups.⁵⁵⁸

The province, including its tribal areas along the Afghan border, has been a traditional stronghold of the TTP,⁵⁵⁹ with areas serving as the group's support and attack zones.⁵⁶⁰ Though driven out of Pakistan in 2014, the group has been able to regain control in pockets of

⁵⁴⁵ International Crisis Group, A New Era of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan, 5 September 2022, [url](#), p. 7

⁵⁴⁶ PBS, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results – Table-9: KP Province Wise, [url](#), p. 1

⁵⁴⁷ Samim, S., The Durand Line and the Fence: How are communities managing with cross-border lives?, AAN, April 2024, [url](#), p. 8

⁵⁴⁸ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 6

⁵⁴⁹ India Today, Pakistani Taliban run riot in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, seize Chitral army headquarters, 12 September 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁰ TKD, Deciphering the TTP's Strategy To Revive in Punjab, 7 May 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁵¹ Pakistan, PBS, Announcement of Results of 7th Population and Housing Census-2023 'The Digital Census' [Table], 5 August 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁵⁵² US, CIA, World Factbook – Pakistan, last updated 23 October 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁵³ RFE/RL, New Extremist Groups -- At Least In Name -- Enter Pakistan's Militant Scene, 25 July 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁴ Abdullah et al., Terrorist Attacks and Conflict Intensity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa since the August 2021 Taliban Takeover: Pakistan's Response and Operation Azm-e-Istehkam, July-September 2024, [url](#), p. 652

⁵⁵⁵ Abdullah et al., Terrorist Attacks and Conflict Intensity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa since the August 2021 Taliban Takeover: Pakistan's Response and Operation Azm-e-Istehkam, July-September 2024, [url](#), p. 652; International Crisis Group, The Pakistani Taliban Test Ties between Islamabad and Kabul, 29 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁶ PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options [Table], 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 32

⁵⁵⁷ International Crisis Group, The Pakistani Taliban Test Ties between Islamabad and Kabul, 29 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁸ Nadery, N., Unraveling Deception: Pakistan's Dilemma After Decades of Promoting Militancy in Afghanistan and Beyond [Blog], Wilson Center, 26 September 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁹ DW, Pakistani Taliban move into new territories, 3 May 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁰ ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, October 13, 2023, 13 October 2023, [url](#)





the province in recent years,⁵⁶¹ reinforcing its presence in the border areas and strengthening its operational capabilities including with the support of Al-Qaeda.⁵⁶² Mirroring the Afghan Taliban's structure of organisation, the TTP has divided Khyber Pakhtunkhwa into seven *wilayahs* (Bannu, Kohat, Dera Ismail Khan, Malakand, Peshawar, Mardan, and Hazara)⁵⁶³ and was active in 10 of the province's 34 districts as of September 2024. According to local residents interviewed by RFE/RL, the TTP has established its own rule in South Waziristan district, replaced the local authorities in Lakki Marwat district and expanded its influence in North Waziristan.⁵⁶⁴

In recent years, attacks by the TTP, its affiliated militant group⁵⁶⁵ Hafiz Gul Bahadar (HGB) and allied factions concentrated on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.⁵⁶⁶ The TTP focused on security forces personnel in the province,⁵⁶⁷ particularly the police force which only possessed light arms and was insufficiently trained and deployed to effectively counter the militants.⁵⁶⁸ In a major offensive in September 2023,⁵⁶⁹ the TTP overran several villages in Chitral district and took over the local headquarters of the Pakistan Army.⁵⁷⁰ The province has recently seen the emergence of several new militant groups such as Jaish Fursan-e Muhammad (JFM), Lashkar-e Khorasan and the Shaheen Group, believed to be front groups for the TTP and HGB.⁵⁷¹

ISKP, competing with the TTP for recruits and influence in the province,⁵⁷² has been strengthening its position in the tribal border zones in recent years.⁵⁷³ However, despite its presence in the tribal areas, the International Crisis Group noted in September 2022 that it was 'primarily an urban phenomenon'. It targeted civilians from religious minorities such as Sikhs and Shiites, including in a large-scale bombing of a Shiite mosque in Peshawar in March 2022. The group lacked a centralised structure. Law enforcement and intelligence officials interviewed by International Crisis Group in April and May 2022 estimated that its attacks were organised by small, dispersed cells. The province has also witnessed the presence of hundreds of former Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ) fighters reportedly willing to join armed groups such as ISKP.⁵⁷⁴ In July 2023, the ISKP, which reportedly operated cells and a wide-reaching network of informants in Bajaur district, targeted a rally of the religious-political party Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam - Fazl (JUI-F) in Bajaur in a major suicide bombing, killing at least 54 people.⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁶¹ RFE/RL, 'No One Is Safe': Life Under The Rule Of The Pakistani Taliban, 10 September 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁶² PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options [Table], 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 32

⁵⁶³ MEMRI, Looking Ahead In 2024 – The Taliban Factor In The Afghanistan-Pakistan Region, 1 March 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁴ RFE/RL, 'No One Is Safe': Life Under The Rule Of The Pakistani Taliban, 10 September 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁵ Business Standard, From friend to foe: How Hafiz Gul Bahadur brought Pak, Afghanistan to blows, 20 March 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁶ RFE/RL, New Extremist Groups -- At Least In Name -- Enter Pakistan's Militant Scene, 25 July 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁷ International Crisis Group, A New Era of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan, 5 September 2022, [url](#), p. 7

⁵⁶⁸ International Crisis Group, The Pakistani Taliban Test Ties between Islamabad and Kabul, 29 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁹ India Today, Pakistan Taliban capture several villages in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, kill soldiers, 6 September 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁰ India Today, Pakistani Taliban run riot in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, seize Chitral army headquarters, 12 September 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁷¹ RFE/RL, New Extremist Groups -- At Least In Name -- Enter Pakistan's Militant Scene, 25 July 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁷² International Crisis Group, A New Era of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan, 5 September 2022, [url](#), p. i

⁵⁷³ Al Jazeera, Taliban's ties with Pakistan fraying amid mounting security concerns, 17 August 2023, [url](#)

International Crisis Group, A New Era of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan, 5 September 2022, [url](#), p. 7

⁵⁷⁴ International Crisis Group, A New Era of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan, 5 September 2022, [url](#), pp. 6, 7, 18

⁵⁷⁵ Rehman, Z., Why is the militant ISKP attacking the JUI-F in Bajaur?, Dawn, 2 August 2023, [url](#)





Apart from Bajaur, the group maintained a significant presence in Mohmand, and to some extent, in Peshawar.⁵⁷⁶

Meanwhile, long-running tribal rivalries were reported in areas of Kohat⁵⁷⁷ and Kurram⁵⁷⁸ districts. In 2023, tribal disputes in Kohat's Darra Adam Khel area over a coal mine⁵⁷⁹ and a sectarian conflict over land between the Shia- and the Sunni-dominated tribal groups in Kurram⁵⁸⁰ resulted in dozens of deaths.

(c) Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

Security trends

In 2023, as in the previous year, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa witnessed the highest number of 'terrorist attacks' of any other region of Pakistan, according to PIPS.⁵⁸¹ Around the beginning of the reference period of this report in October 2023, it was noted that TTP was attacking the security forces in the province with several attacks per week,⁵⁸² with PIPS suggesting that armed groups may have transitioned to 'more intensified or high-impact attacks' over the year 2023, resulting in higher fatalities per incident.⁵⁸³

During 2023, the number of militant attacks increased in both 'mainland' Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and in the newly merged districts of the former FATA, as the PICSS reported.⁵⁸⁴ According to PIPS, the majority of militant operations recorded in the province in 2023 focused on the southern districts (North and South Waziristan, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank, and Dera Ismail Khan) and Peshawar and its adjacent Khyber district. These regions mainly experienced activity of TTP and affiliated armed groups. Around 75 % of all attacks recorded in the province in 2023 targeted the security forces,⁵⁸⁵ including a major attack in December 2023 on a security post in Daraban (Dera Ismail Khan district) that left at least 23 security personnel dead and was claimed by Tehrik-e Jihad Pakistan (TJP).⁵⁸⁶ At least two unclaimed bombings reported in Bannu⁵⁸⁷ and South Waziristan⁵⁸⁸ also resulted in several civilian casualties in late 2023.

⁵⁷⁶ PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 44

⁵⁷⁷ Al Jazeera, At least 16 killed as Pakistan tribes clash over coal mine, 16 May 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁸ Al Jazeera, Kurram clashes: How a Pakistani land dispute led to a deadly tribal battle, 2 August 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁹ Al Jazeera, At least 16 killed as Pakistan tribes clash over coal mine, 16 May 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁰ Al Jazeera, Kurram clashes: How a Pakistani land dispute led to a deadly tribal battle, 2 August 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁸¹ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 17

⁵⁸² ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, October 13, 2023, 13 October 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁸³ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 17

⁵⁸⁴ PICSS, 2023 ends with 70% Increase in Militant Attacks, 81 % Rise in Deaths: PICSS Report, 1 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁵ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 17

⁵⁸⁶ UN Press, Security Council Press Statement on Terrorist Attack in Daraban, Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, 13 December 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁷ RFE/RL, One Killed, 21 Injured In Suicide Attack On Market In Pakistan, 26 November 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁸ RFE/RL, Pakistani Army Claims Suicide Attack A Day Earlier Carried Out By Afghan National, 27 November 2023, [url](#)





Multiple deadly militant attacks reported in 2024 continued to target security forces, including personnel of the military⁵⁸⁹ and police⁵⁹⁰ and the Frontier Corps,⁵⁹¹ in North⁵⁹² and South Waziristan,⁵⁹³ Dera Ismail Khan,⁵⁹⁴ Bannu⁵⁹⁵ and on the outskirts of Peshawar,⁵⁹⁶ while attacks were also reported in the districts of Kurram,⁵⁹⁷ Mardan,⁵⁹⁸ Lakki Marwat,⁵⁹⁹ and in the Tirah valley.⁶⁰⁰

Around the February 2024 general elections, militants targeted a police station in Daraban (Dera Ismail Khan district), killing at least 10 police officers,⁶⁰¹ and opened fire on security personnel who were guarding election workers in Tank district.⁶⁰² In total, PIPS recorded eight attacks on election-related targets (political leaders/workers and sites linked to the elections) in January and February 2024.⁶⁰³ The first ten months of 2024 also witnessed at least two complex attacks that involved militants ramming explosive-laden vehicles into military installations in North Waziristan (March 2024)⁶⁰⁴ and Bannu city (mid-July 2024),⁶⁰⁵ leaving more than a dozen soldiers dead. These attacks were claimed by HGB.⁶⁰⁶

Although TTP⁶⁰⁷ and HGB,⁶⁰⁸ as well as new groups such as TJP,⁶⁰⁹ JFM⁶¹⁰ and Ansar al-Jihad⁶¹¹ claimed responsibility for some incidents during the reference period, many militant

⁵⁸⁹ AP, Attack on Pakistani army posts leaves 3 soldiers and 4 insurgents dead, 9 August 2024, [url](#); Al Jazeera, At least 8 Pakistani soldiers killed in military base suicide attack, 16 July 2024, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Attack on Pakistan army post near Afghan border kills seven, military says, 16 March 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁰ RFE/RL, At Least 10 Police Officers Killed In Attack In Pakistan's Northwest Days Before Polls, 5 February 2024, [url](#); RFE/RL, Gunmen Kill 3 Police In Separate Incidents In Northwestern Pakistan, 6 April 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹¹ PTI, One Frontier Corps soldier, two government officials killed in separate terror incidents in Pakistan's KPK, 21 April 2024; Dawn, FC personnel injured in Khyber IED blast, 25 April 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹² Al Jazeera, Six soldiers and eight rebels killed in fighting in northwest Pakistan, 5 October 2024, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Attack on Pakistan army post near Afghan border kills seven, military says, 16 March 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹³ RFE/RL, Gunmen Kill 3 Police In Separate Incidents In Northwestern Pakistan, 6 April 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁴ PTI, One Frontier Corps soldier, two government officials killed in separate terror incidents in Pakistan's KPK, 21 April 2024; AP, A roadside bomb targeting security forces kills 2 soldiers and wounds 15 in Pakistan, 21 March 2024, [url](#); RFE/RL, At Least 10 Police Officers Killed In Attack In Pakistan's Northwest Days Before Polls, 5 February 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁵ AA, 28 people, including 5 civilians, 10 soldiers, killed in past 24 hours in Pakistan, 17 July 2024, [url](#); RFE/RL, Five Police, Civilian Killed In Separate Attacks In Northwest Pakistan, 10 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁶ RFE/RL, Five Wounded, Including Soldiers, In Northwest Pakistan Bomb Blast, 16 August 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁷ RFE/RL, 4 Killed In Roadside Bombing In Pakistan's Restive Northwest, 16 June 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁸ RFE/RL, At Least 3 Killed, 8 Injured In Northwest Pakistan Bomb Blast, 5 July 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁹ RFE/RL, Gunmen Kill 3 Police In Separate Incidents In Northwestern Pakistan, 6 April 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁰ AP, Attack on Pakistani army posts leaves 3 soldiers and 4 insurgents dead, 9 August 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁰¹ RFE/RL, At Least 10 Police Officers Killed In Attack In Pakistan's Northwest Days Before Polls, 5 February 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁰² AA, 51 'terrorist attacks' on Pakistan election day left 12 people dead: Army, 8 February 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁰³ PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options [Table], 8 May 2024, [url](#), pp. 95-96

⁶⁰⁴ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Pakistan: October 2023-October 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁶⁰⁵ RFE/RL, At Least 4 Soldiers Dead, Dozens Injured In Attack On Pakistani Garrison, 15 July 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁶ Al Jazeera, At least 8 Pakistani soldiers killed in military base suicide attack, 16 July 2024, [url](#); International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Pakistan: October 2023-October 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁶⁰⁷ Firstpost, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan kills 6 security personnel in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 20 September 2024, [url](#); RFE/RL, Pakistani Security Forces Killed In Bomb Attack Claimed By Tehrik-e Taliban, 21 June 2024, [url](#); RFE/RL, 7 Police Officers Killed In Attack Claimed By Pakistani Taliban, 9 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁸ AP, Attack on Pakistani army posts leaves 3 soldiers and 4 insurgents dead, 9 August 2024, [url](#); Al Jazeera, At least 8 Pakistani soldiers killed in military base suicide attack, 16 July 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁹ RFE/RL, At Least 10 Police Officers Killed In Attack In Pakistan's Northwest Days Before Polls, 5 February 2024, [url](#)

⁶¹⁰ RFE/RL, At Least 4 Soldiers Dead, Dozens Injured In Attack On Pakistani Garrison, 15 July 2024, [url](#)

⁶¹¹ RFE/RL, Three Soldiers, Three Suspected Militants Killed In Attacks In Northwest Pakistan, 15 December 2023, [url](#)



attacks went unclaimed.⁶¹² Following militant attacks, security forces carried out a number of security operations,⁶¹³ including in South and North Waziristan,⁶¹⁴ Lakki Marwat⁶¹⁵ and in the Peshawar area/⁶¹⁶ Khyber district,⁶¹⁷ with casualties reported on both sides.⁶¹⁸

Apart from attacks targeting security forces, unidentified perpetrators carried out lethal attacks targeting vehicles carrying customs officials (Dera Ismail Khan district),⁶¹⁹ a former senator,⁶²⁰ a physician involved in a polio vaccination campaign (both in Bajaur district),⁶²¹ and a bus carrying Chinese workers⁶²² (Besham area⁶²³ of Shangla district⁶²⁴), several barbers (Mir Ali town),⁶²⁵ as well as persons of unspecified profile.⁶²⁶ In one instance, in July 2024, a group of militants stormed a healthcare facility in Dera Ismail Khan district and opened fire, killing five civilians.⁶²⁷ In Swat district, there was one case of mob killing of a local tourist who was accused of blasphemy.⁶²⁸

Armed attacks targeting polio vaccination campaigns significantly increased in 2024, with ten incidents documented in the first five months of 2024 alone.⁶²⁹ Media sources repeatedly covered largely unclaimed armed attacks on polio vaccination campaigns. These attacks mostly resulted in casualties among police officers who had been assigned to protect these campaigns,⁶³⁰ but occasionally also killed or injured polio/health workers⁶³¹ and civilians⁶³².

⁶¹² RFE/RL, 3 Soldiers, 5 Suspected Militants Killed In Clash In Pakistan's Northwest, 20 August 2024, [url](#); RFE/RL, Gunmen Kill 3 Police In Separate Incidents In Northwestern Pakistan, 6 April 2024, [url](#)

⁶¹³ AA, Over 580 killed in suspected militant attacks in Pakistan over last 7 months, 3 August 2024, [url](#); RFE/RL, 7 Soldiers Killed In Clashes With Pakistani Taliban, 27 May 2024, [url](#); AP, A roadside bomb kills 2 soldiers and troops kill 1 militant in northwest Pakistan, 28 October 2023, [url](#)

⁶¹⁴ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Pakistan: October 2023-October 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁶¹⁵ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Pakistan: October 2023-October 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁶¹⁶ RFE/RL, 7 Soldiers Killed In Clashes With Pakistani Taliban, 27 May 2024, [url](#);

⁶¹⁷ AP, A roadside bomb kills 2 soldiers and troops kill 1 militant in northwest Pakistan, 28 October 2023, [url](#)

⁶¹⁸ AA, Over 580 killed in suspected militant attacks in Pakistan over last 7 months, 3 August 2024, [url](#); RFE/RL, 7 Soldiers Killed In Clashes With Pakistani Taliban, 27 May 2024, [url](#); AP, A roadside bomb kills 2 soldiers and troops kill 1 militant in northwest Pakistan, 28 October 2023, [url](#)

⁶¹⁹ AP, Gunmen ambush vehicle carrying customs officials in northwest Pakistan, killing 4 officers, 18 April 2024, [url](#)

⁶²⁰ DW, Pakistan: Bomb kills former senator close to Afghan border, 3 July 2024, [url](#)

⁶²¹ RFE/RL, Doctor, Five Others Killed In Pakistan's Restive Northwest, 20 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶²² RFE/RL, Suicide Car Bombing Kills 5 Chinese Workers In Northwestern Pakistan, 26 March 2024, [url](#)

⁶²³ UN Press, Security Council Press Statement on Terrorist Attack in Besham, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, 27 March 2024, [url](#)

⁶²⁴ Pakistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government – Deputy Commissioner Shangla, About District Shangla, n.d., [url](#)

⁶²⁵ AP, Gunmen kill 6 barbers in a former stronghold of the Pakistani Taliban near the Afghan border, 2 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶²⁶ RFE/RL, Doctor, Five Others Killed In Pakistan's Restive Northwest, 20 January 2024, [url](#); AP, 2 killed as a motorcycle loaded with explosives detonates in the Pakistani city of Peshawar, 10 March 2024, [url](#)

⁶²⁷ AA, 28 people, including 5 civilians, 10 soldiers, killed in past 24 hours in Pakistan, 17 July 2024, [url](#)

⁶²⁸ RFE/RL, Police In Pakistan's Swat District Arrest 22 Following Mob Killing, Rioting, 23 June 2024, [url](#)

⁶²⁹ Voicepk.net, Polio vaccination drives face deadly attacks in Pakistan, 4 June 2024, [url](#)

⁶³⁰ Voicepk.net, Polio vaccination drives face deadly attacks in Pakistan, 4 June 2024, [url](#); AP, Gunmen kill a policeman guarding polio workers in northwestern Pakistan, 12 September 2024, [url](#); AP, Gunmen kill a police officer assigned to protect polio workers in northwest Pakistan, 30 April 2024, [url](#); RFE/RL, Gunmen Kill 3 Police In Separate Incidents In Northwestern Pakistan, 6 April 2024, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Blast in Pakistan kills five police officers during polio vaccination drive, 8 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶³¹ Voicepk.net, Polio vaccination drives face deadly attacks in Pakistan, 4 June 2024, [url](#); AP, Gunmen kill a policeman guarding polio workers in northwestern Pakistan, 12 September 2024, [url](#)

⁶³² Voicepk.net, Polio vaccination drives face deadly attacks in Pakistan, 4 June 2024, [url](#)



Khyber Pakhtunkhwa ranked first among the country's provinces in terms of frequency of sectarian attacks that caused fatalities (21 incidents with 131 people killed), as the CRSS noted with regard to the year 2023.⁶³³

Several instances of deadly violence involving tribal groups were reported in Kurram district.⁶³⁴ Continuing land disputes between Shia-majority and Sunni-majority tribes in Kurram district erupted into violent clashes in October 2023,⁶³⁵ July 2024⁶³⁶ and September 2024,⁶³⁷ resulting in dozens of deaths.⁶³⁸ Tribal clashes in the same district caused at least another 11 civilian deaths in October 2024.⁶³⁹

Security incidents

According to CRSS, the province witnessed 451 violent incidents over the same year (comprising both militant attacks and violence linked to counter-terrorism operations) resulting in 975 fatalities and 871 injuries.⁶⁴⁰ With specific regard to 'terrorist attacks' (which may include militant, nationalist, insurgent and sectarian attacks),⁶⁴¹ PIPS reported 174 incidents in 2023 causing 422 fatalities and 782 injuries. These incidents accounted for approximately 57 % of all such attacks PIPS recorded in the country during that year.⁶⁴² The source noted that while the number of incidents in 2023 only increased by 3 % over 2022, the number of fatalities rose by around 43 %.⁶⁴³ Meanwhile, PICSS documented 423 militant attacks during 2023, resulting in 621 deaths and 980 injuries.⁶⁴⁴ The source indicated that militant attacks were more frequent in 'mainland' Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (237 incidents) than in the newly merged former districts of the former FATA (186 incidents).⁶⁴⁵

During the first nine months of 2024, the CRSS recorded 474 incidents (both militant attacks and violence during counter-terrorism operations) resulting in 927 fatalities and 574 injuries.⁶⁴⁶

⁶³³ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan [Table], 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 40

⁶³⁴ Express Tribune (The), Exchange of fire between Kurram tribes claims 11 lives, injures several others, 12 October 2024, [url](#); Nation (The), Kurram clashes claim 12 lives, injure 22 in 3 days, 24 September 2024, [url](#); Dawn, Tribal clashes in Kurram come to halt after claiming 49 lives within a week: DC, 30 July 2024, [url](#)

⁶³⁵ Dawn, Seven more killed as Kurram clashes worsen, 28 October 2023, [url](#)

⁶³⁶ Al Jazeera, Kurram clashes: How a Pakistani land dispute led to a deadly tribal battle, 2 August 2024, [url](#)

⁶³⁷ Nation (The), Kurram clashes claim 12 lives, injure 22 in 3 days, 24 September 2024, [url](#)

⁶³⁸ Dawn, Tribal clashes in Kurram come to halt after claiming 49 lives within a week: DC, 30 July 2024, [url](#);

Voicepk.net, Tribal clashes in Kurram leave 36 dead, 27 September 2024, [url](#)

⁶³⁹ AP, Tribal clashes kill at least 11 people in Pakistan, 12 October 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁰ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan [Table], 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 6

⁶⁴¹ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 9

⁶⁴² PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options [Table], 8 May 2024, [url](#), pp. 28, 32-33

⁶⁴³ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 17

⁶⁴⁴ PICSS, 2023 ends with 70% Increase in Militant Attacks, 81 % Rise in Deaths: PICSS Report, 1 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁵ PICSS, 2023 ends with 70% Increase in Militant Attacks, 81 % Rise in Deaths: PICSS Report, 1 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁶ CRSS, 2024 violence-linked fatalities overtake full-year 2023 in just nine months [Table], 30 September 2024, [url](#)



Civilian fatalities

PICSS reported that militant attacks recorded in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2023 resulted in 222 civilian fatalities, including 67 fatalities in ‘mainland’ Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 155 in the former FATA.⁶⁴⁷

Displacement and return

Militant activity and military operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the former FATA have led to large-scale displacement,⁶⁴⁸ affecting over 6 million residents between 2003 and 2014.⁶⁴⁹ As of 2023, voluntary returns continued based on improvements in the security situation.⁶⁵⁰ Based on data obtained from the Complex Emergencies Wing of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Disaster Management Authority (KPDMA) and media sources, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) reported that there were around 23 000 IDPs in Pakistan in 2023 whose displacement was linked to conflict and violence. As the IDMC pointed out, this figure mainly encompassed individuals who had been displaced by conflict in the former FATA between 2002 and 2014. However, it also included individuals displaced by small-scale incidents of political or intercommunal violence between 2018 and 2023 for whom no reports of return, resettlement or local integration could be found.⁶⁵¹ Several IDP populations settled in informal settlements on the outskirts of cities such as Peshawar, Dera Ismail Khan, and Bannu.⁶⁵²

According to the USDOS, many IDPs reportedly wished to return to their places of origin in spite of rigid controls imposed by the security forces over returnees’ movements through extensive checkpoints, and a lack of housing and services. Other IDP families postponed their return or opted to stay with family members in settlements in Kyber Pakhtunkhwa.⁶⁵³

No further information could be found on conflict-related IDP or return movements from or into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province during the reference period.

4.2.3. Balochistan

(a) General description of the governorate

Balochistan province is located in southwestern Pakistan and shares internal borders with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to the northeast, Punjab province to the east and Sindh province to the

⁶⁴⁷ PICSS, 2023 ends with 70% Increase in Militant Attacks, 81 % Rise in Deaths: PICSS Report, 1 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁸ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 53

⁶⁴⁹ RFE/RL, Violence By Islamist Militants Haunts Pakistani Elections In Restive Province, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁰ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 53

⁶⁵¹ IDMC, Country profile: Pakistan, last updated 24 May 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁵² USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 53

⁶⁵³ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 54

southeast.⁶⁵⁴ Externally, the province shares borders with Afghanistan to the north, Iran to the west⁶⁵⁵ and the Arabian Sea to the south.⁶⁵⁶

As of 2023, Balochistan comprised 8 divisions and 34 districts,⁶⁵⁷ with the city of Quetta serving as provincial capital.⁶⁵⁸ The province is mainly inhabited by ethnic Balochs but also includes Pashtun communities.⁶⁵⁹ The Pashtun-populated areas extend from Quetta to the towns of Chaman and Killa Saifullah on the Afghan border, as well as to Zhob district bordering Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.⁶⁶⁰ Western Pakistan is dominated by the Sunni Deobandi sect.⁶⁶¹ The province is also home to the Zikri Muslim community which had an estimated size of between 500 000 and 800 000 individuals, as the USDOS reported for the year 2023.⁶⁶² For information on the Zikris, see also section [6.2.5 Zikris](#). The main non-Muslim minorities in the province are Christians and Hindus.⁶⁶³

Balochistan is the largest and least populous of the country's four provinces.⁶⁶⁴ Pakistan's digital Population and Housing Census of 2023 found that the province had a population of around 14 890 000.⁶⁶⁵ As of 2023, Quetta district (part of Quetta division) had 2 595 492 inhabitants, with an urban population of 1 565 546.⁶⁶⁶ While known for its rich gas and mineral reserves, Balochistan has experienced economic deprivation and has been described as the country's most impoverished province.⁶⁶⁷

(b) Conflict background and armed actors

The BLA and other armed groups have been waging a decades-long insurgency against the government, accusing it of unjustly appropriating the province's gas and mineral resources.⁶⁶⁸ PIPS reported that the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) were the main actors of instability in the province.⁶⁶⁹ Experts interviewed by RFE/RL

⁶⁵⁴ UK, PCGN, Pakistan, 2023, [url](#), p. 4; France, OFPRA, DIDR, Carte des provinces du Pakistan, June 2021, [url](#), p. 1; Pakistan, Survey of Pakistan, Political Map Pakistan, 2020, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁵ France, OFPRA, DIDR, Carte des provinces du Pakistan, June 2021, [url](#); Pakistan, Survey of Pakistan, Political Map Pakistan, 2020, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁶ Encyclopedia Britannica, Balochistan, last updated 15 October 2024, [url](#); Pakistan, Survey of Pakistan, Political Map Pakistan, 2020, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁷ Pakistan, PBS, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results – Table-1: Balochistan Province Wise, n.d., [url](#)

⁶⁵⁸ Encyclopedia Britannica, Balochistan, last updated 15 October 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁹ Samim, S., The Durand Line and the Fence: How are communities managing with cross-border lives?, AAN, April 2024, [url](#), p. 5, footnote 5

⁶⁶⁰ DW, Pakistani Taliban move into new territories, 3 May 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁶¹ Jain, R., Changes in Sectarian Profile of Pakistan, VIF, 29 December 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁶² USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 6

⁶⁶³ Pakistan, PBS, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results – Table-9: Balochistan Province Wise, [url](#), p. 1

⁶⁶⁴ Shaikh, F., Why brute force will not end Pakistan's Balochistan insurgency, Chatham House, 3 September 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁵ Pakistan, PBS, Announcement of Results of 7th Population and Housing Census-2023 'The Digital Census' [Table], 5 August 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁶⁶⁶ Pakistan, PBS, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results – Table-1: Balochistan Province Wise, n.d., [url](#), pp. 1-2

⁶⁶⁷ Shaikh, F., Why brute force will not end Pakistan's Balochistan insurgency, Chatham House, 3 September 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁸ Shaikh, F., Why brute force will not end Pakistan's Balochistan insurgency, Chatham House, 3 September 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁹ PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 31

indicated that the BLA had evolved into a stronger and better organised fighting force. The source quoted a journalist and commentator as saying that the BLA, notwithstanding its secular views, had come to adopt more deadly tactics that had hitherto been employed by Islamist groups like the Afghan Taliban and TTP (e.g., suicide bombings, IEDs and complex attacks).⁶⁷⁰ Baloch nationalist groups have targeted security forces, Chinese citizens and individuals working on development projects,⁶⁷¹ as well as labourers from Punjab as part of a campaign to pressure them to leave Balochistan,⁶⁷² perceiving them to be exploiting their local resources.⁶⁷³

The TTP, formed in 2007, initially lacked interest in Balochistan, but over the years gradually strengthened its footprint in the province through its Balochistan chapter (known as Tehrik-e Taliban Balochistan in the past).⁶⁷⁴ Although the group's presence used to be confined to the Pashtun-dominated zones, in recent years it made inroads in the Baloch-majority areas.⁶⁷⁵ The TTP has established two *wilayahs* in Balochistan: Zhob (covering the Pashtun-majority areas) and Kalat-Makran (comprising the Baloch-majority areas).⁶⁷⁶ As of late 2023, PIPS noted that Zhob witnessed 'proper deployment' of TTP militants.⁶⁷⁷ Several local militant factions have joined the TTP, including groups led by Ustaz Aslam Baloch, Mazar Baloch, Akram Baloch and Aslam Baloch,⁶⁷⁸ as well as an LeJ outfit named the Saifullah Kurd faction.⁶⁷⁹ Since the Taliban's takeover of power in Afghanistan in August 2021, the TTP has been linked to attacks in Balochistan's Pashtun-inhabited areas.⁶⁸⁰ In July 2023, the presumably TTP-affiliated group⁶⁸¹ Tehrik-e Jihad Pakistan (TJK) claimed a major attack on a military base in Zhob district that left up to a dozen soldiers dead and resulted in casualties among civilians caught in the crossfire.⁶⁸²

ISKP, which lacked a centralised structure of command and control, was competing with the TTP for recruits and influence in Balochistan.⁶⁸³ Militants in the province have supported and joined ISKP since its formation in 2014 and according to PIPS, the group had 'become quite active' in the province as of late 2023.⁶⁸⁴

⁶⁷⁰ RFE/RL, The Rise Of The Baloch Liberation Army In Pakistan, 1 September 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁷¹ Al Jazeera, What's behind Pakistan's deadly Balochistan attacks, which left 74 dead?, 26 August 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁷² AP, Gunmen kill 7 barbers in Pakistan's volatile Baluchistan province, 9 May 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁷³ Reuters, More than 70 dead after militant attacks in Pakistan's Balochistan, 27 August 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁴ PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 30

⁶⁷⁵ Basit, A., Questions Surround Pakistani Taliban's Inroads into Balochistan: Organizational Expansion or Propaganda Stunt?, The Jamestown Foundation, 11 July 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁶ PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 29; Basit, A., Questions Surround Pakistani Taliban's Inroads into Balochistan: Organizational Expansion or Propaganda Stunt?, The Jamestown Foundation, 11 July 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁷ PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 29

⁶⁷⁸ Basit, A., Questions Surround Pakistani Taliban's Inroads into Balochistan: Organizational Expansion or Propaganda Stunt?, The Jamestown Foundation, 11 July 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁹ Rehman, Z., Inside Balochistan's sectarian shift — the rise of IS from Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, Dawn, 3 October 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁰ DW, Pakistani Taliban move into new territories, 3 May 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁸¹ VOA, Militants Raid Pakistan Army Base; 12 Soldiers, Civilian Die in Clashes, 12 July 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁸² Dawn, 12 soldiers martyred in Zhob, Sui attacks, 13 July 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁸³ International Crisis Group, A New Era of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan, 5 September 2022, [url](#), pp. i, 6

⁶⁸⁴ PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 30



The province has a history of anti-Shiite violence driven by Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ)⁶⁸⁵ that targeted Shia Hazara communities in Quetta and in Mastung. Until 2015, LeJ in Balochistan operated as an autonomous group collaborating with militant groups such as the TTP, Al-Qaeda, the newly emerged Islamic State (IS) and the Iranian Sunni insurgent groups Jundullah and Jaish-ul Adl. However, following the killing of its leader in February 2015, LeJ weakened and disintegrated. An LeJ faction centred around Mastung joined the ranks of ISKP the same year, prompting the ISKP to subsequently carry out a number of high-profile attacks targeting security forces, religious minorities and political campaigning.⁶⁸⁶ A high-ranking intelligence official in Quetta told International Crisis Group in April 2022 that the overwhelming majority of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) members in the province now identified with ISKP.⁶⁸⁷ In August and September 2023, Mastung district experienced a series of attacks linked to ISKP and ISPP which targeted security forces, the Islamist party Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), and the Barelvi community. In the aftermath of these attacks, journalist Zia Ur Rehman quoted a Quetta-based intelligence official as saying that the hitherto longer intervals between IS attacks were diminishing.⁶⁸⁸

(c) Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

Security trends

Balochistan was the second province most affected by ‘terrorism’ in 2023 (after Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), according to PIPS.⁶⁸⁹ While the PICSS noted a deterioration of the security situation in 2023 as a result of a significant overall rise in the frequency of militant attacks compared to the previous year, the last three months of 2023 witnessed the continuation of a decreasing trend in attacks that began in August 2023.⁶⁹⁰

According to PIPS, most militant attacks in the province in 2023 (78 incidents, or about 71 %) had been perpetrated by various Baloch rebel groups, primarily the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) and the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF). Attacks attributed to Baloch insurgents were recorded across 19 districts mostly located in the province’s centre, south and southwest.⁶⁹¹ The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) conducted 48 attacks in the province in 2023, as recorded by PIPS. The BLA’s attacks were distributed across 18 districts, with Quetta witnessing the largest number of attacks (11 incidents). The majority of these incidents targeted security forces.⁶⁹²

⁶⁸⁵ International Crisis Group, A New Era of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan, 5 September 2022, [url](#), p. i; Rehman, Z., Inside Balochistan’s sectarian shift — the rise of IS from Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, Dawn, 3 October 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁶ Rehman, Z., Inside Balochistan’s sectarian shift — the rise of IS from Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, Dawn, 3 October 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁷ International Crisis Group, A New Era of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan, 5 September 2022, [url](#), p. 6

⁶⁸⁸ Rehman, Z., Inside Balochistan’s sectarian shift — the rise of IS from Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, Dawn, 3 October 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁹ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 17

⁶⁹⁰ PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 24

⁶⁹¹ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 17

⁶⁹² PIPS, Pakistan’s Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 31



These incidents included BLA attacks targeting installations of security forces in the towns of Mach⁶⁹³ and Kolpur (resulting in two civilian deaths),⁶⁹⁴ the port authority complex in the city of Gwadar⁶⁹⁵ and a naval facility in Turbat.⁶⁹⁶ In April 2024, the BLA abducted and killed nine individuals from Punjab in the Noshki area.⁶⁹⁷ Then, in late August 2024, in an escalation of violence, a series of at least six attacks near the Punjab border killed at least 74 people,⁶⁹⁸ including 14 soldiers and 38 civilians.⁶⁹⁹ Those targeted in the killings included a group of at least 23 Punjabi migrant labourers in Musakhel district and at least 10 members of law enforcement in Kalat district.⁷⁰⁰ The attacks targeted police stations, highways and railway lines.⁷⁰¹ The BLA, which claimed responsibility for the August 2024 incidents, declared that it had deployed 800 of its fighters during these attacks.⁷⁰²

Meanwhile, the TTP and affiliated factions carried out 15 attacks in Balochistan in 2023,⁷⁰³ most of them in the northern or Pashtun-dominated districts.⁷⁰⁴ Balochistan ranked third among the country's provinces in terms of frequency of sectarian attacks that caused fatalities (4 incidents with 64 people killed), as the CRSS noted with regard to the year 2023.⁷⁰⁵

Meanwhile, ISKP was reported to have shown greater activity in Mastung, Kalat and Bolan districts.⁷⁰⁶ Seven attacks in Balochistan in 2023 were attributed to ISKP, including a large-scale bombing that killed over 63 people in Mastung⁷⁰⁷ on 29 September 2023 as they were taking part in a religious procession.⁷⁰⁸ PIPS recorded three sectarian attacks in the province in 2023.⁷⁰⁹ The Sunni sectarian group LeJ carried out four attacks in the province in 2023 as recorded by PIPS, all of which targeted Shia Hazara communities.⁷¹⁰ No reports of sectarian violence could be found with regard to the first ten months of 2024.

A series of bombings with civilian casualties were reported in the run-up to the elections on 8 February 2024,⁷¹¹ including an unclaimed attack targeting a rally of Pakistan Tehrik-e Insaaf (PTI) party supporters in the town of Sibi (killing at least four people)⁷¹² and two explosions claimed by IS that targeted candidates' election offices in Pishin and Killa Saifullah districts,

⁶⁹³ Al Jazeera, At least 10 killed in overnight attack by Baloch rebels in Pakistan, 30 January 2024, [url](#); Reuters, At least 15 killed after rebel attacks in Pakistan's Balochistan, 30 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁴ Reuters, At least 15 killed after rebel attacks in Pakistan's Balochistan, 30 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁵ RFE/RL, Baluch Separatists Claim Attack On Pakistan's Gwadar Port, 20 March 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁶ AP, Pakistani forces kill 4 insurgents as they foiled an attack on a naval facility in Baluchistan, 25 March 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁷ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Pakistan: October 2023-October 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁶⁹⁸ Al Jazeera, What's behind Pakistan's deadly Balochistan attacks, which left 74 dead?, 26 August 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁹ Reuters, More than 70 dead after militant attacks in Pakistan's Balochistan, 27 August 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁰ Al Jazeera, What's behind Pakistan's deadly Balochistan attacks, which left 74 dead?, 26 August 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁰¹ Reuters, More than 70 dead after militant attacks in Pakistan's Balochistan, 27 August 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁰² TNH, Dozens killed in Pakistan separatist attacks, 27 August 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁰³ PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 29

⁷⁰⁴ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 17

⁷⁰⁵ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan [Table], 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 40

⁷⁰⁶ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), pp. 17-18

⁷⁰⁷ PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 30

⁷⁰⁸ Al Jazeera, Blast at Pakistan procession to mark prophet's birthday kills at least 52, 29 September 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁹ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 18

⁷¹⁰ PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 31

⁷¹¹ PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options [Table], 8 May 2024, [url](#), pp. 96-97

⁷¹² VOA, Election Rally Bombing, Insurgent Raid Kill Several in Southwestern Pakistan, 30 January 2024, [url](#)



leaving nearly 30 people dead.⁷¹³ In total, 46 attacks were recorded on election-related targets (political leaders/workers and sites linked to the elections) in January and February 2024, most of them perpetrated by Baloch insurgent groups and ISKP.⁷¹⁴ Clashes during by-elections in April 2024 between PLN-N and PTI supporters left one person dead.⁷¹⁵

Unidentified perpetrators were behind a number of other deadly incidents, including attacks targeting security forces near the town of Pasni (killing 14 soldiers)⁷¹⁶ and in Kech district (killing five soldiers).⁷¹⁷ Moreover, there were multiple attacks on civilians such as the killing of several barbers in the vicinity of Gwadar city,⁷¹⁸ an attack on a shopping area in Khuzdar (resulting in at least two deaths),⁷¹⁹ an explosion in Pishin district that left two children dead,⁷²⁰ and the killing of 21 coal miners in Duki district.⁷²¹ Unidentified assailants also killed a number of labourers during the reference period,⁷²² including groups of workers from Punjab.⁷²³ A series of militant attacks in Panjgur⁷²⁴ and Quetta districts area in September 2024 killed at least six police officers.⁷²⁵

Multiple anti-terrorism operations carried out by security forces in various districts during the reference period resulted in the killing of militants,⁷²⁶ including an operation launched in retaliation for the late August 2024 attacks claimed by the BLA.⁷²⁷ Regarding the year 2023, the PICSS noted that 104 suspected insurgents had been ‘neutralised’ and another 11 arrested by the security forces.⁷²⁸ Moreover, in December 2023, Sarfraz Bangulzai, a main commander of the Baloch National Army (BNA), surrendered to the authorities along with 70 other BNA members,⁷²⁹ resulting in a cessation of BNA activities.⁷³⁰ However, claims that the Baloch insurgency and its leadership had been significantly weakened have been called into question

⁷¹³ CNN, At least 30 dead in Balochistan explosions, day before Pakistan election, 7 February 2024, [url](#); RFE/RL, Dozens Killed In Blasts Ahead Of Pakistani Elections; Islamic State Claims Responsibility, 7 February 2024, [url](#)

⁷¹⁴ PIPS, Pakistan’s Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options [Table], 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 96

⁷¹⁵ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Pakistan: October 2023-October 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁷¹⁶ AFP, Attack on Pakistan security convoy kills 14: military, 3 November 2023

⁷¹⁷ Dawn, Five soldiers martyred in Kech bomb explosion, 14 January 2024, [url](#)

⁷¹⁸ AP, Gunmen kill 7 barbers in Pakistan’s volatile Baluchistan province, 9 May 2024, [url](#)

⁷¹⁹ Dawn, Two killed, five injured in Khuzdar explosion, 8 April 2024, [url](#)

⁷²⁰ RFE/RL, 3 Killed, Including 2 Children, 18 Wounded In Bomb Blast In Pakistan's Southwest, 24 August 2024, [url](#)

⁷²¹ AP, Gunmen kill 21 miners in southwest Pakistan ahead of an Asian security summit, 11 October 2024, [url](#)

⁷²² VOA, Militants kill 7 workers, kidnap 20 in southwestern Pakistan, 29 September 2024, [url](#); AA, Militants kill 4 civilians, 1 cop in southwestern Pakistan, 31 October 2023, [url](#); Express Tribune (The), Six labourers killed in pre-dawn Turbat attack, 14 October 2023, [url](#)

⁷²³ VOA, Militants kill 7 workers, kidnap 20 in southwestern Pakistan, 29 September 2024, [url](#); AA, Militants kill 4 civilians, 1 cop in southwestern Pakistan, 31 October 2023, [url](#)

⁷²⁴ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Pakistan: October 2023-October 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁷²⁵ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Pakistan: October 2023-October 2024, n.d., [url](#); VOA, Bomb blast in southwest Pakistan kills two police officers, 14 September 2024, [url](#)

⁷²⁶ Dawn, 5 terrorists killed, 3 injured in intelligence-based operations across Balochistan: ISPR, 30 August 2024, [url](#); Reuters, Pakistan military kills 24 militants in Balochistan week before elections, 2 February 2024, [url](#); PTI, 6 terrorists killed in Pakistan’s Balochistan province during intelligence-based operations, 2 November 2023

⁷²⁷ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Pakistan: October 2023-October 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁷²⁸ PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 27

⁷²⁹ Express Tribune (The), Key BNA commander Sarfraz Bangulzai surrenders along with 70 associates, 20 December 2023, [url](#)

⁷³⁰ PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 27



by the scale of the coordinated BLA attacks in August 2024, a report by Chatham House noted.⁷³¹

Apart from militancy-related deaths and injuries, several casualties resulted from attacks by Iranian forces, including from Iranian missile strikes in January 2024 that claimed to target positions of the militant group Jaish al-Adl (killing two children in Panjgur district)⁷³² and Iranian border guards opening fire on Pakistani nationals in the vicinity of the border village of Mashkel.⁷³³ Meanwhile, armed border clashes with Afghan troops in August 2024 left one Pakistani soldier dead in the Noshki area. In addition, clashes between protesters and security forces in summer 2024 left three people dead and dozens injured across various parts of the province.⁷³⁴

Security incidents

According to CRSS, the province witnessed 205 violent incidents in 2023 (comprising both militant attacks and violence linked to counter-terrorism operations) resulting in 413 fatalities and 353 injuries.⁷³⁵ With specific regard to ‘terrorist attacks’ (which may include militant, nationalist, insurgent and sectarian attacks),⁷³⁶ PIPS reported 110 incidents in 2023 causing 229 fatalities and 282 injuries.⁷³⁷ Baloch armed groups, primarily the BLA and BLF, perpetrated 78 of these attacks, causing 86 fatalities and wounding 137 others, while Islamist groups such as TTP and ISKP carried out 29 attacks, causing 139 fatalities and 144 injuries.⁷³⁸ Meanwhile, PICSS documented 170 militant attacks during 2023, resulting in 285 deaths and 388 injuries.⁷³⁹

During the first nine months of 2024, the CRSS recorded 253 incidents (both militant attacks and violence during counter-terrorism operations) resulting in 524 fatalities and 499 injuries.⁷⁴⁰

Civilian fatalities

PICSS reported that militant attacks recorded in Balochistan in 2023 resulted in 151 civilian fatalities.⁷⁴¹

Displacement and return

No information could be found on conflict-related IDP or return movements from or into Balochistan province during the reference period.

⁷³¹ Shaikh, F., Why brute force will not end Pakistan’s Balochistan insurgency, Chatham House, 3 September 2024, [url](#)

⁷³² Dawn, Panic grips Koh-i-Sabz, 18 January 2024, [url](#)

⁷³³ RFE/RL, Pakistan Says 4 Citizens Killed After Iranian Border Guards Open Fire, 30 May 2024, [url](#)

⁷³⁴ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Pakistan: October 2023-October 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁷³⁵ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan [Table], 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 6

⁷³⁶ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 9

⁷³⁷ PIPS, Pakistan’s Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options [Table], 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 28

⁷³⁸ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 17

⁷³⁹ PICSS, 2023 ends with 70% Increase in Militant Attacks, 81 % Rise in Deaths: PICSS Report, 1 January 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁴⁰ CRSS, 2024 violence-linked fatalities overtake full-year 2023 in just nine months [Table], 30 September 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁴¹ PICSS, 2023 ends with 70% Increase in Militant Attacks, 81 % Rise in Deaths: PICSS Report, 1 January 2024, [url](#)



4.2.4. Sindh

(a) General description of the governorate

Sindh province is located in southeastern Pakistan⁷⁴² and shares internal borders with Balochistan to the west and north and Punjab to the northeast.⁷⁴³ Externally, the province shares borders with India to the east⁷⁴⁴ and the Arabian Sea to the south.⁷⁴⁵

As of 2023, Sindh comprised 6 divisions and 30 districts,⁷⁴⁶ with the port city⁷⁴⁷ of Karachi serving as provincial capital.⁷⁴⁸ At least 16 distinct languages were spoken in the province. While Sindhi was the predominant language,⁷⁴⁹ the province had substantial numbers of speakers of Urdu, Punjabi,⁷⁵⁰ and Pashto.⁷⁵¹ Barelvi Islam was well-established in Sindh, but the province also included communities of Deobandis in Karachi.⁷⁵² Both Barelvis and Deobandis are Sunni sects following the Hanafi school of thought.⁷⁵³ Karachi also has a large Shia population,⁷⁵⁴ particularly Hazaras, concentrated, amongst others, in Abbas Town, Mughal Hazara Goth, Hussain Hazara Goth, Ancholi, Rizvia, and Manghopir. Outside Karachi, Shias also lived in Sanghar, Nawabshah and Hyderabad.⁷⁵⁵ Karachi also has a small Christian community.⁷⁵⁶ Moreover, Sindh is home to a significant proportion of the country's Hindu population,⁷⁵⁷ whose combined population according to Pakistan's digital Population and Housing Census of 2023 was around 4.9 million,⁷⁵⁸ accounting for 8.8 % of the province's population. Further, non-Muslim religious minorities included Christians and smaller communities of Sikhs.⁷⁵⁹

⁷⁴² Encyclopedia Britannica, Sindh, last updated 19 September 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁴³ UK, PCGN, Pakistan, 2023, [url](#), p. 4; France, OFPRA, DIDR, Carte des provinces du Pakistan, June 2021, [url](#), p. 1; Pakistan, Survey of Pakistan, Political Map Pakistan, 2020, [url](#)

⁷⁴⁴ France, OFPRA, DIDR, Carte des provinces du Pakistan, June 2021, [url](#), p. 1; Pakistan, Survey of Pakistan, Political Map Pakistan, 2020, [url](#)

⁷⁴⁵ Encyclopedia Britannica, Sindh, last updated 19 September 2024, [url](#); Pakistan, Survey of Pakistan, Political Map Pakistan, 2020, [url](#)

⁷⁴⁶ Pakistan, PBS, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results – Table-1: Sindh Province Wise, n.d., [url](#), pp. 1-2

⁷⁴⁷ DW, Pakistani Taliban move into new territories, 3 May 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁴⁸ Encyclopedia Britannica, Sindh, last updated 19 September 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁴⁹ Express Tribune (The), Census shows rich lingual tapestry in Sindh, 22 July 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁵⁰ Encyclopedia Britannica, Pakistan, People of Pakistan, last updated 22 October 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁵¹ Express Tribune (The), Census shows rich lingual tapestry in Sindh, 22 July 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁵² Jain, R., Changes in Sectarian Profile of Pakistan, VIF, 29 December 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁵³ Khan, N. et al., The Rise of Sectarianism: An Ethnography of Religious Intolerance in Southern Punjab, January-March 2021, [url](#), p. 320

⁷⁵⁴ International Crisis Group, A New Era of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan, 5 September 2022, [url](#), p. 15

⁷⁵⁵ SATP, Pakistan: Targeting Shias – Analysis, Eurasia Review, 19 September 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁵⁶ DW, Pakistan: Karachi's dwindling Goan Christian community, 5 March 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁵⁷ AP, In Pakistan's Sindh province, Hindu culture fights the odds, 7 November 2022, [url](#); PTI, Over 22 lakh Hindus in Pakistan, says national database report, 9 June 2022

⁷⁵⁸ Pakistan, PBS, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results – Table-9: Sindh Province Wise, [url](#), p. 1

⁷⁵⁹ Pakistan, PBS, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results – Table-9: Sindh Province Wise, [url](#), p. 1; Pakistan, PBS, Announcement of Results of 7th Population and Housing Census-2023 'The Digital Census' [Table], 5 August 2023, [url](#), p. 1





Sindh is the country's second most populous province following Punjab⁷⁶⁰ and the third largest by area.⁷⁶¹ Pakistan's digital Population and Housing Census of 2023 found that the province had a population of around 55 690 000.⁷⁶² The CIA estimated that Karachi, the country's largest city, had a population of 17.236 million as of 2023.⁷⁶³

(b) Conflict background and armed actors

Karachi has a history of sectarian conflict, experiencing intense violence involving Sunnis and Shias in the 1980s and 1990s.⁷⁶⁴ The city has been one of the main areas of operation of the anti-Shia group Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP, also known as Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ)) and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ).⁷⁶⁵ Intra-Sunni tensions between Deobandis and Barelvis intensified in the 1990s when Sunni Tehreek, a Karachi-based Barelvi group, was formed to counter the Deobandi Lashkar-e-Jhangvi militants. In 2006, Sunni Tehreek's top leadership was killed in a suicide attack in Karachi. More recently, in 2020, Karachi experienced a new wave of anti-Shia mobilisation driven by Sunni groups, both Barelvi and Deobandi, during Muharram (the Shiite month of mourning), with militant protesters demanding from the state to designate Shias as heretics.⁷⁶⁶ Tensions came to a head again in early September 2023 when members of ASWJ attempted to block the passage of a Shia mourning procession in Khipro town (Sanghar district), leaving at least 11 people injured.⁷⁶⁷ While security operations by the Sindh CTD have targeted LeJ, it was alleged that the Pakistani military, as of April 2022, continued to use the LeJ as a proxy force to counter the influence of Baloch separatist groups.⁷⁶⁸

Sindh also has a long history of bandits (*dacoits*) operating in rural areas of the province, especially along a heavily forested stretch of the Indus River known as the Katcha area in the remotely situated districts of Jacobabad, Shikarpur, and Kashmore.⁷⁶⁹ In summer and early autumn 2023, bandits kidnapped a Hindu leader and two other persons,⁷⁷⁰ temporarily⁷⁷¹ took hostage around 30 members of the Hindu community,⁷⁷² and attacked homes and a place of worship belonging to Hindus.⁷⁷³ The USDOS quoted Hindu community leaders as saying that

⁷⁶⁰ Pakistan, PBS, Announcement of Results of 7th Population and Housing Census-2023 'The Digital Census' [Table], 5 August 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁷⁶¹ Pakistan, Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan – Berlin, About Pakistan: Basic Facts, n.d., [url](#)

⁷⁶² Pakistan, PBS, Announcement of Results of 7th Population and Housing Census-2023 'The Digital Census' [Table], 5 August 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁷⁶³ US, CIA, World Factbook – Pakistan, last updated 23 October 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁶⁴ International Crisis Group, A New Era of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan, 5 September 2022, [url](#), p. 15

⁷⁶⁵ US, CRS, Terrorist and Other Militant Groups in Pakistan, last updated 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁷⁶⁶ International Crisis Group, A New Era of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan, 5 September 2022, [url](#), pp. 8, 15

⁷⁶⁷ SATP, Pakistan: Targeting Shias – Analysis, Eurasia Review, 19 September 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁶⁸ International Crisis Group, A New Era of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan, 5 September 2022, [url](#), p. 4

⁷⁶⁹ Rehman, Z., Pakistan bans 3 Sindhi militant groups for involvement in terrorism, Pakistan Forward, 13 May 2020, [url](#)

⁷⁷⁰ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan, 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 42

⁷⁷¹ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 50

⁷⁷² HRCP, [X, former Twitter], posted on: 16 July 2023, [url](#); CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan, 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 42

⁷⁷³ Dawn, Dacoits attack place of worship belonging to members of Hindu community in Kashmore, 16 July 2023, [url](#)





police were at times complicit in abductions or were facing pressure from landholders who influenced the authorities to turn a blind eye on these activities.⁷⁷⁴

Karachi also witnessed a presence of Baloch armed groups, including the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), the Baloch Liberation Front (BLF), and the Baloch Republican Guards (BRG),⁷⁷⁵ while the province also saw activities of Sindhi separatist militant groups like the Sindhudesh Liberation Army (SLA),⁷⁷⁶ the Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army (SRA),⁷⁷⁷ and the Sindhudesh People's Army (SPA).⁷⁷⁸ Sindhi militants have been behind a range of incidents in the province such as bombings,⁷⁷⁹ targeted killings and attacks on infrastructure.⁷⁸⁰ Their attacks have targeted Rangers in Karachi, Ghotki⁷⁸¹ and Larkana,⁷⁸² and, in August 2020, a pro-Kashmir march in Karachi organised by the religious party Jamaat-e-Islami (JI).⁷⁸³ In May 2020, Pakistan's Mol banned the SLA and SRA, as well as the Jeay Sindh Qaumi Mahaz-Arisar (JSQM-A),⁷⁸⁴ a Sindhi political organisation under whose banner the SLA and SRA operated, for their involvement in 'terrorist' attacks.⁷⁸⁵

The BLA⁷⁸⁶ and the Sindhudesh People's Army (SPA)⁷⁸⁷ claimed several attacks against Chinese targets in Karachi in recent years,⁷⁸⁸ including an April 2022 suicide attack targeting China's Confucius Center in Karachi that killed three Chinese citizens.⁷⁸⁹

In 2020, a senior intelligence officer stated that the frequency of attacks by Sindhi groups had increased noticeably.⁷⁹⁰ Some security experts consulted by the Dawn newspaper in 2022 believed that the Sindhi militant groups had formed a nexus with BRAS, a conglomerate of Baloch rebel groups that was providing training to Sindhi militants in return for their logistical

⁷⁷⁴ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 50

⁷⁷⁵ PICSS, Pakistan's Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 34

⁷⁷⁶ Rehman, Z., Authorities intensify crackdown on Sindhi militant outfits after recent attacks, Pakistan Forward, 23 June 2020, [url](#)

⁷⁷⁷ Arab News, Pakistani counterterrorism force foils Independence Day militant plot in Sindh, arrests two, 10 August 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁷⁸ Dawn, Militancy in Sindh, 16 October 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁷⁹ Arab News, Pakistani counterterrorism force foils Independence Day militant plot in Sindh, arrests two, 10 August 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁰ Arab News, Pakistani counterterrorism force foils Independence Day militant plot in Sindh, arrests two, 10 August 2024, [url](#); Rehman, Z., Authorities intensify crackdown on Sindhi militant outfits after recent attacks, Pakistan Forward, 23 June 2020, [url](#)

⁷⁸¹ Rehman, Z., Authorities intensify crackdown on Sindhi militant outfits after recent attacks, Pakistan Forward, 23 June 2020, [url](#)

⁷⁸² Rehman, Z., Authorities intensify crackdown on Sindhi militant outfits after recent attacks, Pakistan Forward, 23 June 2020, [url](#); Dawn, Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army claims twin blasts targeting Rangers in Larkana, 31 July 2016, [url](#)

⁷⁸³ Al Jazeera, Dozens wounded in grenade attack at pro-Kashmir Karachi rally, 5 August 2020, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁴ Rehman, Z., Pakistan bans 3 Sindhi militant groups for involvement in terrorism, Pakistan Forward, 13 May 2020, [url](#); Dawn, JSQM-A, two separatist outfits in Sindh banned, 12 May 2020, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁵ Rehman, Z., Pakistan bans 3 Sindhi militant groups for involvement in terrorism, Pakistan Forward, 13 May 2020, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁶ Valle, R. and Webber, L., Rising Anti-China Sentiment in Balochistan Threatens Increased Attacks on Chinese Interests in Pakistan, The Jamestown Foundation, 12 January 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁷ Dawn, Militancy in Sindh, 16 October 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁸ Valle, R. and Webber, L., Rising Anti-China Sentiment in Balochistan Threatens Increased Attacks on Chinese Interests in Pakistan, The Jamestown Foundation, 12 January 2024, [url](#); Dawn, Militancy in Sindh, 16 October 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁹ Valle, R. and Webber, L., Rising Anti-China Sentiment in Balochistan Threatens Increased Attacks on Chinese Interests in Pakistan, The Jamestown Foundation, 12 January 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁰ Arab News, Sindhi, Baloch 'separatists' forming ties in Sindh, Pakistani officials say, 13 July 2020, [url](#)





support for Baloch operations in Karachi and elsewhere in Sindh. Other experts, however, were quoted as saying that the province's social and political landscape did not provide much fertile ground for the growth of insurgent or separatist movements.⁷⁹¹ CTDs⁷⁹² and law enforcement agencies⁷⁹³ have conducted a number of security operations targeting the Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army (SRA)⁷⁹⁴ and bandits (*dacoits*).⁷⁹⁵ These resulted in arrests of militants⁷⁹⁶ and bandits,⁷⁹⁷ but also caused civilian deaths in at least one instance.⁷⁹⁸ As of 2020, it was said that law enforcement agencies had destroyed the networks of religious insurgent groups, notably ISKP, in rural Sindh.⁷⁹⁹

Meanwhile, the city of Karachi has been one of the TTP's main areas of operation.⁸⁰⁰ According to confidential sources consulted by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the TTP and affiliated groups have expanded their reach in Sindh in recent years.⁸⁰¹ In February 2023, the TTP notably claimed a suicide attack on a police headquarters in central Karachi that left three members of the security forces and a civilian dead.⁸⁰² However, as of early 2024, while the TTP's organisational structure comprised a total of 12 *wilayahs* ('provinces') in various parts of the country, the group did not have any *wilayahs* in Sindh province.⁸⁰³

(c) Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

Security trends

Sindh province, described as being 'relatively peaceful' by the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) in 2023,⁸⁰⁴ nonetheless experienced an increase in attacks compared to 2022.⁸⁰⁵ Sources noted that the provincial capital of Karachi witnessed the vast majority of

⁷⁹¹ Dawn, Militancy in Sindh, 16 October 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁹² Dawn, CTD claims terror attack on LEAs foiled as two SRA militants held in Kotri, 29 August 2023, [url](#); Dawn, CTD arrests 'Sindh Revolutionary Army terrorist' from Jamshoro, 15 February 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁹³ HRCP, Investigation into extra-judicial killings in Mari Jalbani village near Sakrand, Sindh, October 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁷⁹⁴ HRCP, Investigation into extra-judicial killings in Mari Jalbani village near Sakrand, Sindh, October 2023, [url](#), p. 1; Dawn, CTD claims terror attack on LEAs foiled as two SRA militants held in Kotri, 29 August 2023, [url](#); Dawn, CTD arrests 'Sindh Revolutionary Army terrorist' from Jamshoro, 15 February 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁵ Rehman, Z., Pakistan bans 3 Sindhi militant groups for involvement in terrorism, Pakistan Forward, 13 May 2020, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁶ Arab News, Pakistani counterterrorism force foils Independence Day militant plot in Sindh, arrests two, 10 August 2024, [url](#); Dawn, CTD claims terror attack on LEAs foiled as two SRA militants held in Kotri, 29 August 2023, [url](#); Dawn, CTD arrests 'Sindh Revolutionary Army terrorist' from Jamshoro, 15 February 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁷ Rehman, Z., Pakistan bans 3 Sindhi militant groups for involvement in terrorism, Pakistan Forward, 13 May 2020, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁸ HRCP, Investigation into extra-judicial killings in Mari Jalbani village near Sakrand, Sindh, October 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁷⁹⁹ Rehman, Z., Pakistan bans 3 Sindhi militant groups for involvement in terrorism, Pakistan Forward, 13 May 2020, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁰ DW, Pakistani Taliban move into new territories, 3 May 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁰¹ Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen Ambtsbericht Pakistan [Country report Pakistan], 5 July 2024, [url](#), p. 18

⁸⁰² AP, Taliban claim attack on police in Pakistan's Karachi, 7 dead, 18 February 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁰³ MEMRI, Looking Ahead In 2024 – The Taliban Factor In The Afghanistan-Pakistan Region, 1 March 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁴ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan, 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 4

⁸⁰⁵ PICSS, Pakistan's Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 34; PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 22





the attacks⁸⁰⁶ and casualties reported in the province in 2023.⁸⁰⁷ According to PIPS, seven of the 15 ‘terrorist’ attacks it recorded in Sindh during 2023 had been perpetrated by ethnic insurgent groups such as the Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army (SRA) and Baloch armed groups, while seven other attacks were of a sectarian nature.⁸⁰⁸

Sindh ranked second among the country’s provinces in terms of frequency of sectarian attacks that caused fatalities (eight incidents with five people killed), as the CRSS noted with regard to the year 2023.⁸⁰⁹ Sectarian-related incidents reported during the reference period included the kidnapping of several Hindus in November 2023⁸¹⁰ and the hostage-taking of two policemen during mob violence targeting an Ahmadiyya place of worship in February 2024.⁸¹¹ (For information on the treatment of Hindus and members of the Ahmadiyya community, see also sections [6.2.1 Hindus and Sikhs](#) and [6.2.4 Ahmadiyya](#).) Moreover, there were at least two instances of members of Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ) being killed by unidentified assailants.⁸¹²

Attacks claimed by militant groups resulted in the killing of two Rangers in Dadu city in January 2024 (claimed by SRA)⁸¹³ and of a high-ranking counter-terrorism official in July 2024 (claimed by TTP).⁸¹⁴ An attack by unidentified suspected militants in April 2024 targeting a vehicle carrying Japanese nationals in Karachi left one bystander dead and two others injured,⁸¹⁵ while in early October 2024, a suspected suicide bombing claimed by the BLA targeting a convoy of Chinese nationals near Karachi airport left two Chinese dead⁸¹⁶ and at least eight other people wounded.⁸¹⁷

An election-related attack claimed by TTP in Karachi district in January 2024 left three people injured,⁸¹⁸ while the SRA claimed attacks with no reported casualties targeting election-linked sites in Karachi⁸¹⁹ and Jamshoro in early February 2024.⁸²⁰ Moreover, PIPS documented five incidents of what it termed ‘political violence’ in the province between January and March 2024 (four in Karachi district and one in Larkana district) resulting in eight deaths and 11

⁸⁰⁶ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan, 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 38; PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 34; PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 18

⁸⁰⁷ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan, 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 38; PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 34

⁸⁰⁸ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 18

⁸⁰⁹ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan [Table], 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 40

⁸¹⁰ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 50

⁸¹¹ SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – February 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁸¹² SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – May 2024, n.d., [url](#); SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – January 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁸¹³ Balochistan Post (The), BLF, SRA Claim Attacks on Pakistani Forces In Balochistan, Sindh, 3 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸¹⁴ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Pakistan: October 2023-October 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁸¹⁵ AP, 5 Japanese workers in Pakistan escape suicide blast targeting their van. A Pakistani bystander dies, 19 April 2024, [url](#)

⁸¹⁶ BBC News, Blast kills two Chinese near Pakistan’s Karachi airport, 7 October 2024, [url](#); AP, A Pakistani separatist group claims bombing that killed 2 Chinese near Karachi airport, 7 October 2024, [url](#)

⁸¹⁷ BBC News, Blast kills two Chinese near Pakistan’s Karachi airport, 7 October 2024, [url](#)

⁸¹⁸ PIPS, Pakistan’s Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options [Table], 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 95

⁸¹⁹ SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – February 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁸²⁰ Balochistan Post (The), Jamshoro: SRA Attacks PML-JUD Office, Rejects Elections in Sindh, 7 February 2024, [url](#)



injuries.⁸²¹ In addition, a January 2024 attack by unidentified assailants killed a local politician from the Pakistan People Party (PPP) in Jamshoro district.⁸²²

Furthermore, unidentified assailants carried out multiple deadly attacks in the province, targeting at least one intelligence official,⁸²³ several police officers,⁸²⁴ and a number of civilians,⁸²⁵ including a muezzin,⁸²⁶ a trader, a religious party worker,⁸²⁷ and journalists.⁸²⁸

Meanwhile, security operations conducted by security forces targeted suspected militants of various groups, including TTP,⁸²⁹ BLA,⁸³⁰ SLA,⁸³¹ SRA,⁸³² Al-Qaeda⁸³³ and LeJ,⁸³⁴ the allegedly Iran-backed Zainebiyoun Brigade,⁸³⁵ as well as hitmen employed by the Muttahida Qaumi Movement – London (MQM-L).⁸³⁶ These operations resulted in a number of arrests⁸³⁷ and deaths of suspects.⁸³⁸ The Dawn newspaper referred to police data indicating that the year 2023 had seen a total of 26 914 ‘suspects’, including militants, hitmen, bandits and abductors, being arrested and 289 being killed in operations in various parts of the province.⁸³⁹ In July 2024, the CTD of Hyderabad claimed to have foiled a likely ‘terrorist’ attack planned to be carried out during Independence Day festivities in August.⁸⁴⁰

⁸²¹ PIPS, Pakistan’s Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options [Table], 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 97

⁸²² SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – January 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁸²³ SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2023 – November 2023, n.d., [url](#)

⁸²⁴ SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – July 2024, n.d., [url](#); SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – June 2024, n.d., [url](#); SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁸²⁵ SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – February 2024, n.d., [url](#); SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2023 – November 2023, n.d., [url](#); SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2023 – October 2023, n.d., [url](#)

⁸²⁶ SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2023 – November 2023, n.d., [url](#)

⁸²⁷ SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2023 – December 2023, n.d., [url](#)

⁸²⁸ SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – August 2024, n.d., [url](#); SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – May 2024, n.d., [url](#); RSF, Pakistani reporter gunned down outside his home in village near Afghan border, 24 May 2024, [url](#)

⁸²⁹ Arab News, Pakistan’s counterterrorism police announce killing of suspected militant involved in major Karachi attacks, 24 July 2024, [url](#); International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Pakistan: October 2023-October 2024, n.d., [url](#); SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – January 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁸³⁰ SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – April 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁸³¹ Dawn, Two ‘SRA militants’ arrested in Larkana CTD raid, 11 August 2024, [url](#)

⁸³² SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – August 2024, n.d., [url](#); SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – February 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁸³³ SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2023 – November 2023, n.d., [url](#)

⁸³⁴ SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2023 – November 2023, n.d., [url](#); SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2023 – October 2023, n.d., [url](#)

⁸³⁵ RFE/RL, Amid Rising Tensions With Iran, Pakistani Police Say Member Of Iranian-Backed Militant Group Arrested In Karachi, 21 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸³⁶ SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2023 – October 2023, n.d., [url](#)

⁸³⁷ Dawn, Two ‘SRA militants’ arrested in Larkana CTD raid, 11 August 2024, [url](#); RFE/RL, Amid Rising Tensions With Iran, Pakistani Police Say Member Of Iranian-Backed Militant Group Arrested In Karachi, 21 January 2024, [url](#); SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2023 – November 2023, n.d., [url](#); SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2023 – October 2023, n.d., [url](#); International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Pakistan: October 2023-October 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁸³⁸ SATP, Sindh (Sindh): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – October 2024, n.d., [url](#); Arab News, Pakistan’s counterterrorism police announce killing of suspected militant involved in major Karachi attacks, 24 July 2024, [url](#)

⁸³⁹ Dawn, 289 suspects killed in Sindh ‘encounters’ in 2023, 8 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁴⁰ Express Tribune (The), CTD police foil terror bid planned for August 14, 31 July 2024, [url](#)



Security incidents

According to CRSS, Sindh province witnessed 68 violent incidents over the year 2023 (comprising both militant attacks and violence linked to counter-terrorism operations) resulting in 73 fatalities and 87 injuries.⁸⁴¹ 63 of these incidents were recorded in Karachi district, accounting for 58 of the fatalities and 68 of the injuries.⁸⁴² With specific regard to ‘terrorist attacks’ (which may include militant, nationalist, insurgent and sectarian attacks),⁸⁴³ PIPS reported 15 incidents in 2023 (including 14 in Karachi) causing 16 fatalities and 26 injuries.⁸⁴⁴ Meanwhile, PICSS documented 35 militant attacks during 2023, resulting in 39 deaths and 35 injuries.⁸⁴⁵

During the first nine months of 2024, the CRSS recorded 46 incidents (both militant attacks and violence during counter-terrorism operations) resulting in 46 fatalities and 35 injuries.⁸⁴⁶

Civilian fatalities

PICSS reported that militant attacks recorded in Sindh in 2023 resulted in 22 civilian fatalities.⁸⁴⁷

Displacement and return

No information could be found on conflict-related IDP or return movements from or into Sindh province during the reference period.

4.2.5. Islamabad Capital Territory

(a) General description of the governorate

The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) is located in the northern part of Pakistan and shares internal borders with Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) provinces.⁸⁴⁸ It includes the capital city, Islamabad. The ICT does not have international borders.⁸⁴⁹ According to Pakistan’s 7th Population and Housing Census in 2023, the ICT had a population of approximately 2.36 million.⁸⁵⁰

Islamabad was developed as a planned city beginning in 1960 to succeed Karachi as the capital of Pakistan. It is located near the Margalla Hills, to the northeast of the historic garrison town of Rawalpindi. Islamabad was laid out on a grid, featuring wide roads, divided avenues,

⁸⁴¹ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan [Table], 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 6

⁸⁴² CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan [Table], 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 38

⁸⁴³ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 9

⁸⁴⁴ PIPS, Pakistan’s Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options [Table], 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 28

⁸⁴⁵ PICSS, 2023 ends with 70% Increase in Militant Attacks, 81 % Rise in Deaths: PICSS Report, 1 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁴⁶ CRSS, 2024 violence-linked fatalities overtake full-year 2023 in just nine months [Table], 30 September 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁴⁷ PICSS, 2023 ends with 70% Increase in Militant Attacks, 81 % Rise in Deaths: PICSS Report, 1 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁴⁸ UK, PCGN, Pakistan, 2023, [url](#), p. 4; France, OFPRA, DIDR, Carte des provinces du Pakistan, June 2021, [url](#), p. 1; Pakistan, Survey of Pakistan, Political Map Pakistan, 2020, [url](#)

⁸⁴⁹ France, OFPRA, DIDR, Carte des provinces du Pakistan, June 2021, [url](#), p. 1

⁸⁵⁰ Pakistan, PBS, Announcement of Results of 7th Population and Housing Census-2023 ‘The Digital Census’, 5 August 2023, [url](#)



open areas and parks, as well as designated commercial spaces.⁸⁵¹ It is organised into five zones.⁸⁵² Zone I comprises well-developed areas, Zone II includes both underdeveloped and undeveloped regions, Zone III encompasses the Margalla Hills, while Zones IV and V are primarily rural. The Soan and Kurang rivers are the two main streams that provide the water supply for both Islamabad and Rawalpindi.⁸⁵³

The ICT Administration, commonly referred to as the Islamabad Administration, serves as both the civil authority and the primary law enforcement body for the Federal Capital. It operates under Presidential Order No. 18 of 1980, which grants the Chief Commissioner of Islamabad the authority of the Provincial Government. The ICT Administration oversees 6 directorates and 25 departments.⁸⁵⁴

According to Pakistan's 7th Population and Housing Census in 2023, the ICT's population was predominantly Muslim, with a minority of Christians.⁸⁵⁵ Street cleaners in Islamabad reportedly were frequently Christians.⁸⁵⁶ Moreover, there were smaller communities of Ahmadis and Hindus.⁸⁵⁷ The most spoken language was Punjabi, followed by Pashto and Urdu. Other languages included Hindko, Kashmiri, Saraiki and Sindhi.⁸⁵⁸

(b) Conflict background and armed actors

Provincial authorities had implemented security measures, particularly for Chinese nationals, by establishing foreign security cells and special protection units (SPUs), in Islamabad amongst other places, to ensure their safety.⁸⁵⁹

In a May 2024 report, the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) noted that the TTP was responsible for four attacks, with eight fatalities and eleven injuries in Islamabad district between 1 January 2021 and 15 April 2024.⁸⁶⁰

According to the OSAC security report update from September 2024, Islamabad was the most common location for large-scale demonstrations in Pakistan. In recent years, large crowds of protesters from political opposition groups had gathered in Islamabad to demonstrate against

⁸⁵¹ US, State Magazine, Islamabad, Strengthening 75 years of U.S-Pakistan relations, November 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁵² The following website provides links to maps showing zones and sectors of Islamabad: ProProperty, Layout Maps of Islamabad's Major Sectors, 1 August 2022, [url](#); Sohail, M. T. et al., Impacts of urbanization, LULC, LST, and NDVI changes on the static water table with possible solutions and water policy discussions: A case from Islamabad, Pakistan, 9 February 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁵³ Sohail, M. T. et al., Impacts of urbanization, LULC, LST, and NDVI changes on the static water table with possible solutions and water policy discussions: A case from Islamabad, Pakistan, 9 February 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁵⁴ Pakistan, Islamabad Capital Territory Administration, About ICTA, n.d., [url](#)

⁸⁵⁵ Pakistan, PBS, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results, Islamabad – Table 9: Population by sex, religion and rural/urban, Census-2023, n.d., [url](#)

⁸⁵⁶ DW, Islamabad street cleaners are often Christian, 22 August 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁵⁷ Pakistan, PBS, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results, Islamabad – Table 9: Population by sex, religion and rural/urban, Census-2023, n.d., [url](#); Al Jazeera, Pakistan's top Islamic body approves construction of Hindu temple, 29 October 2020, [url](#); Independent (The), Islamabad to get first Hindu temple after public outcry, 9 November 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL, Pakistan Bows To Islamic Hard-Liners To Halt Hindu Temple Construction, 16 July 2020, [url](#)

⁸⁵⁸ Pakistan, PBS, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results, Islamabad – Table 11: Population By Mother Tongue, Sex And Rural/Urban, Census-2023, n.d., [url](#)

⁸⁵⁹ PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 109

⁸⁶⁰ PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options [Table], 8 May 2024, [url](#), pp. 63-64



the government. Thousands of people had marched on major roads, intersections, and landmarks in the city. In response to these sizeable demonstrations, Islamabad police swiftly deployed additional security forces and secure key areas, roads, and important government buildings.⁸⁶¹ Reuters for example noted on 4 October 2024 that authorities ‘sealed off’ Islamabad and shut down mobile phone services to prevent an anti-government rally by supporters of imprisoned former Prime Minister Imran Khan.⁸⁶²

(c) Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

Security trends

PICSS noted that the ‘overall security situation’ in the ICT ‘remained stable’ in 2023.⁸⁶³ According to the CRSS, the ICT was not affected by sectarian violence that caused fatalities in 2023.⁸⁶⁴

Regarding the year 2023, PICSS reported that security forces carried out two operations in the ICT. In one of them, two suspects allegedly linked to the TTP were arrested.⁸⁶⁵

In 2024, Islamabad witnessed several violent incidents, including the fatal shooting of Allama Masood-u Rehman Usmani, linked to unidentified attackers,⁸⁶⁶ and the emergence of a militant group like Tehrik-e Namoos Pakistan (TNP).⁸⁶⁷

Security incidents

According to the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), the province witnessed 5 violent incidents in 2023 (comprising both militant attacks and violence linked to counter-terrorism operations) resulting in 94 injuries.⁸⁶⁸ With specific regard to ‘terrorist attacks’ (which may include militant, nationalist, insurgent and sectarian attacks),⁸⁶⁹ the Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS) reported no incidents in 2023.⁸⁷⁰ Meanwhile, PICSS documented one militant attack during 2023.⁸⁷¹

⁸⁶¹ US, OSAC, Pakistan Country Security Report, last updated 4 September 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁶² Reuters, Pakistan seals off capital, blocks cellphones ahead of protest by Imran Khan's party, 4 October 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁶³ PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 35

⁸⁶⁴ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan, 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 39

⁸⁶⁵ PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 36

⁸⁶⁶ Pakistan Today, Violence erupts outside Islamabad court, two killed in shooting, 26 September 2024, [url](#); Khorasan Diary (The), [X, former Twitter], posted on: 5 January 2024, [url](#); Times of India (The), Anti-India cleric Allama Masood-ur-Rehman Usmani assassinated in Islamabad, 7 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁶⁷ SATP, Islamabad (NA): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – April 2024, n.d., [url](#); Al Jazeera, More than a dozen Pakistani judges receive letters with ‘toxic’ powder, 4 April 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁶⁸ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan [Table], 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 6

⁸⁶⁹ PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 9

⁸⁷⁰ PIPS, Pakistan’s Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options [Table], 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 28

⁸⁷¹ PICSS, 2023 ends with 70% Increase in Militant Attacks, 81 % Rise in Deaths: PICSS Report, 1 January 2024, [url](#)



During the first nine months of 2024, the CRSS recorded two incidents (both militant attacks and violence during counter-terrorism operations), resulting in one fatality and one injury.⁸⁷²

Civilian fatalities

No further information on civilian fatalities could be found.

Displacement and return

No information could be found on conflict-related IDP or return movements from or into Islamabad Capital Territory during the reference period.

4.2.6. Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan

(a) General description of the governorate

The Pakistan-administered Kashmir regions of Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) are located in northeastern Pakistan. Gilgit-Baltistan shares internal borders with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in the west and Azad Jammu and Kashmir in the south. Azad Jammu and Kashmir further shares internal borders with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab provinces in the west.⁸⁷³ The Kashmir region is disputed between India, Pakistan and China but claimed in its entirety by Pakistan and India.⁸⁷⁴ Each of the two territories of Pakistan-administered Kashmir has an elected assembly and government with limited autonomy but lacks parliamentary representation and other rights granted to Pakistani provinces. Pakistani federal institutions hold significant control over security, the courts, and key policy decisions.⁸⁷⁵ According to a May 2024 article by the Washington, D.C.-based online magazine *The Diplomat*, AJK was tightly controlled by the Pakistani government. Its political structure closely mirrored that of the Pakistani government, being dominated by Pakistani political parties and controlled by the military-bureaucratic establishment. As a result, local AJK leaders and elites had very limited autonomy.⁸⁷⁶

Pakistan's digital Population and Housing Census of 2023 does not contain data on the Pakistan-administered Kashmir regions. The Azad Government of the State of Jammu and Kashmir lists the population of AJK as 4.361 million.⁸⁷⁷ According to the Tourism, Sports Culture Archaeology & Museums Department of the government of Gilgit-Baltistan, the territory's population was around 2.3 million, as of April 2024.⁸⁷⁸

⁸⁷² CRSS, 2024 violence-linked fatalities overtake full-year 2023 in just nine months [Table], 30 September 2024, [url](#); CRSS, Terrorism Continues to Batter Pakistan [Table], 1 July 2024, [url](#); CRSS, Balochistan and KP Dominate Violence Landscape in Pakistan's Q1 2024: CRSS Security Report, [Table], 31 March 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁷³ UK, PCGN, Pakistan, 2023, [url](#), p. 4; France, OFPRA, DIDR, Carte des provinces du Pakistan, June 2021, [url](#), p. 1; Pakistan, Survey of Pakistan, Political Map Pakistan, 2020, [url](#)

⁸⁷⁴ SWP, Redrawing the Maps in Kashmir. New Geopolitical Realities in the Conflict between China, India, and Pakistan, November 2020, [url](#), p. 1

⁸⁷⁵ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 – Pakistani Kashmir, 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁷⁶ *Diplomat* (The), Making Sense of Recent Mass Protests in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir, 20 May 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁷⁷ Pakistan, Azad Government of the State of Jammu & Kashmir, Aj&K at a Glance, n.d., [url](#)

⁸⁷⁸ Pakistan, Tourism, Sports Culture Archaeology & Museums Department, Government of Gilgit-Baltistan, Importance of Gilgit-Baltistan, 22 April 2024, [url](#)



According to a study paper by the European Foundation of South Asian Studies (EFSAS), an Amsterdam-based think tank, the majority of AJK's population was Muslim, however, they shared few cultural similarities with the Muslims of the Kashmir Valley. Only around 5 % of the population speak Kashmiri, with Pahari, Gojri, and Punjabi being more commonly spoken alongside Urdu, the official language. The region's communities include Gurhar, Jat, Awan, Abasi, Sudhan, and other ethnic Kashmiris from the Neelam and Leepa Valleys. Culturally, AJK aligns more closely with Northern Punjab, and social ties are strongly influenced by a clan-based tribal system.⁸⁷⁹ The Kashmir Welfare Foundation, a charity based in the UK, in an overview on economic development in AJK, noted that the region's economy has traditionally been driven by natural resource exploitation and agriculture, with timber from its forests, traditional handicrafts, and livestock farming playing key roles. The region also has a growing tourism industry. Its hydropower sector is benefitting from the AJK's major rivers. However, economic progress had been hindered by political instability, poor infrastructure, and limited access to markets and the region's rugged terrain complicates transportation and communication.⁸⁸⁰

Gilgit-Baltistan differed notably from the rest of Pakistan, 'being ethnically diverse and linguistically distinct from Pakistan's predominantly Punjabi and Pashtun population'. It is also the only predominantly Shia region in a largely Sunni country, which has led to ethno-nationalist movements pushing for the region's independence from Pakistan.⁸⁸¹ According to the Iran-based Institute for East Strategic Studies (IESS), the region's four main religious groups were Shia (41 %), Sunni (30 %), Ismailia (24 %), and Noorbakshia (6 %). Sunnis predominantly resided in the southern area of Diamir. The Nagar District in the north and Baltistan in the east were mainly Shia, with a small Noorbakshia minority. Skardu also had a Shia majority population. Ismailia communities were concentrated in the northern area of Hunza and the western region of Ghizer.⁸⁸² In addition to its hydroelectric potential, southern Gilgit-Baltistan held significant reserves of valuable minerals like nickel, copper, and coal, while the northern and northeastern regions were rich in resources such as iron, gold, marble, and various gemstones.⁸⁸³

(b) Conflict background and armed actors

The greater Kashmir region has been contested by both Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan since the end of British colonial rule in 1947. The region was divided by the Line of Control (LOC), where hundreds of thousands of troops were stationed. Ongoing disputes over Kashmir have sparked three wars and intermittent violence. Tensions were

⁸⁷⁹ EFSAS, Ethnic, Cultural and Religious Diversity in Jammu & Kashmir: Perceptions on unity and discord - Demise of Kashmiriyat, October 2020, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁰ Kashmir Welfare Foundation, Economic Development in Azad Kashmir: An Analysis of Current Economic Trends and Future Potential for Growth in the Region, 13 August 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁸¹ EFSAS, The Sectarianization of Society, Culture and Religion in Gilgit-Baltistan, November 2020, [url](#)

⁸⁸² IESS, Analysis of sectarian violence in Gilgit-Baltistan; a Pakistani Shiite region, 8 May 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁸³ EFSAS, The Sectarianization of Society, Culture and Religion in Gilgit-Baltistan, November 2020, [url](#)



further heightened by Kashmiri separatist groups⁸⁸⁴ resisting India's control, while China also claimed a small portion of the region.⁸⁸⁵

Violence along the India-Pakistan border persisted.⁸⁸⁶ In June 2023, the Pakistani army accused Indian forces of killing two civilians along the Line of Control (LOC).⁸⁸⁷ In August 2023, police in Pakistan-administered Kashmir reported that a civilian was shot and killed by Indian forces along the disputed border, despite a cease-fire agreement in 2021.⁸⁸⁸ India accused Pakistan of backing armed groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) to create unrest in Indian-administered Kashmir. Pakistan had consistently denied these claims, asserting that it only supported the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination against Indian rule. India referred to the armed rebels in Kashmir as 'terrorists'. In January 2024, the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi, said that the murder of Muhammad Riaz in Pakistan-administered Kashmir in September 2023 was reportedly orchestrated by Indian agents. Indian news outlets claimed that Riaz was a top commander of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and that Latif was allegedly associated with Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM).⁸⁸⁹

(c) Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

Security trends

PICSS noted that the 'overall security situation' in AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan 'remained stable' in 2023.⁸⁹⁰ In November 2023, Indian and Pakistani soldiers exchanged gunfire and mortar rounds across the disputed border, resulting in the death of an Indian border guard.⁸⁹¹ Also in November 2023, the Indian English-language daily newspaper Times of India reported that Lashkar-e-Taiba commander Khwaja Shahid, also known as Mia Mujahid, one of the masterminds behind a 2018 terrorist attack on an Indian Army camp, was reportedly found beheaded near the LOC in 'Pakistan-occupied Kashmir'. His body reportedly showed signs of severe torture.⁸⁹²

In January 2024, a bomb disposal squad defused a bomb planted near the police headquarters, in the Chinarbagh area of Gilgit District.⁸⁹³

According to the CRSS, one incident of sectarian violence caused one fatality in Gilgit-Baltistan in 2023, while AJK was not affected by sectarian violence that caused fatalities in the

⁸⁸⁴ A December 2023 report by the CRS provides an overview on India- and Kashmir-oriented militants: US, CRS, Terrorist and Other Militant Groups in Pakistan, last updated 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2; on its website, the SATP provides a list of 'terrorist', insurgent and extremist groups in Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan: SATP, Pakistan - Terrorist, insurgent and extremist groups, n.d., [url](#)

⁸⁸⁵ CFR, Kashmir: What to Know About the Disputed Region, 7 August 2019, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁶ CFR, Conflict Between India and Pakistan | Global Conflict Tracker, last updated 9 April 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁷ Reuters, Pakistan army says two civilians killed by Indian forces, 24 June 2023, [url](#); CFR, Conflict Between India and Pakistan | Global Conflict Tracker, last updated 9 April 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁸ Reuters, Pakistan says civilian killed by Indian gunfire on Kashmir boundary, 21 August 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁹ Al Jazeera, Is India behind targeted killings in Pakistan? What we know, 5 April 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁰ PICSS, Pakistan's Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 35

⁸⁹¹ AP, Indian and Pakistani soldiers trade fire in disputed Kashmir, killing 1 Indian soldier, 10 November 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁹² Times of India (The), LeT man behind Jammu and Kashmir army camp attack killed in PoK, 7 November 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁹³ SATP, Gilgit-Baltistan (Pakistan Occupied Kashmir): Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2024 – January 2024, n.d., [url](#)



same year.⁸⁹⁴ Sources reported mob attacks on the Ahmadiyya community in Kotli district of AJK in February⁸⁹⁵ and June 2024⁸⁹⁶ (for more information, please see section [6.2.4 Ahmadiyya](#)).

According to the International Crisis Group, an alliance of civil society organisations began a protest march in AJK over rising flour and electricity prices on 11 May 2024. Clashes with security forces continued for several days, resulting in the deaths of 5 people and wounding of over 100.⁸⁹⁷ The Diplomat noted that the violent clashes broke out between civilians led by the AJK Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) and paramilitary Rangers. Regarding casualties, The Diplomat reported the deaths of one police officer and three civilians, and nearly a hundred people injured.⁸⁹⁸

In December 2023, an attack on a passenger bus in northern Gilgit-Baltistan led to the deaths of at least 10 passengers, including two Pakistan army soldiers. Over two dozen people were left injured.⁸⁹⁹ PICSS reported that the bus attack caused 9 fatalities and 26 injuries. No group claimed responsibility, and the TTP denied involvement. Authorities reportedly arrested six suspects in connection with the bus attack.⁹⁰⁰ In July 2024, Pakistani security forces reportedly killed a militant commander responsible for the bus attack. Also, seven individuals were injured, including two civilians.⁹⁰¹

Security incidents

According to the CRSS, Gilgit-Baltistan witnessed 6 violent incidents (comprising both militant attacks and violence arising from counter-terrorism operations) during the year 2023, resulting in 17 fatalities and 25 injuries. In the same period, AJK witnessed one violent incident, resulting in one fatality.⁹⁰² For 2023, PICSS reported that two security force members were killed and one injured in Gilgit-Baltistan.⁹⁰³

Between January and September 2024, the CRSS recorded three incidents (both militant attacks and violence during counter-terrorism operations), resulting in one fatality and seven injuries, in Gilgit-Baltistan.⁹⁰⁴ However, in its report on the first quarter of 2024, the CRSS noted that one incident with six fatalities and no injuries was recorded,⁹⁰⁵ while its report on

⁸⁹⁴ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan [Table], 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 40

⁸⁹⁵ Atalayar, Attack on Ahmadiyya Muslim Mosque in Kotli Azad, Kashmir, 15 February 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁶ Al, Pakistan: Authorities must end escalating attacks on minority Ahmadiyya community, 21 June 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁷ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Pakistan: October 2023-October 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁸⁹⁸ Diplomat (The), Making Sense of Recent Mass Protests in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir, 20 May 2024, [url](#); for further background on the protests see: HRCP, Civil unrest and violence in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, May 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁹ Al Jazeera, ‘An hour from hell’: Surviving six bullets in a Pakistan bus attack, 8 December 2023, [url](#); PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2023, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 18

⁹⁰⁰ PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, 5 January 2024, [url](#), pp. 35-36

⁹⁰¹ Dawn, Terrorist involved in Chilas bus attack killed in GB, 5 July 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁰² CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan [Table], 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 6

⁹⁰³ PICSS, Pakistan’s Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023 [Table], 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 4

⁹⁰⁴ CRSS, 2024 violence-linked fatalities overtake full-year 2023 in just nine months [Table], 30 September 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁰⁵ CRSS, Balochistan and KP Dominate Violence Landscape in Pakistan’s Q1 2024: CRSS Security Report, [Table], 31 March 2024, [url](#)





the second quarter recorded no incidents⁹⁰⁶ and its report on the third quarter recorded three incidents with one fatality and seven injuries.⁹⁰⁷

Between January and September 2024, the CRSS recorded one incident (both militant attacks and violence during counter-terrorism operations) resulting in eight injuries, in AJK.⁹⁰⁸ According to the CRSS, one incident of sectarian violence caused one fatality in Gilgit-Baltistan in 2023, while AJK was not affected by sectarian violence in the same year.⁹⁰⁹

Civilian fatalities

For 2023, PICSS recorded one militant attack in AJK resulting in one civilian death and one militant attack in Gilgit-Baltistan resulting in seven civilian deaths and 25 injured civilians.⁹¹⁰

Displacement and return

No information could be found on conflict-related IDP or return movements from or into Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan during the reference period.

⁹⁰⁶ CRSS, Terrorism Continues to Batter Pakistan [Table], 1 July 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁰⁷ CRSS, 2024 violence-linked fatalities overtake full-year 2023 in just nine months [Table], 30 September 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁰⁸ CRSS, 2024 violence-linked fatalities overtake full-year 2023 in just nine months [Table], 30 September 2024, [url](#); CRSS, Terrorism Continues to Batter Pakistan [Table], 1 July 2024, [url](#); CRSS, Balochistan and KP Dominate Violence Landscape in Pakistan's Q1 2024: CRSS Security Report, [Table], 31 March 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁰⁹ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 Pakistan [Table], 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 40

⁹¹⁰ PICSS, Pakistan's Comprehensive National Security Profile 2023, [Table], 5 January 2024, [url](#), p. 4





5. Structure and functioning of the judiciary

5.1. Formal and informal systems

The Constitution of Pakistan addresses the judiciary in Part VII, including provisions regarding the composition, jurisdiction, powers, and functions of courts.⁹¹¹ The judiciary consists of the Supreme Court, which is the highest court in the country, provincial high courts and, under their authority and oversight, district courts that handle civil cases and sessions courts that deal with criminal cases. Additionally, there is a magistracy responsible for cases brought by the police. The district magistrate, who also serves as the government's deputy commissioner and oversees the police, hears appeals from subordinate magistrates. Appeals from the district magistrate can be taken to the sessions judge.⁹¹² The Supreme Court serves as both the highest court of appeal and the constitutional court.⁹¹³

In the 1980s a court of Islamic law, the Federal Shariat Court (FSC), was established to determine whether laws passed by Parliament align with Islamic teachings.⁹¹⁴ All rulings of the FSC can be appealed to the Supreme Court, which retained its position as the highest court in the country.⁹¹⁵ Additionally, the Council of Islamic Ideology provides recommendations and advice to the federal and provincial legislatures on whether a given law is contrary to the Qur'an and Sunnah, but its function is purely advisory, and it holds no legislative authority.⁹¹⁶ Farhatullah Babar, senior council member at the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), noted that, in practice, the Council of Islamic Ideology tended to provide unsolicited advice by expressing its opinion publicly which could create momentum. It also began to submit its advice on laws to Parliament without formal request through the constitutional mechanism, but Parliament had not yet accepted such advice.⁹¹⁷

There are several other courts and tribunals that specialise in areas such as corruption cases, narcotics offenses, financial crimes, consumer rights, and industrial relations.⁹¹⁸ The law also enables the government to utilize special antiterrorism courts (ATCs) to prosecute individuals accused of terrorist activities and sectarian violence, a parallel system that has been criticised by human rights activists (for more information, please see section [5.4 Anti-Terrorism Acts](#)).⁹¹⁹

⁹¹¹ Pakistan, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, [url](#), Part VII

⁹¹² Encyclopedia Britannica, Pakistan, Constitutional framework, last updated 22 October 2024, [url](#)

⁹¹³ Commonwealth Governance, Judicial System of Pakistan, n. d., [url](#)

⁹¹⁴ Encyclopedia Britannica, Pakistan, Constitutional framework, last updated 22 October 2024, [url](#)

⁹¹⁵ Darr, A., No Law but God's Law: Islam and the Pakistani Legal System, LSE [Blog], 13 March 2023, [url](#); Pakistan, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, [url](#), Art. 203F

⁹¹⁶ Munir, M., The Role of Shari'a in the Legal System of Pakistan, 16 January 2022, [url](#), p. 20; Pakistan, Council of Islamic Ideology, Introduction, n.d., [url](#)

⁹¹⁷ Farhatullah, B., online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

⁹¹⁸ Commonwealth Governance, Judicial System of Pakistan, n. d., [url](#)

⁹¹⁹ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 22



The Constitution formally separates the judiciary from the executive and provides for the independence of the judiciary,⁹²⁰ but sources noted that the judiciary was often influenced by external factors and power struggles.⁹²¹ The USDOS noted that media and the public typically viewed the high courts and the Supreme Court as more credible, but media reported on allegations that security agencies exerted pressure on judges of these courts. In lower courts, many judges and staff were described as corrupt, inefficient, and susceptible to pressure from affluent individuals and influential religious or political people.⁹²² According to Freedom House, the broader court system was 'marred by endemic problems including corruption, intimidation, insecurity, a large backlog of cases, and low conviction rates for serious crimes.'⁹²³ Likewise, the USDOS reported that access to fair, timely, and transparent justice was not guaranteed, particularly for marginalised individuals and those with limited resources.⁹²⁴ The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) noted that by the end of 2023, there were 2 260 386 cases pending in the courts, including 56 155 cases in the Supreme Court and 342 334 cases in the high courts.⁹²⁵

Alongside the formal justice system, another system of dispute resolution exists in the form of *jirgas*,⁹²⁶ or local council meetings, operating mainly in rural areas.⁹²⁷ Dating back to before British colonisation, *jirga* refers to a gathering of men convening to discuss and decide on a matter. This is known as a 'jirga' in Pashto, 'majlis' in Persian, 'panchayat' in Punjabi and Hindi, and 'faislo' in Sindhi.⁹²⁸ *Jirgas* aim to conduct hearings and develop solutions grounded in *Sharia* law and local customs.⁹²⁹ They are organised and led by men from the dominant local elite such as tribal or clan chiefs and elite men of the community who either inherit this role or are selected based on their social or economic standing.⁹³⁰ The USDOS reported that *jirgas* resolved disputes at times with the backing of local police officials and judges and imposed tribal penalties, which could include fines, imprisonment, and, in some cases, the death penalty.⁹³¹

In 2019, the Supreme Court of Pakistan declared *jirgas* unlawful under the Constitution of Pakistan and various international legal obligations.⁹³² According to Chief Justice Saqib Nisar, *jirgas* lacked precedents, predictability, and certainty in their decisions as well as using personal knowledge and hearsay to determine civil rights violations and criminal charges.⁹³³ The Supreme Court's judgement specifies that *jirgas* operating for the purposes of arbitration,

⁹²⁰ Pakistan, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, [url](#), Preamble, Art. 175 (3)

⁹²¹ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 18; Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 – Pakistan, 2024, [url](#)

⁹²² USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 18-19

⁹²³ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 – Pakistan, 2024, [url](#)

⁹²⁴ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 21

⁹²⁵ HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 10

⁹²⁶ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 – Pakistan, 2024, [url](#); USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 19

⁹²⁷ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 19

⁹²⁸ Pakistan, NCSW, Women, Violence and Jirga, - Consensus and Impunity in Pakistan, June 2017, [url](#), p. 13, p. 15

⁹²⁹ Fatima, S., Reviving the Jirga System as Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in Pakistan's Tribal Areas, May 2024, [url](#), p. 26

⁹³⁰ Pakistan, NCSW, Women, Violence and Jirga, - Consensus and Impunity in Pakistan, June 2017, [url](#), p. 13

⁹³¹ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 19-20

⁹³² Khurshid, M., Jirga System in Pakistan: A Transgression of Human Rights, RSIL, 11 April 2022, [url](#)

⁹³³ Fatima, S., Reviving the Jirga System as Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in Pakistan's Tribal Areas, May 2024, [url](#), p. 26



mediation, or negotiation are still allowed. However, when they overstep into the jurisdiction of regular civil or criminal courts, they act as parallel courts which is illegal.⁹³⁴

The USDOS noted that *jirgas* ‘meant to provide “speedier justice” than traditional courts’ and that in the former Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA), the use of informal justice systems was a widespread practice.⁹³⁵ For tribal communities, the *jirga* system could offer a cost-effective, less time-consuming and thus more accessible alternative to the formal justice system, but due to its fundamentally patriarchal nature and in the absence of codified written rules, there was potential for misuse of power and authority.⁹³⁶ The USDOS reported that the use of informal justice systems, which lacked institutionalised legal protections, often led to human rights abuses and in some instances significantly harmed women and girls.⁹³⁷ While the composition of *jirgas* varied by province, women were uniformly excluded from all of them.⁹³⁸ Women were not allowed to participate in *jirgas*, even when they were the victims, the main accused, or witnesses.⁹³⁹

5.2. Applicable laws (including *Sharia*)

Pakistan’s legal system is shaped by three main influences, Islamic law, English common law, and local customary practices, and it operates under both statutory laws and *Sharia*. Statutory laws are created by Parliament and provincial assemblies and regulate criminal, civil, administrative, and constitutional matters. Islamic laws, which operate in areas of personal status and family law, are derived from Quranic teachings and the Sunnah, and are put into action through legislation.⁹⁴⁰

The Constitution of Pakistan was designed to establish the rule of law, ensure its enforcement, and regulate the governance of the country’s institutional framework as well as recognising people’s fundamental rights.⁹⁴¹ It also proclaims Islam as the state religion, requiring all provisions of the law to be in conformity with the injunctions of Islam.⁹⁴² The Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) of 1860 serves as the primary criminal code in Pakistan and outlines the punishments for offenses specified within it.⁹⁴³ The main legislation on procedures for the administration of substantive criminal law in Pakistan is the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) of 1898.⁹⁴⁴ It provides the necessary tools for conducting criminal investigations, arresting

⁹³⁴ Khurshid, M., *Jirga System in Pakistan: A Transgression of Human Rights*, RSIL, 11 April 2022, [url](#)

⁹³⁵ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 20

⁹³⁶ Fatima, S., *Reviving the Jirga System as Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in Pakistan’s Tribal Areas*, May 2024, [url](#), p. 26

⁹³⁷ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 19-20

⁹³⁸ Pakistan, NCSW, *Women, Violence and Jirga, - Consensus and Impunity in Pakistan*, June 2017, [url](#), pp. 19-20

⁹³⁹ Fatima, S., *Reviving the Jirga System as Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in Pakistan’s Tribal Areas*, May 2024, [url](#), p. 26

⁹⁴⁰ Baig, K. et al., *An Analysis of the Legal System: A comparative Study in the Context of Pakistan and the UK*, 25 March 2024, [url](#), p. 379

⁹⁴¹ Pakistan, MOHR, *Constitution of Pakistan*, n.d., [url](#)

⁹⁴² Pakistan, *The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan*, 1973, [url](#), Art. 2, 227

⁹⁴³ Pakistan, *The Pakistan Penal Code*, 1860, [url](#), Art. 1-5

⁹⁴⁴ Pakistan, *The Code of Criminal Procedure*, 1898, [url](#)



suspects, collecting evidence, determining the guilt or innocence of the accused as well as determining procedure.⁹⁴⁵

Muhammad Munir, professor at the department of law at the International Islamic University in Islamabad, observed that, since the late 1960s, Pakistani courts have increasingly relied on and recognised the principles of Islamic law due to statutory obligation.⁹⁴⁶ Notably, the West Pakistan Muslim Personal Law Act (WPMPLA), 1962, refers to the application of Muslim personal law (*Shariat*) in all questions regarding issues such as marriage, divorce, dower, adoption and guardianship, among others.⁹⁴⁷ Munir argued that the WPMPLA has generated thousands of cases. When these cases have been decided by superior judiciary, they become binding precedents.⁹⁴⁸ Sources noted that the Islamisation process of the legal system, however, was most associated with the government of General Zia ul-Haq who introduced several Islamic laws, such as for example the *Hudud* Ordinances.⁹⁴⁹ *Hudud* is defined as fixed punishments outlined in the Holy Quran and the Sunnah and the 1979 Hudud Ordinances deal with offences of adultery, false accusation of adultery, consumption of alcohol, and theft (for more information, please see section [5.5 Punishments under the law](#)).⁹⁵⁰ The process of adopting Islamic laws continued under successive leaders.⁹⁵¹ This included the introduction of the Enforcement of Shariat Act of 1991, which requires laws to be interpreted according to *Sharia*.⁹⁵² Furthermore, the introduction of *Qisas* and *Diyat* Ordinance of 1990, provided for the payment of blood money, which was eventually integrated in the PPC and the CrPC.⁹⁵³ The PPC describes *Qisas* as ‘means punishment by causing similar hurt at the same part of the body of the convict as he has caused to the victim or by causing his death if he has committed *qatl-i-amd* [intentional killing]’.⁹⁵⁴ *Qisas* and *Diyat* permit a compromise between the offender and the legal heir(s) of a murder victim, either with or without the payment of blood money (for more information, please see section [5.5 Punishments under the law](#)).⁹⁵⁵

5.3. Blasphemy law

The USCIRF described Pakistan as one of the ‘strictest and most frequent enforcers of blasphemy laws’.⁹⁵⁶ Initially introduced during the colonial period, blasphemy law was adopted into the PPC in 1947 and further strengthened in the 1980s under the rule of Zia ul-Haq.⁹⁵⁷ The PPC stipulates that ‘deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any

⁹⁴⁵ UK Home Office, Country Policy and Information Note Pakistan: Actors of protection, July 2024, [url](#), pp. 9-10

⁹⁴⁶ Munir, M., The Role of Shari’a in the Legal System of Pakistan, 16 January 2022, [url](#), p. 14

⁹⁴⁷ Pakistan, The West Pakistan Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Act, 1962, [url](#), Art. 2

⁹⁴⁸ Munir, M., The Role of Shari’a in the Legal System of Pakistan, 16 January 2022, [url](#), p. 14

⁹⁴⁹ Darr, A., No Law but God’s Law: Islam and the Pakistani Legal System, LSE [Blog], 13 March 2023, [url](#); Mukhtar, S., In Defense of the Codification of the Islamic Law of Hudud into the Law of Pakistan, 12 May 2016, [url](#), p. 1

⁹⁵⁰ Mukhtar, S., In Defense of the Codification of the Islamic Law of Hudud into the Law of Pakistan, 12 May 2016, [url](#), p. 1

⁹⁵¹ Darr, A., No Law but God’s Law: Islam and the Pakistani Legal System, LSE [Blog], 13 March 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁵² Pakistan, The Enforcement of Shari’ah Act, 1991, [url](#), Art. 4

⁹⁵³ Munir, M., The Role of Shari’a in the Legal System of Pakistan, 16 January 2022, [url](#), p. 15

⁹⁵⁴ Pakistan, The Pakistan Penal Code, 1860, [url](#), Art. 299(k)

⁹⁵⁵ Munir, M., The Role of Shari’a in the Legal System of Pakistan, 16 January 2022, [url](#), p. 15

⁹⁵⁶ USCIRF, Issue update: Assessing blasphemy and related laws on religious freedom in Pakistan, 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁹⁵⁷ USCIRF, Issue update: Assessing blasphemy and related laws on religious freedom in Pakistan, 1 December 2023, [url](#), pp. 1-2



class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs [...] shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, or with fine, or with both' (article 295A).⁹⁵⁸ Furthermore, article 295B of the PPC states that 'defiling, etc., of copy of Holy Quran [...] shall be punishable with imprisonment for life' and article 295C provides that 'use of derogatory remarks, etc., in respect of the Holy Prophet [...] shall be punished with death, and shall also be liable to fine'.⁹⁵⁹ Additionally, article 298 of the PPC deals with 'derogatory remarks, etc., in respect of holy personages' (298A), 'misuse of epithets, descriptions and titles, etc., reserved for certain holy personages or places' (298B), and 'person of Qadiani group, etc., calling himself a Muslim or preaching or propagating his faith' whereas the Qadiani group refers to people 'who call themselves "Ahmadis" or by any other name' (298C).⁹⁶⁰ This makes it a criminal offence for Ahmadis to identify as Muslims, engage in Muslim religious practices, or promote their beliefs.⁹⁶¹ In 2023, the National Assembly and the Senate passed the Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2023, to increase punishments for condescending remarks against revered personalities such as the Prophet Muhammad's family, wives, and companions and the four caliphs.⁹⁶² As of December 2023 the Bill seems not to have been signed into law by the president.⁹⁶³ As of April 2024 no information was available on the progress of the bill.⁹⁶⁴ According to Pakistan correspondent Kunwar Khuldune Shahid, the passing of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) of 2016 took Pakistan's blasphemy law into the digital sphere.⁹⁶⁵ The introduction of the PECA led to a significant increase in the registration of blasphemy cases.⁹⁶⁶

The National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) reported that, as of 21 June 2024, there were 705 people imprisoned under the blasphemy laws which was a 6 300 % increase over the last three and a half years, with only 11 persons incarcerated for blasphemy in 2020 and 213 people in 2023. Of the 705 people imprisoned as of June 2024, 370 persons were charged under the PECA with the majority being under the age of 30.⁹⁶⁷ In September 2024, the UNCERD reported that it was 'alarmed by the increase in the total annual number of cases concerning blasphemy, from 11 in 2020 to 213 in 2023', especially those brought under sections 295 and 298 of the PPC and the PECA.⁹⁶⁸ People accused of blasphemy were often subjected to lengthy prison sentences, but the government has not yet carried out an execution for blasphemy and death sentences were generally overturned by higher courts.⁹⁶⁹ As of late 2023, dozens of people remained on death row.⁹⁷⁰ These included people sentenced to death in blasphemy cases dating back to 2014 as judges repeatedly postponed

⁹⁵⁸ Pakistan, The Pakistan Penal Code, 1860, [url](#), Art. 295 A

⁹⁵⁹ Pakistan, The Pakistan Penal Code, 1860, [url](#), Art. 295B, 295C

⁹⁶⁰ Pakistan, The Pakistan Penal Code, 1860, [url](#), Art. 298A, 298B, 298C

⁹⁶¹ USCIRF, Issue update: Assessing blasphemy and related laws on religious freedom in Pakistan, 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 4

⁹⁶² Dawn, Senate passes bill to ramp up punishment for blasphemy to at least 10 years, 8 August 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁶³ USCIRF, Issue update: Assessing blasphemy and related laws on religious freedom in Pakistan, 1 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁹⁶⁴ UK Home Office, Country policy and information note: Christians and Christian converts, Pakistan, April 2024 (accessible), April 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁵ Shahid, K.K., Five years of PECA: The law that tried to silence Pakistan, IFEX, 9 May 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁶ Pakistan, NCHR, Report on Pakistan's Compliance with CERD, July 2024, [url](#), p. 15

⁹⁶⁷ Pakistan, NCHR, Report on Pakistan's Compliance with CERD, July 2024, [url](#), p. 15

⁹⁶⁸ UNCERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan, CERD/C/PAK/CO/24-26, 24 September 2024, [url](#), para. 15

⁹⁶⁹ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 17

⁹⁷⁰ HRW, World Report 2024: Pakistan, 11 January 2024, [url](#)



hearings, adjourned them without listening to arguments or before delivering rulings, or referred appeals to other judicial benches.⁹⁷¹

Prolonged detentions and trials in blasphemy cases undermined the right to a fair trial.⁹⁷² Judges were afraid to hear or rule on blasphemy cases,⁹⁷³ witnesses frequently avoided describing the alleged blasphemy out of fear of committing further blasphemy and lawyers were reluctant to represent the accused.⁹⁷⁴ While some lower courts conducted proceedings with spectators from groups supportive of harsh punishment for blasphemy, other blasphemy trials lacked transparency as they were held inside prisons due to concerns for the safety of defendants, lawyers, judges, prosecutors, and witnesses.⁹⁷⁵ The USDOS reported that the government could employ ATCs, which were created as an alternative legal system under anti-terrorism laws, to handle blasphemy cases (please see section [5.4 Anti-Terrorism Acts](#)).⁹⁷⁶

Blasphemy accusations were often used to settle personal vendettas and individual or political feuds, resulting in acts of violence before charges were drafted or presented to a court.⁹⁷⁷ In September 2024, UNCERD noted an increase in reports of violent attacks and reprisals against people accused of blasphemy, many of whom were members of ethnic and ethno-religious minority groups. These incidents included physical assaults, mob lynchings, and killings.⁹⁷⁸ For more information, please see section [6.3 Individuals accused of blasphemy](#).

5.4. Anti-Terrorism Acts

The USDOS reported that the government continued to implement the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997 (ATA), the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) Act, the 2014 Investigation for Fair Trial Act, along with significant amendments to the ATA in 2014 and 2020, all of which granted increased authority to law enforcement, prosecutors, and courts in terrorism-related cases.⁹⁷⁹ The term ‘terrorism’ is defined in Section 6 of the ATA. It states that “‘terrorism’ means the use or threat of action [...] to coerce and intimidate or overawe the Government or the public or a section of the public or community or sect [...] for the purpose of advancing a religious, sectarian or ethnic cause’.⁹⁸⁰ This includes the ‘dissemination, preaching ideas, teachings and beliefs as per own interpretation on FM stations or through any other means of communication without explicit approval of the government’.⁹⁸¹ The ATA was amended multiple times since 1997 and its definition of terrorism⁹⁸² was revised on several occasions.

⁹⁷¹ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), pp. 21-22

⁹⁷² UNCERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan, CERD/C/PAK/CO/24-26, 24 September 2024, [url](#), para. 15

⁹⁷³ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 22

⁹⁷⁴ Munshey, M., Pakistan must confront blasphemy-related vigilante violence, TNH, 4 October 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁷⁵ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 25; USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 22-23

⁹⁷⁶ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 8

⁹⁷⁷ USCIRF, Issue update: Assessing blasphemy and related laws on religious freedom in Pakistan, 1 December 2023, [url](#), pp. 1, 3

⁹⁷⁸ UNCERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan, CERD/C/PAK/CO/24-26, 24 September 2024, [url](#), para. 15

⁹⁷⁹ USDOS, Country Report on Terrorism 2022, 30 November 2023, [url](#), p. 175

⁹⁸⁰ Pakistan, The Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997, [url](#), Art. 6(1)(b), 6(1)(c)

⁹⁸¹ Pakistan, The Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997, [url](#), Art. 6(2)(p)

⁹⁸² Khan, I. et al., Anti-Terrorism Law and Policy in Pakistan, 20 May 2022 [url](#), pp. 57-58



September 2024, the federal cabinet approved an amendment to the ATA, increasing the powers of security forces in counterterrorism operations.⁹⁸³

The ATA's scope and definition of terrorism was described as broad and vague,⁹⁸⁴ allowing for its abuse and resulting in unwarranted prosecutions and human rights violations.⁹⁸⁵ The ATA also restricts several due process rights as it allows the police to conduct searches and make arrests without a warrant, admits confessions made while in detention (which increases the risk of police torture, for more information, please see section [5.6 Detention and death penalty](#)), provides a very short timeline for investigations and trials, and makes offenses non-compoundable.⁹⁸⁶ The government used anti-terrorism legislation for political repression,⁹⁸⁷ and the ATA was utilised to target lawyers, academics, journalists, activists, and civil society members for criticizing state institutions.⁹⁸⁸

The law permitted the government to utilise special, streamlined ATCs to prosecute individuals accused of terrorist acts and sectarian violence.⁹⁸⁹ According to Ayesha Jawad from the law department at the Kinnaird College for Women in Lahore, special military courts for prosecuting terrorists have been established under the ATA, the Protection of Pakistan Act (POPA), 2014, and the 21st amendment to the Pakistani Constitution in 2015. These laws were incorporated into the two main legal frameworks, the CrPC and the PPC, which also address terrorism-related offenses.⁹⁹⁰ While regular courts required suspects to appear within seven working days of arrest, ATCs were allowed to extend this period.⁹⁹¹ A joint NGO report to the UN Human Rights Committee noted that, following a school massacre in Peshawar in 2014, the government had increasingly treated civilians as 'terrorists' and tried them in ATCs. Accordingly, more than 86 % of death sentences issued by ATCs were for ordinary criminal offenses in which the accused had no indication of terroristic intent.⁹⁹² Freedom House reported that, in 2023, the practice of trying civilians in military courts under the Army Act 'reemerged as a key area of concern' given the lack of due process safeguards in military trial proceedings and limited rights of appeal.⁹⁹³

⁹⁸³ Dawn, Senators oppose special powers for security forces, 7 September 2024, [url](#); Express Tribune (The), Forces armed with special powers in Balochistan, 6 September 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁸⁴ HRCP and FIDH, Joint submission for the adoption of the List of Issues Prior to Reporting (LoIPR): Pakistan, United Nations Human Rights Committee (CCPR) - 139th Session, 14 August 2023 [url](#), p. 1

⁹⁸⁵ Khan, I. et al., Anti-Terrorism Law and Policy in Pakistan, 20 May 2022 [url](#), pp. 61-62

⁹⁸⁶ JPP, The Advocates for Human Rights and World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, Joint Submission in Advance of the Adoption of Issues for the Second Periodic Report of Pakistan in the 138th Session of the Human Rights Committee (26 June - 28 July 2023), 18 August 2023, [url](#), para. 111; USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 26

⁹⁸⁷ Khan, I. et al., Anti-Terrorism Law and Policy in Pakistan, 20 May 2022 [url](#), p. 61; AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Pakistan 2023, 24 April 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁸⁸ Waseem, Z., Inside the Punitive State: Governance Through Punishment in Pakistan, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 20 June 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁸⁹ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 22

⁹⁹⁰ Jawad, A., An evaluation of anti-terrorism laws in Pakistan: Lessons from the past and challenges for the future, 2022 [url](#), p. 18

⁹⁹¹ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 22

⁹⁹² JPP, The Advocates for Human Rights and World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, Joint Submission in Advance of the Adoption of Issues for the Second Periodic Report of Pakistan in the 138th Session of the Human Rights Committee (26 June - 28 July 2023), 18 August 2023, [url](#), para. 108, 110

⁹⁹³ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 – Pakistan, 2024, [url](#)



5.5. Punishments under the law

Under Islamic law, there are three categories of punishments for criminal offenses: retribution, referred to as *Qisas*, discretionary punishment, called *Ta'zir*, and fixed punishment, known as *Hudud* (*Hadd* in singular).⁹⁹⁴ Punishments in the form of *Qisas* and *Ta'zir* are provided for in article 53 of the PPC, along with punishments such as death and imprisonment for life among others.⁹⁹⁵

The PPC describes *Qisas* as ‘means punishment by causing similar hurt at the same part of the body of the convict as he has caused to the victim or by causing his death if he has committed *qatl-i-amd* [intentional killing]’.⁹⁹⁶ The punishment of *Qisas* was integrated in the PPC through the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 1997, replacing Chapter 16 (Sections 299-338) of the PPC. The act deals with all offences relating to the human body and additionally provides for *Diyat*, *Arsh*, and *Daman*,⁹⁹⁷ which are three forms of compensation functioning as quasi-civil damages provided under different circumstances.⁹⁹⁸ *Qisas* and *Diyat* permit a compromise between the offender and the legal heir(s) of a murder victim, either with or without the payment of blood money.⁹⁹⁹ In a briefing to the UN Human Rights Committee, the NGO Strategic Advocacy Human Rights (SAHR) reported that the application of *Qisas* and *Diyat* legitimised the practice of honour killings and allowed perpetrators to avoid legal consequences.¹⁰⁰⁰

For *Hudud* punishments, codified laws were introduced in the form of the Offence of Zina (Enforcement of Hudud) Ordinance 1979, the Offence of Qazf (Enforcement of Hadd) Ordinance 1979, the Prohibition (Enforcement of Hadd) Order 1979 and the Offences Against Property (Enforcement of Hudud) Ordinance 1979. These four 1979 Hudud Ordinances deal with adultery, false accusation of adultery, consumption of alcohol, and theft, respectively.¹⁰⁰¹ Several sources noted that the government modified the 1979 Hudud Ordinances through the Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment Act) of 2006, which placed the crimes of rape and adultery back into the PPC.¹⁰⁰²

The USDOS reported that ‘although not enforced since the 1985 lifting of martial law, the Hudood [Hudud] Ordinance of 1979 criminalised sexual intercourse outside of marriage in

⁹⁹⁴ Mukhtar, S., In Defense of the Codification of the Islamic Law of Hudud into the Law of Pakistan, 12 May 2016, [url](#), p. 1

⁹⁹⁵ Pakistan, The Pakistan Penal Code, 1860, [url](#), Art. 53

⁹⁹⁶ Pakistan, The Pakistan Penal Code, 1860, [url](#), Art. 299(k)

⁹⁹⁷ Khan, M.A. and Shah, S.A.A., The Notion of ‘Daman’ in Islamic Law and Its Application in Pakistani Criminal Law: An Analytical Study, September 2023, [url](#), p. 369

⁹⁹⁸ Khan, M.A. and Shah, S.A.A., The Notion of ‘Daman’ in Islamic Law and Its Application in Pakistani Criminal Law: An Analytical Study, September 2023, [url](#), p. 370

⁹⁹⁹ Munir, M., The Role of Shari’a in the Legal System of Pakistan, 16 January 2022, [url](#), p. 15

¹⁰⁰⁰ SAHR, Briefing for the Human Rights Committee, Country Report Task Force, 139th Session (9 October 2023 - 3 November 2023), with Respect to Violence Against Women in: Pakistan, August 2023, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁰⁰¹ Mukhtar, S., In Defense of the Codification of the Islamic Law of Hudud into the Law of Pakistan, 12 May 20216, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁰⁰² USIP, Moving Forward with the Legal Empowerment of Women in Pakistan, May 2012, [url](#), p. 6; Mukhtar, S., In Defense of the Codification of the Islamic Law of Hudud into the Law of Pakistan, 12 May 20216, [url](#), p. 13; SAHR, Briefing for the Human Rights Committee, Country Report Task Force, 139th Session (9 October 2023 - 3 November 2023), with Respect to Violence Against Women in: Pakistan, August 2023, [url](#), p. 10



accordance with *Sharia*, with penalties of whipping or, potentially, death'.¹⁰⁰³ Article 3 of the Abolition of the Punishment of Whipping Act, 1996, stipulates that 'except in cases where the punishment of whipping is provided for as hadd, the sentence of whipping provided under any law, rule or regulation for the time being in force shall stand abolished'.¹⁰⁰⁴ According to media reports from April 2024, a session court in Karachi sentenced a man to 80 lashes under Section 7(1) of the Offence of Qazf (Enforcement of Hadd) Ordinance, 1979, for denying paternity of his child and falsely accusing his former wife of adultery.¹⁰⁰⁵ The punishment was described as 'very rare'¹⁰⁰⁶ with the prosecutor stating that it 'could be the first instance of corporal punishment in many decades'.¹⁰⁰⁷

Informal justice systems such as *jirgas* or *panchayats* (for more information, please see section [5.1. Formal and informal systems](#)) could impose penalties such as fines, imprisonment, and sometimes the death penalty.¹⁰⁰⁸ Functioning on local traditions and male belief systems of which honour is a critical component,¹⁰⁰⁹ the USDOS reported that *jirgas* often reverted to violent punishments or death sentences against women for so-called honour-related crimes (for more information, please see section [6.5 Women](#)).¹⁰¹⁰ Sources referred to practices such as *Swara*, *Vanni* and *Sung Chatti* which describe the exchange of women by forced marriage as a way of settlement imposed by *jirgas*.¹⁰¹¹ This form of forced marriage or servitude is recognised by several names, such as *Wanni* or *Vani*, *Swara*, *Sung Chatti* and *Budla-i-sulh* depending on where you are situated in the country.¹⁰¹² Article 310A of the PPC stipulates that anyone giving 'a female in marriage or otherwise compels her to enter into marriage, as badla-e-sulh, wanni, or swara or any other custom or practice under any name, in consideration of settling a civil dispute or a criminal liability' is to be 'punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to seven years but shall not be less than three years and shall also be liable to fine of five hundred thousand rupees'.¹⁰¹³ In its annual report covering 2021, the HRCP reported that the Federal Shariat Court declared the practice of *swara* to be un-Islamic, but noted that 'it remains to be seen whether this ruling will effectively curb this deeply entrenched practice'.¹⁰¹⁴ The USDOS reported in 2024 that women, and especially young girls, were affected by the practices such as *swara* as they continued to be used in rural areas.¹⁰¹⁵

¹⁰⁰³ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 84

¹⁰⁰⁴ Pakistan, The Abolition of the Punishment of Whipping Act, 1996, [url](#), Art. 3

¹⁰⁰⁵ Dawn, Man in Karachi sentenced to 80 lashes for denying child's paternity, 8 April 2024, [url](#); Stateman (The), Pakistan session court sentences man to 80 lashes in a rare decision, 9 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁶ Stateman (The), Pakistan session court sentences man to 80 lashes in a rare decision, 9 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁷ Dawn, Man in Karachi sentenced to 80 lashes for denying child's paternity, 8 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁸ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 20

¹⁰⁰⁹ Pakistan, NCSW, Women, Violence and Jirga, - Consensus and Impunity in Pakistan, June 2017, [url](#), p. 20

¹⁰¹⁰ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 20

¹⁰¹¹ Pakistan, NCSW, Women, Violence and Jirga, - Consensus and Impunity in Pakistan, June 2017, [url](#), p. 20; Fatima, S., Reviving the Jirga System as Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in Pakistan's Tribal Areas, May 2024, [url](#), p. 26

¹⁰¹² Pasha, A.H., The Cultural Sharks of Gender-based Violence in Pakistan, RSIL, 21 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰¹³ Pakistan, The Pakistan Penal Code, 1860, [url](#), Art. 310A.

¹⁰¹⁴ HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2021, 2022, [url](#), p. 20

¹⁰¹⁵ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 20



5.6. Detention and death penalty

The main law regulating prison systems in Pakistan is the Prisons Act of 1894, which is still in effect. Likewise, the Prisoners Act of 1900 was enacted to unify the regulations concerning the treatment of prisoners by law enforcement. To enforce these laws, the Pakistan Prison Rules (PPR) of 1978 were created as the central prison manual, detailing the duties and restrictions for prison officials.¹⁰¹⁶ According to Qadeer Alam, Assistant Inspector General of Prisons in Punjab, Pakistan inherited an outdated prison system from British colonial rule, which has seen little change in more than 200 years.¹⁰¹⁷

Several sources described Pakistan's prisons as extremely overcrowded.¹⁰¹⁸ According to data from the provincial prisons departments for the year 2023, prisons in Pakistan housed 97 449 prisoners while having an approved capacity of 67 294 inmates, implying a significant overcrowding rate of 145 %.¹⁰¹⁹ Justice Project Pakistan (JPP) reported that, gathering data from 127 prisons in all provinces and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan's total prison population stood at 100 366 prisoners in 2023 and had a nation-wide overcrowding rate of 152.2 %, with some jails operating over 200 % of their capacity.¹⁰²⁰ HRW noted that the main causes for overcrowding in Pakistan's prisons included a reluctance by courts to grant bail and a tendency of police to arrest and detain suspects by default.¹⁰²¹ According to the HRCP, the police had a proclivity to detain the usual suspects, who had previous jail records, for minor offences.¹⁰²² As of September 2023, approximately 75 % of prisoners were either awaiting trial or on trial, with some people remaining in pre-trial detention for a longer period than the maximum sentence for the crime with which they were charged.¹⁰²³ The JPP also noted that, in all provinces, the number of under-trial prisoners surpassed that of convicted inmates which highlights the 'failure of Pakistan's bail and parole regimes, an over-reliance on custodial measures, and the pressing need to reform laws and practices related to pre-conviction detention and incarceration'.¹⁰²⁴

USDOS reported that prison conditions 'often were extremely poor' and in some civilian prisons and military detention centres amounted to being 'life threatening' due to overcrowding and lack of food, water, sanitation, heating, ventilation, lighting, and medical care.¹⁰²⁵ Overcrowding left prisoners vulnerable to the spread of infectious diseases and burdened the prison healthcare infrastructure.¹⁰²⁶ Corruption among prison officials and

¹⁰¹⁶ Afzal, Q., The State of Female Prisoners in Pakistan, RSIL, 25 October 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰¹⁷ Alam, Q., Prison Reform in Pakistan: What is needed and why?, University of Oxford Centre for Criminology [Blog], 2 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰¹⁸ HRW, "A Nightmare for Everyone" The Health Crisis in Pakistan's Prisons, 29 March 2023 [url](#), p. 3; Alam, Q., Prison Reform in Pakistan: What is needed and why?, University of Oxford Centre for Criminology [Blog], 2 September 2022, [url](#); USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 9

¹⁰¹⁹ HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 12

¹⁰²⁰ JPP, Prison Population of Pakistan 2023 – Fact Sheet, 30 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁰²¹ HRW, "A Nightmare for Everyone" The Health Crisis in Pakistan's Prisons, 29 March 2023 [url](#), p. 28

¹⁰²² HRCP, The Ailing Prisoner Access to Healthcare in Pakistan's Prisons, 2 June 2023, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁰²³ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 17

¹⁰²⁴ JPP, Prison Population of Pakistan 2023 – Fact Sheet, 30 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁰²⁵ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 9

¹⁰²⁶ HRCP, The Ailing Prisoner Access to Healthcare in Pakistan's Prisons, 2 June 2023 [url](#), p. 6; HRW, "A Nightmare for Everyone" The Health Crisis in Pakistan's Prisons, 29 March 2023 [url](#), p. 1; USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 9



guards, combined with impunity for misconduct, led to human rights abuses and the creation of two parallel systems for those with wealth and influence and all others.¹⁰²⁷ Women prisoners were, according to HRW, routinely subjected to prejudice, discrimination, and abuse and faced ‘enormous difficulties’ accessing health care.¹⁰²⁸ Prisoners with disabilities often did not receive adequate care¹⁰²⁹ and limited awareness of mental health issues contributed to the mistreatment of people with mental health conditions.¹⁰³⁰ USDOS noted that juveniles did not have facilities separate from adult detainees and reported on police brutality against juveniles.¹⁰³¹ According to representatives of Christian and Ahmadi Muslim communities, their members were frequently subjected to abuse and violence by other inmates and reports of harassment further included detained transgender persons.¹⁰³² Rank-and-file political detainees were sometimes subjected to harsher abuse and mistreatment than other prisoners.¹⁰³³

Article 14(2) of the Constitution declares that ‘[n]o person shall be subjected to torture for the purpose of extracting evidence’.¹⁰³⁴ The PPC and CrPC do not specifically address torture, but the PPC does prescribe penalties for certain acts of torture under related offences such as for example ‘force and assault’.¹⁰³⁵ The USDOS reported that custodial deaths were prosecuted under Section 302 of the PPC, which prescribes the death penalty.¹⁰³⁶ In November 2022, the government approved the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act, 2022, which criminalises custodial death, torture and rape of people held in the custody of public officials and sets up a complaint and investigation procedure.¹⁰³⁷ In June 2024, JPP called the Act’s promulgation an important milestone in the effort to criminalise torture, but noted that ‘much work lies ahead to bring this law into implementation’.¹⁰³⁸

Bertelsmann Foundation noted that torture and preventive detention continued to be a part of Pakistan’s policing and security practices and ‘remains rampant in practice’.¹⁰³⁹ Police and prosecutors faced criticism for relying on torture to extract confessions.¹⁰⁴⁰ According to media monitoring by the HRCP, at least 13 people were reportedly victims of custodial torture and 33 were killed in custody in 2023,¹⁰⁴¹ but the USDOS noted that police abuse was often underreported, and impunity remained a significant issue.¹⁰⁴²

As of July 2023, the following 31 offences were punishable by death, many of which did not meet the ‘most serious crimes’ threshold: murder, robbery resulting in death, terrorism,

¹⁰²⁷ HRW, “A Nightmare for Everyone” The Health Crisis in Pakistan’s Prisons, 29 March 2023 [url](#), pp. 1-2

¹⁰²⁸ HRW, “A Nightmare for Everyone” The Health Crisis in Pakistan’s Prisons, 29 March 2023 [url](#), p. 4

¹⁰²⁹ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 10

¹⁰³⁰ HRW, “A Nightmare for Everyone” The Health Crisis in Pakistan’s Prisons, 29 March 2023 [url](#), p. 5

¹⁰³¹ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 21

¹⁰³² USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 10

¹⁰³³ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 25

¹⁰³⁴ Pakistan, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, [url](#), Art. 14(2)

¹⁰³⁵ OMCT and JPP, Criminalising Torture in Pakistan: The Need for an Effective Legal Framework, 15 March 2021 [url](#), p. 4

¹⁰³⁶ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁰³⁷ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁰³⁸ JPP, Gap Analysis Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act, 2022, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁰³⁹ Bertelsmann Foundation, BTI 2024 Country Report Pakistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 13

¹⁰⁴⁰ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 – Pakistan, 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴¹ HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 11

¹⁰⁴² USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 8



kidnapping or abduction of a minor, kidnapping for ransom or extortion, abduction to subject someone to unnatural lust, blasphemy, adultery, stripping a woman's clothes, gang rape, *harabaha* (robbery, rape or terrorism) with murder, sexual abuse, unnatural offences, mutiny and insubordination, abetment of mutiny, disclosure of parole, watchword, or countersign, giving or fabricating false evidence with intent to procure conviction of a capital offence, high treason, offences against the state, offences in relation to the enemy, arms trading, and hijacking as well as harbouring hijacking.¹⁰⁴³ In July 2023, the repeal of the death penalty for drug-related offences came into effect.¹⁰⁴⁴

According to JPP, there have been no executions since December 2019, but as of August 2023 lower courts continued to impose death sentences for less serious crimes.¹⁰⁴⁵ There were also reports of juveniles being sentenced to death.¹⁰⁴⁶ According to the HRCP, in 2023, at least 102 people were sentenced to death.¹⁰⁴⁷ AI estimated that there were more than 3 900 people known to be on death row at the end of 2023,¹⁰⁴⁸ while the JPP reported that the total number of prisoners on death row amounted to 6 039 as of October 2023.¹⁰⁴⁹

Sources reported that proceedings leading to death sentences did not meet international fair trial standards.¹⁰⁵⁰ This included cases being decided on witness testimonies collected through ill-treatment and torture.¹⁰⁵¹ Pakistan's provincial high courts are mandated to automatically review death penalty cases, but the appeals process was slow due to an overburdened judiciary,¹⁰⁵² with the average time prisoners spend on death row amounting to 11 years.¹⁰⁵³ Outside of the ordinary court system, death sentences were also imposed by military courts (for more information, please see section [5.4 Anti-Terrorism Acts](#)).¹⁰⁵⁴

¹⁰⁴³ JPP, The Advocates for Human Rights and World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, Joint Submission in Advance of the Adoption of Issues for the Second Periodic Report of Pakistan in the 138th Session of the Human Rights Committee (26 June - 28 July 2023), 18 August 2023, [url](#), para. 13

¹⁰⁴⁴ AI, Death Sentences and Executions 2023, 29 May 2024, [url](#), p. 27

¹⁰⁴⁵ JPP, The Advocates for Human Rights and World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, Joint Submission in Advance of the Adoption of Issues for the Second Periodic Report of Pakistan in the 138th Session of the Human Rights Committee (26 June - 28 July 2023), 18 August 2023, [url](#), para. 9, 14

¹⁰⁴⁶ DPIC, Executions of Juveniles Outside of the U.S., n.d., [url](#); Gatestone Institute, Pakistan: Young Christian Unjustly Sentenced to Death, 19 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴⁷ HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 11

¹⁰⁴⁸ AI, Death Sentences and Executions 2023, 29 May 2024, [url](#), p. 22

¹⁰⁴⁹ JPP, Death Penalty in Pakistan - Data Mapping Capital Punishment, 10 October 2023, [url](#), pp. 12-13

¹⁰⁵⁰ AI, Death Sentences and Executions 2023, 29 May 2024, [url](#), pp. 13, 26; JPP, The Death Penalty in Law and in Practice in Pakistan, 16 June 2023, [url](#), p. 5

¹⁰⁵¹ JPP, The Death Penalty in Law and in Practice in Pakistan, 16 June 2023, [url](#), p. 5

¹⁰⁵² JPP, The Advocates for Human Rights and World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, Joint Submission in Advance of the Adoption of Issues for the Second Periodic Report of Pakistan in the 138th Session of the Human Rights Committee (26 June - 28 July 2023), 18 August 2023, [url](#), para. 15

¹⁰⁵³ JPP, The Death Penalty in Law and in Practice in Pakistan, 16 June 2023, [url](#), p. 6

¹⁰⁵⁴ AI, Death Sentences and Executions 2023, 29 May 2024, [url](#), p. 26; FIDH and HRCP, Joint submission for the review of the Second periodic report Pakistan - United Nations Human Rights Committee (CCPR) – 142nd session, 16 September 2024, [url](#), p. 2



5.7. Effectiveness and integrity of law enforcement and judiciary

The World Justice Projects' 2023 Rule of Law Index ranks Pakistan 130th out of 142 countries globally and 5th out of 6 in South Asia. Within the region, Nepal was the best performer, while Pakistan and Afghanistan had the lowest scores. The WJP also provides various 'factor scores' for the 142 countries. In terms of 'order and security', Pakistan ranks 141st. Other factor scores include 'civil justice' (129/142), 'criminal justice' (99/142), 'regulatory enforcement' (128/142)¹⁰⁵⁵ and 'absence of corruption' (123/142).¹⁰⁵⁶

The National Corruption Perception Survey 2023 by Transparency International (TI) Pakistan reflects Pakistani citizens' perceptions of the levels and frequency of corruption. According to the survey,¹⁰⁵⁷ the police were perceived as the most corrupt sector, with a rate of 30 %. In Sindh, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces the police were perceived as the most corrupt sector. In Punjab, citizens paid the highest average bribe of PKR 21 186 (approximately EUR 68)¹⁰⁵⁸ to access police services.¹⁰⁵⁹ Freedom House noted that the police have faced longstanding accusations of 'biased or arbitrary handling of initial criminal complaints'. Additionally, both police and prosecutors have been criticised for their consistent failure to prosecute terrorism cases and for relying on torture to extract confessions.¹⁰⁶⁰

According to the USDOS, government security forces reportedly 'engaged in extrajudicial killings during operations against suspected militants throughout the country' in 2023.¹⁰⁶¹ Rights activists claimed that 'fake encounters' are regularly staged by Pakistani police to carry out extrajudicial killings.¹⁰⁶² According to the USDOS, kidnappings and enforced disappearances occurred nationwide, with intelligence agencies, police, and security forces reportedly holding detainees incommunicado and refusing to reveal their whereabouts.¹⁰⁶³ Human rights groups reported the arrest and 'disappearance of Pashtun, Sindhi, and Baloch human rights activists, as well as Sindhi and Baloch nationalists, without cause or warrant'.¹⁰⁶⁴ Reports also indicated that security forces, including intelligence agencies, subjected individuals in custody to torture and abuse.¹⁰⁶⁵

¹⁰⁵⁵ The WJP website also provides information on the different factors. For example, under 'regulatory enforcement' it states that this factor 'measures the extent to which regulations are fairly and effectively implemented and enforced. Regulations, both legal and administrative, structure behaviors within and outside of the government.' WJP, WJP Rule of Law Index, Pakistan, Regulatory Enforcement, 25 October 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵⁶ WJP, WJP Rule of Law Index, Pakistan, 25 October 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵⁷ Transparency International Pakistan conducted the National Corruption Perception Survey 2023 from 13 to 31 October 2023, in the provinces of Sindh, Punjab, KP and Balochistan. The survey involved 1 600 respondents, with 400 participants from each province. TI Pakistan, National Corruption Perception Survey TI Pakistan 2023, 9 December 2023, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁰⁵⁸ All currency calculations in this report are based on the exchange rate from European Commission, Exchange rate (InforEuro), n.d., [url](#)

¹⁰⁵⁹ TI Pakistan, National Corruption Perception Survey TI Pakistan 2023, 9 December 2023, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁰⁶⁰ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 – Pakistan, 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶¹ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 28

¹⁰⁶² TNH, In Pakistan, a poet's killing fuels Pashtun fears ahead of a new security crackdown, 24 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶³ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 5

¹⁰⁶⁴ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 6

¹⁰⁶⁵ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7





Pakistan has multiple security forces, each with slightly different areas of jurisdiction.¹⁰⁶⁶ For further information please see section [3.1 State Actors](#). In its Pakistan Country Security Report, the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) provides an overview on law enforcement in different regions. According to OSAC, Islamabad had a sizeable police force but it faced resource constraints, including low salaries and inadequate equipment, which impacted its effectiveness.¹⁰⁶⁷ According to a September 2024 media report, stability and effectiveness within the Islamabad police force were being challenged by significant issues. Rapid appointments and frequent transfers had created uncertainty among officers, hindering their ability to fulfil their duties and impacting the department's overall performance.¹⁰⁶⁸ OSAC noted that despite difficulties, substantial resources were dedicated to protecting government buildings. Although police corruption was common across Pakistan, it was less of an issue in Islamabad.¹⁰⁶⁹

In Karachi, the effectiveness of police services was hindered by inadequate training, resources, and low salaries, possibly leading to political influence and bribery affecting investigations, arrests, and prosecutions, according to OSAC.¹⁰⁷⁰ According to the HRCP's annual report covering 2023, in Sindh, the 'law-and-order situation remained a major cause for concern', with a rise in kidnappings for ransom in the Katcha area, particularly in the districts of Ghotki, Shikarpur, and Kashmore. Despite police operations, *dacoits* ('bandits') continued to operate freely. In major cities like Karachi, the situation also remained troubling, with street crime increasing.¹⁰⁷¹

The Punjab Police, with over 200 000 active members, was the largest police force in Pakistan but faced issues like inadequate funding, resources, and training. The government was working to modernise and computerise the force.¹⁰⁷² According to the HRCP's annual report covering 2023, in Punjab, '[s]tate agencies failed to prevent faith-based crimes', with the most severe incident occurring in August 2023 in Jaranwala. This attack involved the burning of churches and Christian homes, leading to 'significant loss of life and property'.¹⁰⁷³ For more information, please see section [6.2. Religious minorities](#).

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, security agencies faced challenges such as insufficient equipment, communication technology, and training. Police response to crimes was often inconsistent, and security forces were frequent targets of terrorist attacks.¹⁰⁷⁴ In September 2024, RFE/RL reported that TTP was active in 10 of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's 34 districts. According to locals, the TTP often dominated at night, with government forces withdrawing to their posts, and many civilians avoiding going outside due to fear of the militants.¹⁰⁷⁵ According to a September 2024 report by CRSS, despite anti-terror efforts the state's control over large parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had 'considerably deteriorated'. Outrage from political leaders, the public, and

¹⁰⁶⁶ US, OSAC, Pakistan Country Security Report, last updated 4 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶⁷ US, OSAC, Pakistan Country Security Report, last updated 4 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶⁸ News International (The), Leadership gaps, neglected rankers weakening police force, 29 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶⁹ US, OSAC, Pakistan Country Security Report, last updated 4 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷⁰ US, OSAC, Pakistan Country Security Report, last updated 4 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷¹ HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 60

¹⁰⁷² US, OSAC, Pakistan Country Security Report, last updated 4 September 2024, [url](#); Dawn, Lahore fails to accrue Safe City project potential, 8 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷³ HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 26

¹⁰⁷⁴ US, OSAC, Pakistan Country Security Report, last updated 4 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷⁵ RFE/RL, 'No One Is Safe': Life Under The Rule Of The Pakistani Taliban, 10 September 2024, [url](#)





even the police, especially in Lakki Marwat, Bannu, and Swat, over the increasing targeted killings and the ‘helplessness of the civilian law-enforcement’ highlighted the worsening security situation.¹⁰⁷⁶

OSAC mentioned highway robbery schemes occurring ‘especially in areas of Balochistan where the government has difficulty controlling.’¹⁰⁷⁷ An August 2024 article by Al Jazeera quoted Quetta-based analyst Muhammad Arif as saying that Balochistan is a vast region with a scattered population and the ‘government cannot provide foolproof security, while nationalist groups cannot effectively claim control over large areas.’¹⁰⁷⁸ An analysis by Indian news agency Indo-Asian News Service (IANS), published in October 2024, mentioned that the military significantly increased its presence in the province by deploying more troops and setting up checkpoints in various districts following intensifying violence.¹⁰⁷⁹ According to HRCP, in 2023, the rule of law in Balochistan remained weak.¹⁰⁸⁰ (For more information, please see section [4.2.3 Balochistan](#)).

According to the USDOS’ annual human rights report, corruption in the judicial system continued to be reported in 2023, with claims that court staff demanded payments for administrative procedures. Lower courts were described as corrupt, inefficient, and influenced by ‘higher-ranking judges as well as prominent, wealthy, religious, and political figures.’¹⁰⁸¹ For more information, please see section [5. Structure and functioning of the judiciary](#).

¹⁰⁷⁶ CRSS, 2024 violence-linked fatalities overtake full-year 2023 in just nine months, 30 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷⁷ US, OSAC, Pakistan Country Security Report, last updated 4 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷⁸ Al Jazeera, What’s behind Pakistan’s deadly Balochistan attacks, which left 74 dead?, 26 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷⁹ IANS, Understanding enhanced powers of Pak’s security forces and implications for Balochistan (IANS Analysis), 4 October 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸⁰ HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 127

¹⁰⁸¹ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 61



6. Treatment of certain profiles and groups of population

The general human rights situation in the country has been described as presenting a ‘mixed picture’, with a legal framework on safeguarding fundamental rights said to be in place but not sufficiently implemented.¹⁰⁸² Human rights issues included reports of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearance; arbitrary detention; torture and other forms of violations by government forces; restrictions on freedom of expressions, including violence against journalists and political opponents;¹⁰⁸³ discrimination and repression of ethnic and religious minorities; blasphemy laws prone to be misused; gender-based violence.¹⁰⁸⁴ Ahead of the February 2024 elections, some sources noted a pattern of human rights violations, including harassment,¹⁰⁸⁵ arbitrary arrest and detention of protestors and political candidates; bans of protests; a crackdown on the media and freedom of expression; mass deportation of Afghan refugees ‘in contravention of the principle of *non-refoulement*’.¹⁰⁸⁶

According to HRCP senior council member, Farhatullah Babar, forced conversion, misuse of blasphemy laws and enforced disappearances are the three most serious human rights issues in the country. Babar further noted that Pakistan has experienced a general erosion of the human rights, ‘which is being dramatised by vigilante justice, by shrinking space for the minorities, by the blasphemy law and above all by the impunity for the crimes.’¹⁰⁸⁷ Enforced disappearances,¹⁰⁸⁸ particularly prevalent in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, are reported to have been used as tool of political suppression against critical voices, journalists, human rights defenders and minorities.¹⁰⁸⁹ The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UN CERD) stated to be ‘concerned about reports of the enforced disappearance of ethno-religious leaders, politicians, public officials and human rights defenders’ (over 10 000 registered cases), as well as concerned about the lack of effective accountability for those responsible for these cases, creating a climate of impunity and fear within the affected communities.¹⁰⁹⁰

¹⁰⁸² EEAS, EU Annual Report On Human Rights And Democracy In The World 2023 Country Updates, Pakistan, 24 May 2024 [url](#), pp. 211-212

¹⁰⁸³ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 1-2

¹⁰⁸⁴ EEAS, EU Annual Report On Human Rights And Democracy In The World 2023 Country Updates, Pakistan, 24 May 2024 [url](#), pp. 211-212

¹⁰⁸⁵ UN News, UN rights office voices concern ahead of elections in Pakistan, 6 February 2024, [url](#); RFE/RL, Pakistan Rights Group Slams Government ‘Manipulation’ Of Electoral Process, Doubts ‘Free, Fair’ Vote, 1 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸⁶ AI, Pakistan: Human Rights Charter, 25 March 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁰⁸⁷ Babar F., Senior council member at HRCP, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁰⁸⁸ AI, Pakistan: Amnesty International condemns harassment faced by Baloch protestors in Islamabad, 24 January 2024, [url](#); EEAS, EU Annual Report On Human Rights And Democracy In The World 2023 Country Updates, Pakistan, 24 May 2024 [url](#), pp. 211-212

¹⁰⁸⁹ AI, Pakistan: Human Rights Charter, 25 March 2024, [url](#) p. 3

¹⁰⁹⁰ UN CERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan*, CERD/C/PAK/CO/24-26, 24 September 2024, [url](#), para 17



6.1. Ethnic minorities

The population of Pakistan was estimated between around 241 million in 2023¹⁰⁹¹ and 245 million people in 2024.¹⁰⁹² The main ethnic groups in the country are Punjabi (44.7 %) Pashtuns (15.4%), Sindhi (14.1%), Saraiki (8.4%), Muhajirs (7.6%), Baloch (3.6%), and other smaller groups (6.3%).¹⁰⁹³ The Pakistani constituency system guarantees that the main ethnic groups from each province receive parliamentary representation. Members of Sindh, Pashtun and Baloch communities play visible roles in national political life, however their representation in the military is marginalised due to suspicion that these groups may harbour anti-state sentiments.¹⁰⁹⁴

Historically being ethnically profiled¹⁰⁹⁵ and portrayed as ‘militant, recalcitrant, rustic, volatile, patriarchal’,¹⁰⁹⁶ Pashtuns in Pakistan have continued to face widespread stigmatisation, with cases of verbal abuse and mistreatment due to their ethnicity reported to be common in the provinces of Punjab and Sindh.¹⁰⁹⁷ The Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) has been subject to continued repression from law enforcement bodies and the judiciary.¹⁰⁹⁸ On 6 October 2024, the Pakistani government listed PTM,¹⁰⁹⁹ as a proscribed organisation under the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997. The ban came ahead of the Pashtun *Qaumi Jirga* (Pashtun National Court), a gathering scheduled for 11 October in the Khyber District.¹¹⁰⁰ For more information, please see section [2.1 Recent political developments](#), and section [6.4.1 Members and supporters of opposition parties](#).

Cases of repression and discrimination of ethnic minorities,¹¹⁰¹ in particular Pashtuns and Balochs,¹¹⁰² have been reported. Abuses committed by Pakistani authorities towards these communities include extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances.¹¹⁰³ Such cases have been noted particularly in connection with ongoing military operations in Balochistan and in the former FATA.¹¹⁰⁴ For more information, please see section [4. Security situation](#). Cases of harassment, intimidation and excessive use of force by security and law enforcement officers against ethnic groups were reported at checkpoints, but also in public spaces, such as markets,¹¹⁰⁵ and during peaceful protests.¹¹⁰⁶ In its September 2024 report, UN CERD stated to

¹⁰⁹¹ Pakistan, MoIB, PBS launches results of 7th population & housing census, 18 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹² UNFPA, World population dashboard, Pakistan, *n.d.*, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹³ CIA Factbook, Pakistan, last updated 12 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹⁴ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 – Pakistan, 8 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹⁵ Pakistan Today, Ethnic profiling of the Pashtuns, 22 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹⁶ Kakar B. S., Reimagining the Pashtun’s Cultural Identity in Pakistan, in LSE blog, 3 July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹⁷ New Humanitarian, In Pakistan, a poet’s killing fuels Pashtun fears ahead of a new security crackdown, 24 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹⁸ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 – Pakistan, 8 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹⁹ Al Jazeera, Pakistan bans prominent Pashtun rights group citing security concerns, 7 October 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁰⁰ RFE/RL, Pakistan’s Ban On Prominent Civil Rights Group Will ‘Alienate’ Pashtun Minority, 12 October 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁰¹ EEAS, EU Annual Report On Human Rights And Democracy In The World 2023 Country Updates, Pakistan, 24 May 2024 [url](#), pp. 211-212

¹¹⁰² USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 3

¹¹⁰³ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 3; AI, Pakistan: Human Rights Charter, 25 March 2024, [url](#), p. 3; EEAS, EU Annual Report On Human Rights And Democracy In The World 2023 Country Updates, Pakistan, 24 May 2024 [url](#), pp. 211-212

¹¹⁰⁴ BTI, BTI 2024 Country Report, Pakistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 13

¹¹⁰⁵ UN CERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan*, CERD/C/PAK/CO/24-26, 24 September 2024, [url](#), para 21

¹¹⁰⁶ AI, Pakistan: Amnesty International condemns harassment faced by Baloch protestors in Islamabad, 24 January 2024, [url](#)



be ‘particularly concerned about the increasing rate of enforced disappearance among persons belonging to ethnic minority groups in Sindh and Balochistan Provinces.’¹¹⁰⁷ The HRCP observed that students from Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remain especially vulnerable in Punjab, adding to be deeply concerned about recent cases of harassment and intimidation of Pashtun and Baloch students by law enforcement officers at universities in Lahore, with reports that at least two students had been forcibly disappeared.¹¹⁰⁸

The Baloch Human Rights Council, as cited by USDOS, reported on an increasing number of enforced disappearances of civilians in 2023 in Balochistan, including human rights activists, politicians, teachers, and bystanders wrongly linked to Baloch nationalist groups.¹¹⁰⁹ A community of around 550 000 Hazara Shias residing in Quetta, the capital of Balochistan, is reported to face ‘severe threats due to sectarian violence, terrorism, and systemic discrimination’.¹¹¹⁰ According to HRCP, due to fear of violence members of the Hazara Shia community in Quetta need armed escort to move outside their neighbourhood and visit Quetta’s main markets.¹¹¹¹

6.2. Religious minorities

Islam is the main religion of Pakistan that represents 96 % of the population.¹¹¹² Hinduism and Christianity form the largest minority religions¹¹¹³ while smaller religious communities such as Bohras, Parsis and Sikhs are also present,¹¹¹⁴ as well as Zikris¹¹¹⁵ and Baha’is.¹¹¹⁶

Islam is the state religion of the Islamic republic of Pakistan.¹¹¹⁷ In regard to the freedom of religion, the constitution of Pakistan states:

- a) every citizen shall have the right to profess, practice and propagate his religion; and
- b) every religious denomination and every sect thereof shall have the right to establish, maintain and manage its religious institutions.¹¹¹⁸

Furthermore, the constitution mentions the rights of ‘non-Muslims’ and lists the following religious minorities:

¹¹⁰⁷ UN CERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan*, CERD/C/PAK/CO/24-26, 24 September 2024, [url](#), para 17

¹¹⁰⁸ HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), pp. 257-258

¹¹⁰⁹ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 29

¹¹¹⁰ Haider M. Z., Human Security Paradigm in Pakistan: The Case of Hazaras in Quetta, Pakistan, Vol. 4. No. 03 (Jul-Sep) 2024 International Journal of Human and Society, [url](#), p. 1

¹¹¹¹ HRCP, Balochistan’s Struggle for Hope An HRCP fact-finding report, 2023, [url](#), p. 11

¹¹¹² MoIB, PBS launches results of 7th population & housing census, 18 July 2024, [url](#)

¹¹¹³ Pakistan, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results, Population by sex, religion and rural/urban, 2023, [url](#)

¹¹¹⁴ MRG, Pakistan, n.d., [url](#)

¹¹¹⁵ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 6; USDOS, International religious freedom report for 2023, 29 December 2023, [url](#), p.6

¹¹¹⁶ Open Doors International, Pakistan: Full Country Dossier, January 2024, [url](#), p. 14; USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), pp. 39-40

¹¹¹⁷ Pakistan, The Constitution Of The Islamic Republic Of Pakistan, 1973, amendments up to February 2012, [url](#)

¹¹¹⁸ Pakistan, The Constitution Of The Islamic Republic Of Pakistan, 1973, amendments up to February 2012, [url](#)

“non-Muslim” means a person who is not a Muslim and includes a person belonging to the Christian, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist or Parsi community, a person of the Qadiani group or the Lahori group (who call themselves Ahmadis⁴ or by any other name), or a Bahai, and a person belonging to any of the scheduled castes.¹¹¹⁹

In articles 51 and 59, respectively, the constitution guarantees places for non-Muslims in the National Assembly and in the Provincial Assemblies.¹¹²⁰

In 2022, the Supreme Court of Pakistan decided that religious minorities have the right to practice their religion at home.¹¹²¹ In August 2023, Pakistan’s senate passed an amendment to the Penal Code that increased penalties for blasphemy offences.¹¹²² Religious minorities are particularly vulnerable to blasphemy accusations.¹¹²³ In the same month, the National Assembly passed the National Commission for Minorities Bill, which however fails to adequately protect religious minorities, according to civil society groups cited by CSW.¹¹²⁴ On 23 June 2024, the National Assembly of Pakistan issued a resolution urging ‘the Federal and Provincial governments to ensure the safety and security of all [...] citizens, including religious minorities and other vulnerable segments of society’.¹¹²⁵ On 24 June 2024, the Pakistan Defense Minister reportedly stated that ‘no religious minority is safe in Pakistan’.¹¹²⁶ In January 2024, the government adopted a new curriculum according to which the study of Islam is no longer compulsory for non-Muslim students in Pakistan.¹¹²⁷ Instead, alternative religious education is offered to seven religious minorities, including Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Baha’i, Kalasha and Buddhism.¹¹²⁸

According to United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), the situation of religious minorities continued to deteriorate in 2023¹¹²⁹ and reports of violations continued in 2024.¹¹³⁰ In 2023, CRSS recorded 35 sectarian attacks with 115 fatalities in Pakistan.¹¹³¹ At least 16 people from religious minorities were killed because of their belief in 2023.¹¹³² Reported human rights violations included increased levels of harassment and violent attacks, including suicide bombings by members of armed groups,¹¹³³ attacks on places

¹¹¹⁹ Pakistan, The Constitution Of The Islamic Republic Of Pakistan, 1973, amendments up to February 2012, [url](#); art. 260

¹¹²⁰ Pakistan, The Constitution Of The Islamic Republic Of Pakistan, 1973, amendments up to February 2012, [url](#)

¹¹²¹ Farhatullah Babar, Senior council member at the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹¹²² Bitter Winter, Here We Are: Leading Shiite Cleric Arrested in Pakistan Based on New Blasphemy Law, 6 September 2023, [url](#); CSW, Concerns about two Bills that increase blasphemy punishment and fail minorities, 11 August 2023, [url](#)

¹¹²³ Al Jazeera, Pakistan’s blasphemy law: all you need to know, 18 August 2023, [url](#)

¹¹²⁴ CSW, Concerns about two Bills that increase blasphemy punishment and fail minorities, 11 August 2023, [url](#)

¹¹²⁵ Pakistan, NA, Resolution, 23 June 2024, [url](#)

¹¹²⁶ Dawn, Defence minister admits state’s failure in protecting minorities, 24 June 2024, [url](#)

¹¹²⁷ CNA, Pakistan ends mandatory Islamic studies for non-Muslim students, 26 January 2024, [url](#); UCA News, Islamic studies no longer compulsory for Pakistan’s non-Muslims, 24 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹²⁸ CNA, Pakistan ends mandatory Islamic studies for non-Muslim students, 26 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹²⁹ USCIRF, USCIRF 2024 Annual Report; USCIRF–Recommended for CPC: Pakistan, May 2024, [url](#), p. 40

¹¹³⁰ DW, Pakistan: Police intervene after mob attacks Christians, 25 May 2024, [url](#); Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes, 30 September 2024, [url](#), p. 5; UN OHCHR, Pakistan: UN experts alarmed by lack of protection for minority girls from forced religious conversions and forced marriage, 11 April 2024, [url](#)

¹¹³¹ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 | Pakistan, 19 February 2024, [url](#), pp. 40-41

¹¹³² USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 4

¹¹³³ USCIRF, USCIRF 2024 Annual Report; USCIRF–Recommended for CPC: Pakistan, May 2024, [url](#), p. 40

of worship,¹¹³⁴ trafficking in human beings for forced and bonded labour (some 600 000 people in Sindh, mostly Christian and Hindu Dalits, were estimated to be bonded labourers¹¹³⁵),¹¹³⁶ enforcement of blasphemy laws,¹¹³⁷ mob violence,¹¹³⁸ targeted killings,¹¹³⁹ blasphemy accusations,¹¹⁴⁰ discrimination,¹¹⁴¹ and hate speech.¹¹⁴²

More than 60 religious sites of non-Muslims communities were attacked in 2023.¹¹⁴³ Authorities at times provided enhanced security to Shia, Christian and Hindu places of worship, including by installing camera surveillance and deploying police officers. In Sindh, police officers from the Special Protection Force have been deployed to protect minority houses of worship and some 2 000 security cameras have been installed.¹¹⁴⁴

A team of UN experts reported on a rise of abductions, forced conversions and marriages of women and girls from religious minorities in a statement from January 2023¹¹⁴⁵ that they reiterated in April 2024¹¹⁴⁶. According to the UN CERD, authorities failed to properly investigate cases of abductions and forced marriages of Christian and Hindu women and girls.¹¹⁴⁷ Abductions, forced conversions and forced marriages affected mostly Christian and Hindu women,¹¹⁴⁸ forced evictions from homes affected especially lower-caste Hindus and Christians¹¹⁴⁹ and these communities faced prejudice and discrimination.¹¹⁵⁰ While conversions from Islam to other religions are not recognised by the government, conversions from

¹¹³⁴ CERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan, 23 August 2024, [url](#), para. 23; USCIRF, USCIRF 2024 Annual Report; USCIRF–Recommended for CPC: Pakistan, May 2024, [url](#), p. 41

¹¹³⁵ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 39

¹¹³⁶ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report Pakistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 26; USDOS, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Pakistan, 24 June 2024, [url](#)

¹¹³⁷ AI, Pakistan: One year since Jaranwala attack, minority Christians await justice, 16 August 2024, [url](#)

¹¹³⁸ USCIRF, USCIRF 2024 Annual Report; USCIRF–Recommended for CPC: Pakistan, May 2024, [url](#), p. 40

¹¹³⁹ AI, Escalating attacks on minority Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan must end, 21 June 2024, [url](#); AP News, Islamic State group claims killing Sikh man in Pakistan's northwest, 25 June 2023, [url](#); CERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan, 23 August 2024, [url](#), para. 23;

¹¹⁴⁰ USCIRF, USCIRF Annual Report; USCIRF–Recommended for CPC: Pakistan, May 2024, [url](#), p. 40

¹¹⁴¹ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report Pakistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 7; USDOS, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Pakistan, 24 June 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁴² CSJ, Human Rights Observer 2024; A fact sheet on key issues related to religious freedom and minorities' rights in Pakistan, 1 March 2024, [url](#), p. 4

¹¹⁴³ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 | Pakistan, 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 42

¹¹⁴⁴ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 6

¹¹⁴⁵ UN OHCHR, Pakistan: UN experts urge action on coerced religious conversions, forced and child marriage, 16 January 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁴⁶ UN OHCHR, Pakistan: UN experts alarmed by lack of protection for minority girls from forced religious conversions and forced marriage, 11 April 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁴⁷ CERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan, 23 August 2024, [url](#), para. 25

¹¹⁴⁸ Aurat Foundation, Pakistan based NGO, online interview with EUAA, 20 September 2024; CERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan, 23 August 2024, [url](#), para. 25; Farhatullah Babar, Senior council member at the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024; UN OHCHR, Pakistan: UN experts urge action on coerced religious conversions, forced and child marriage, 16 January 2023, [url](#); UN OHCHR, Pakistan: UN experts alarmed by lack of protection for minority girls from forced religious conversions and forced marriage, 11 April 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁴⁹ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 38

¹¹⁵⁰ Dawn, Pride and prejudice in Pakistan, 11 August 2024, [url](#)



Christianity or Hinduism to Islam are ‘swiftly accepted’.¹¹⁵¹ According to a UN experts’ report, forced marriages were sometimes validated by courts.¹¹⁵²

6.2.1. Hindus and Sikhs

Hindus form the largest religious minority in the country.¹¹⁵³ According to the 2023 population census, there were 3 867 729 Hindus in Pakistan, or some 1.6 % of the population,¹¹⁵⁴ but the estimates vary, with figures as high as eight million people.¹¹⁵⁵ Additionally, 1 349 487 people were recorded as ‘scheduled castes’ in the census.¹¹⁵⁶ An estimated 85 % of scheduled castes, Pakistan's most disadvantaged groups, are Hindus.¹¹⁵⁷ Hindus mostly live in Sindh,¹¹⁵⁸ often in rural areas relying on manual labour to secure their livelihoods and are perceived as a ‘scheduled caste’¹¹⁵⁹ or ‘the lower caste Hindus’.¹¹⁶⁰ Hindus in Pakistan face ‘institutionalized inequality’ and ‘systematic marginalization’, as reported by Bitter Winter.¹¹⁶¹ According to USDOS, Hindu Dalits ‘faced discrimination when seeking assistance from law enforcement or government services’.¹¹⁶² Concerning Sindh and Balochistan in 2023, the same source reported that according to Hindu representatives, ‘police generally provided adequate security’ to their places of worship.¹¹⁶³

According to the 2023 population census, there were 15 998 Sikhs in Pakistan, or some 0.007 % of the population.¹¹⁶⁴ Most Sikhs of present-day Pakistan emigrated to India following the creation of the two new states after the end of the British rule.¹¹⁶⁵

Hindus and at times Sikhs continued to be attacked in the country.¹¹⁶⁶ AP News reported that, while the Sikhs in Pakistan reportedly ‘generally live peacefully’, isolated incidents of violence against them have happened.¹¹⁶⁷ In 2023, CRSS recorded four sectarian attacks against Hindus with two fatalities and 31 injuries and four sectarian attacks against Sikhs with three

¹¹⁵¹ Open Doors International, Pakistan: Full Country Dossier, January 2024, [url](#), p. 46

¹¹⁵² UN OHCHR, Pakistan: UN experts alarmed by lack of protection for minority girls from forced religious conversions and forced marriage, 11 April 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁵³ The Hindu, Minority Hindus feel left out of poll process in Pakistan, 3 February 2024, [url](#); Pakistan, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results, Population by sex, religion and rural/urban, 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁵⁴ Pakistan, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results, Population by sex, religion and rural/urban, 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁵⁵ Al Jazeera, Mass Hindu wedding defies poverty and persecution in Pakistan, 10 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁵⁶ Pakistan, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results, Population by sex, religion and rural/urban, 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁵⁷ Fairplanet, As Pakistan Votes, ‘Untouchables’ Fight For Representation, 5 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁵⁸ Deccan Herald, 50 Hindus convert to Islam in Pakistan's Sindh province, 4 May 2023, [url](#); The Hindu, Minority Hindus feel left out of poll process in Pakistan, 3 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁵⁹ Stop Hindudvesha, Persecution of Hindus in Pakistan: A Cry for Justice, 13 March 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁶⁰ The Hindu, Minority Hindus feel left out of poll process in Pakistan, 3 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁶¹ Bitter Winter, Hindus as Targets in Pakistan: A Report, 17 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁶² USDOS, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Pakistan, 24 June 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁶³ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 6

¹¹⁶⁴ Pakistan, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results, Population by sex, religion and rural/urban, 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁶⁵ AP News, Islamic State group claims killing Sikh man in Pakistan’s northwest, 25 June 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁶⁶ Dawn, Pride and prejudice in Pakistan, 11 August 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁶⁷ AP News, Islamic State group claims killing Sikh man in Pakistan’s northwest, 25 June 2023, [url](#)





fatalities and one injury.¹¹⁶⁸ According to AP News, the three Sikh deaths in 2023 were cases of targeted killings.¹¹⁶⁹ In June 2023, a Sikh man was shot dead by an IS attacker in Peshawar for belonging to “polytheistic” Sikh sect.¹¹⁷⁰ Previous cases were recorded in Lahore in May and Peshawar in April that year.¹¹⁷¹

According to UN experts, Hindu girls are ‘particularly vulnerable’ to abductions, forced conversions and forced marriages.¹¹⁷² Hindu women and girls faced forced conversions,¹¹⁷³ and more specifically, they have been ‘subjected to forced conversion to Islam through marriage’.¹¹⁷⁴ For example, in June 2023, a 14-year-old Hindu girl was abducted and forcibly converted and married in Qazi Ahmad, Sindh.¹¹⁷⁵ According to the Centre for Social Justice, between 2021 and 2023, 68% of the 338 cases of forced conversions recorded by the organisation concerned Hindus.¹¹⁷⁶

The Centre for Social Justice recorded case of one Hindu accused of blasphemy in 2023.¹¹⁷⁷ HRCF reported that Hindus were also targeted for abductions for ransom.¹¹⁷⁸ In July 2023, the same source reported that some 30 Hindus were held hostage by ‘organised criminal gangs’ in Kashmore and Ghotki in Sindh.¹¹⁷⁹

There were reports of destruction of Hindu and Sikh places of worship, two Hindu temples and one Sikh gurdwara were destroyed in 2023.¹¹⁸⁰ In July 2023, local authorities destroyed a historic Hindu temple in Karachi¹¹⁸¹ and a gang attacked a Hindu community's place of worship and surrounding houses in Kashmore, Sindh.¹¹⁸² Following the attack, authorities sent 400 police officers to Kashmore to protect religious sites.¹¹⁸³ According to USDOS, ‘no additional incidents were reported in areas where members of the unit deployed’.¹¹⁸⁴

¹¹⁶⁸ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 | Pakistan, 19 February 2024, [url](#), pp. 40-41

¹¹⁶⁹ AP News, Islamic State group claims killing Sikh man in Pakistan’s northwest, 25 June 2023, [url](#); USCIRF, USCIRF 2024 Annual Report; USCIRF–Recommended for CPC: Pakistan, May 2024, [url](#), p. 40

¹¹⁷⁰ AP News, Islamic State group claims killing Sikh man in Pakistan’s northwest, 25 June 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁷¹ AP News, Islamic State group claims killing Sikh man in Pakistan’s northwest, 25 June 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁷² UN OHCHR, Pakistan: UN experts alarmed by lack of protection for minority girls from forced religious conversions and forced marriage, 11 April 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁷³ Aurat Foundation, Pakistan based NGO, online interview with EUAA, 20 September 2024; The Hindu, Members of Pakistan’s Hindu community protest forced conversions, 31 March 2023, [url](#); UN OHCHR, Pakistan: UN experts alarmed by lack of protection for minority girls from forced religious conversions and forced marriage, 11 April 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁷⁴ Al Jazeera, Mass Hindu wedding defies poverty and persecution in Pakistan, 10 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁷⁵ Dawn, Outcry in Sindh assembly over teenage Hindu girl's 'abduction, forced marriage', 9 June 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁷⁶ Aly N., Executive Director Asma Jahangir Legal Aid Cell (AGHS), Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹¹⁷⁷ IPS, In Pakistan, Death Can Be Just a WhatsApp Share Away, 20 March 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁷⁸ HRCF, A Culture of Hate Mongering, Freedom of Religion or Belief in 2022/23, 2024, [url](#), p. 25

¹¹⁷⁹ [HRCF, \[X\], posted on: 16 July 2023, url](#)

¹¹⁸⁰ CERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan, 23 August 2024, [url](#), para. 23

¹¹⁸¹ Bitter Winter, Historic Hindu Temple Demolished in Karachi, Mayor Vainly Tries to Deny It Happened, 25 July 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁸² Dawn, Dacoits attack place of worship belonging to members of Hindu community in Kashmore, 16 July 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁸³ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 6

¹¹⁸⁴ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 6





6.2.2. Christians

Christians form the second largest religious minority group in Pakistan after Hindus.¹¹⁸⁵ According to the 2023 population census, there were 3 300 788 Christians in Pakistan, representing some 1.37 % of the population.¹¹⁸⁶ Christian communities in Pakistan include members of Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical churches as well as unaffiliated Christians.¹¹⁸⁷

The situation of Christians reportedly worsened in 2023, with human rights violations against them being reported, including ‘false blasphemy accusations, physical assaults, kidnappings, rapes, and forced conversions.’¹¹⁸⁸ According to Open Doors, Christians faced pressure to give up their faith, false accusations of blasphemy, forced conversions to Islam and forced marriages, abductions and forced labour.¹¹⁸⁹ Cited in the 2023 USDOS report on international religious freedom, Christian and Hindu representatives in Sindh and Balochistan stated that ‘police generally provided adequate security’ to their places of worship.¹¹⁹⁰

A group of UN experts noted that Christian girls are ‘particularly vulnerable’ to abductions, forced conversions and forced marriages.¹¹⁹¹ Forced conversions and marriages occurred especially in Sindh and Punjab.¹¹⁹² On 13 March 2024, ‘a 13-year-old Christian girl was allegedly abducted, forcibly converted to Islam and married to her abductor after her age was recorded as 18 on the marriage certificate.’¹¹⁹³ According to an estimate, some 700 Christian women and girls are abducted to be forcibly married to Muslim men every year in Sindh alone.¹¹⁹⁴ The Centre for Social Justice recorded 338 cases of forced conversions in Pakistan between 2021 and 2023, 31% of which concerned Christians.¹¹⁹⁵ In July 2024, Pakistan amended the law regulating Christian marriages and raised a minimum age for both boys and girls to 18.¹¹⁹⁶

In 2023, CRSS recorded five sectarian attacks against Christians with three fatalities and nine injuries.¹¹⁹⁷ 26 Christian places of worship were destroyed in 2023.¹¹⁹⁸ According to the Centre for Social Justice, 11 Christians were accused of blasphemy in 2023.¹¹⁹⁹ According to USDOS, Christians faced discrimination when seeking assistance from the authorities.¹²⁰⁰

¹¹⁸⁵ DW, Pakistan: Police intervene after mob attacks Christians, 25 May 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁸⁶ Pakistan, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results, Population by sex, religion and rural/urban, 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁸⁷ Open Doors International, Pakistan: Full Country Dossier, January 2024, [url](#), pp. 29-30

¹¹⁸⁸ Vatican News, Pakistan’s Christians still ‘living in fear’ after 2023 Punjab violence, 12 March 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁸⁹ Open Doors International, Pakistan: Full Country Dossier, January 2024, [url](#), pp. 7-8

¹¹⁹⁰ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 6

¹¹⁹¹ UN OHCHR, Pakistan: UN experts alarmed by lack of protection for minority girls from forced religious conversions and forced marriage, 11 April 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁹² Farhatullah Babar, Senior council member at the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹¹⁹³ UN OHCHR, Pakistan: UN experts alarmed by lack of protection for minority girls from forced religious conversions and forced marriage, 11 April 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁹⁴ Open Doors International, Pakistan: Full Country Dossier, January 2024, [url](#), p. 43

¹¹⁹⁵ Aly N., Executive Director Asma Jahangir Legal Aid Cell (AGHS), Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹¹⁹⁶ Bitter Winter, Pakistan Raises Minimum Marriage Age for Christians to 18: Good—But, 25 July 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁹⁷ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 | Pakistan, 19 February 2024 [url](#), pp. 40-41

¹¹⁹⁸ CERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan, 23 August 2024, [url](#), para. 23

¹¹⁹⁹ IPS, In Pakistan, Death Can Be Just a WhatsApp Share Away, 20 March 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁰⁰ USDOS, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Pakistan, 24 June 2024, [url](#)



On 16 August 2023, a mob attacked a Christian settlement in Jaranwala, Faisalabad district of Punjab province, following false blasphemy accusations against two Christians.¹²⁰¹ The attack was initiated because of a rumour that a Christian man and his son desecrated pages from the Koran.¹²⁰² All Christian people were able to flee the scene, and no deaths or injuries were reported,¹²⁰³ but the attack caused extensive destruction of infrastructure.¹²⁰⁴ Sources indicated that over 20 churches were destroyed¹²⁰⁵ as well as 80-200 private homes.¹²⁰⁶ HRW indicated that the police knew of the arriving mob and did not stop it.¹²⁰⁷ 130 people were eventually arrested in connection with the attack.¹²⁰⁸

In February 2024, Pakistan's Supreme Court rejected the report on the incident submitted by the police and returned it, requesting more information.¹²⁰⁹ Amnesty International reported that as of 16 August 2024, trials of those responsible have not yet started.¹²¹⁰ According to Amnesty's research, out of the 5 213 accused, 380 were arrested with 4 833 still at large. Of those arrested, 228 are now out on bail granted by the Anti-Terrorism Court in Faisalabad and 77 had the charges against them dropped.¹²¹¹ Nida Aly, Executive Director at Asma Jahangir Legal Aid Cell (AGHS) in Pakistan, stated in an online interview with EUAA on 18 September 2024: 'Not a single person has been convicted, most of the accused have been let out on bail.'¹²¹² In contrast, a Christian man was sentenced to death by an anti-terrorism court in July 2024 'for causing the riots in Jaranwala through an allegedly blasphemous video on TikTok.'¹²¹³

One year after the attack, some of the destroyed churches and homes have been repaired.¹²¹⁴ Authorities helped to rebuild damaged churches and provided compensation to some of the

¹²⁰¹ Amnesty International, Pakistan: One year since Jaranwala attack, minority Christians await justice, 16 August 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁰² AP News, A Pakistani Christian accused of blasphemy and attacked by a mob has died of injuries, 3 June 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁰³ France24, Christian families in Pakistan pick up pieces after mob attack over 'blasphemy', 29 October 2024, [url](#); The Washington Post, Pakistan arrests 130 people after churches attacked on blasphemy rumor, 17 August 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁰⁴ The Washington Post, Pakistan arrests 130 people after churches attacked on blasphemy rumor, 17 August 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁰⁵ Amnesty International, Pakistan: One year since Jaranwala attack, minority Christians await justice, 16 August 2024, [url](#); USCIRF, USCIRF Troubled by Violence Against Christians in Pakistan, 7 June 2024, [url](#); Vatican News, Pakistan's Christians still 'living in fear' after 2023 Punjab violence, 12 March 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁰⁶ Amnesty International, Pakistan: One year since Jaranwala attack, minority Christians await justice, 16 August 2024, [url](#); Vatican News, Pakistan's Christians still 'living in fear' after 2023 Punjab violence, 12 March 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁰⁷ HRW, Pakistan: Mob Attacks Christian Settlement, 22 August 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁰⁸ HRW, Pakistan: Mob Attacks Christian Settlement, 22 August 2023, [url](#); The Washington Post, Pakistan arrests 130 people after churches attacked on blasphemy rumor, 17 August 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁰⁹ Amnesty International, Pakistan: One year since Jaranwala attack, minority Christians await justice, 16 August 2024, [url](#); Vatican News, Pakistan's Christians still 'living in fear' after 2023 Punjab violence, 12 March 2024, [url](#)

¹²¹⁰ Amnesty International, Pakistan: One year since Jaranwala attack, minority Christians await justice, 16 August 2024, [url](#)

¹²¹¹ Amnesty International, Pakistan: One year since Jaranwala attack, minority Christians await justice, 16 August 2024, [url](#)

¹²¹² Aly N., Executive Director Asma Jahangir Legal Aid Cell (AGHS), Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹²¹³ Amnesty International, Pakistan: One year since Jaranwala attack, minority Christians await justice, 16 August 2024, [url](#)

¹²¹⁴ Amnesty International, Pakistan: One year since Jaranwala attack, minority Christians await justice, 16 August 2024, [url](#); VOA News, Pakistani Christian neighborhood slowly rebuilds year after Muslim mob attack, 13 August 2024, [url](#)



people who lost their homes but not to all. As of 7 February 2024, 61 of the affected families were still awaiting compensation while 85 families have been compensated.¹²¹⁵ BBC reported that the compensation was two million rupees [about 6 373 EUR]^{1216,1217} According to Amnesty International, many affected Christians have lost their jobs, continue facing threats and live in fear, and some have moved out of the city.¹²¹⁸ The community's trust in assistance from the police was reportedly low.¹²¹⁹

On 25 May 2024, a Muslim mob attacked a Christian village in Sargodha, Punjab, resulting in the death of a Christian man who was accused of blasphemy later in June,¹²²⁰ and in injuries and destruction of property.¹²²¹ 10 Christians were rescued from the crowd¹²²² and 25 people were arrested.¹²²³ According to a Christian rights group, the police did not intervene when they saw the attack, an allegation the police denied.¹²²⁴ The police have arrested over 100 people in connection to the attack under anti-terrorism laws.¹²²⁵ Christians protested over the incident in cities across Pakistan including Peshawar, Faisalabad, and Karachi.¹²²⁶

6.2.3. Shia Muslims

According to USDOS, it is estimated that some 15-20 % of the Muslim population in Pakistan are Shia,¹²²⁷ while Open Doors indicated that the figure is less than 10% of the Muslim population.¹²²⁸ However, a precise figure is not known because the official census does not differentiate between Muslim sects.¹²²⁹

In 2023, CRSS recorded three sectarian attacks against Shia with nine fatalities and five injuries, as well as one additional attack against Shia Hazara with one fatality.¹²³⁰ USDOS reported on two attacks on Shia Hazaras in Balochistan in 2023.¹²³¹ USDOS indicated that Shia

¹²¹⁵ Amnesty International, Pakistan: One year since Jaranwala attack, minority Christians await justice, 16 August 2024, [url](#)

¹²¹⁶ Exchange rates from European Commission, Exchange rate (InforEuro), n.d., [url](#)

¹²¹⁷ BBC News, Months after attacks, Pakistan's Christians still feel unsafe, 24 December 2023, [url](#)

¹²¹⁸ Amnesty International, Pakistan: One year since Jaranwala attack, minority Christians await justice, 16 August 2024, [url](#)

¹²¹⁹ Vatican News, Pakistan's Christians still 'living in fear' after 2023 Punjab violence, 12 March 2024, [url](#)

¹²²⁰ AP News, A Pakistani Christian accused of blasphemy and attacked by a mob has died of injuries, 3 June 2024, [url](#); VOA News, Pakistani Christian man dies from blasphemy mob assault injuries, 3 June 2024, [url](#)

¹²²¹ DW, Pakistan: Police intervene after mob attacks Christians, 25 May 2024, [url](#); Reuters, Pakistani Christian community attacked after blasphemy accusation, 25 May 2024, [url](#); VOA News, Alleged blasphemy triggers violent Muslim mob attack on Pakistani Christians, 25 May 2024, [url](#)

¹²²² Reuters, Pakistani Christian community attacked after blasphemy accusation, 25 May 2024, [url](#); VOA News, Alleged blasphemy triggers violent Muslim mob attack on Pakistani Christians, 25 May 2024, [url](#)

¹²²³ Reuters, Pakistani Christian community attacked after blasphemy accusation, 25 May 2024, [url](#)

¹²²⁴ Reuters, Pakistani Christian community attacked after blasphemy accusation, 25 May 2024, [url](#)

¹²²⁵ AP News, A Pakistani Christian accused of blasphemy and attacked by a mob has died of injuries, 3 June 2024, [url](#)

¹²²⁶ Vatican News, Christians in Pakistan protest yet another attack over blasphemy, 28 May 2024, [url](#)

¹²²⁷ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 6

¹²²⁸ Open Doors International, Pakistan: Full Country Dossier, January 2024, [url](#), p. 14

¹²²⁹ Pakistan, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results, Population by sex, religion and rural/urban, 2023, [url](#)

¹²³⁰ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 | Pakistan, 19 February 2024, [url](#), pp. 40-41

¹²³¹ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 44





Hazara were in particular targets of sectarian violence.¹²³² According to Muhammad Amir Rana, an Islamabad-based security analyst, as reported by Dawn in October 2023, Shias were one of the Muslim minority sects that were targeted by local IS in Balochistan.¹²³³

On 4 May 2023, seven Shia teachers were shot dead at a school in Kurram, in KP Province. Another episode of violence in the same province erupted in October 2023 when a Shia man was accused of insulting the wife of Prophet Muhammad. Between 40-70 deaths and 40-200 injuries were reported.¹²³⁴ Again in Kurram, at least 25 people were killed during Sunni-Shia sectarian clashes over a land dispute in September 2024. In July 2024, ‘dozens of people on both sides were killed in connection with this conflict.’¹²³⁵

Shia Muslims remained vulnerable to blasphemy accusations.¹²³⁶ In September 2023, protests erupted in Gilgit-Baltistan after a man was accused of blasphemy.¹²³⁷ The man, a Shia cleric, was arrested in Skardu, Gilgit-Baltistan. The cleric stated that Shia Muslims will not stop criticising relatives of the prophet who denied Ali's succession while the Pakistani blasphemy laws were amended after pressure from Sunni groups in 2023 to increase punishment for the criticism of ‘the Prophet’s wives, family, close companions, and the Righteous Caliphs’.¹²³⁸ Sources indicated that the strengthening of the blasphemy law was aimed at Shia Muslims.¹²³⁹

6.2.4. Ahmadiyya

According to the 2023 population census, there were 162 684 Ahmadis in Pakistan, representing some 0.07 % of the population.¹²⁴⁰ Other sources indicate that the Ahmadi population in Pakistan can be around 500 000¹²⁴¹ or 600 000 people.¹²⁴² Comparing the census figures from 2017 and 2023, the population of Ahmadis has decreased in all provinces of Pakistan, in particular in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, by 85 % and 74 %, respectively.¹²⁴³ Sources indicated that Ahmadis were hiding their religious identity which

¹²³² USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 43

¹²³³ Dawn, Inside Balochistan’s sectarian shift — the rise of IS from Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, 3 October 2023, [url](#)

¹²³⁴ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), pp. 45, 48

¹²³⁵ Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes, 30 September 2024, [url](#), p. 5

¹²³⁶ HRCP, A Culture of Hate Mongering, Freedom of Religion or Belief in 2022/23, 2024, [url](#), p. 24

¹²³⁷ USCIRF, 2024 Annual Report; USCIRF—Recommended for CPC: Pakistan, May 2024, [url](#), p. 40

¹²³⁸ Bitter Winter, Here We Are: Leading Shiite Cleric Arrested in Pakistan Based on New Blasphemy Law, 6 September 2023, [url](#)

¹²³⁹ Bitter Winter, Here We Are: Leading Shiite Cleric Arrested in Pakistan Based on New Blasphemy Law, 6 September 2023, [url](#); The Statesman, Call for merger with India in PoK’s Gilgit after arrest of Shia cleric over blasphemy, 1 September 2023, [url](#); Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, State of Human Rights in 2023, 2024, [url](#), p. 167; HRCP, A Culture of Hate Mongering, Freedom of Religion or Belief in 2022/23, 2024, [url](#), p. 8

¹²⁴⁰ Pakistan, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 7th Population and Housing Census - Detailed Results, Population by sex, religion and rural/urban, 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁴¹ AI, Pakistan: Authorities must end escalating attacks on minority Ahmadiyya community, 21 June 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁴² MRG, Ahmadiyas in Pakistan, 17 August 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁴³ Friday Times (The), New Census Reveals Sharp Drop In Ahmadi Numbers Across KP And Balochistan, 1 August 2024, [url](#)





made the official count of their community difficult.¹²⁴⁴ They primarily reside in Rabwah district of Punjab.¹²⁴⁵

In 1974, Ahmadis in Pakistan have been declared to be ‘non-Muslims’ by the National Assembly of Pakistan through an amendment to the Constitution indicating that ‘any follower of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is a non-Muslim’.¹²⁴⁶ The Constitution refers to the Ahmadis community also as the Qadiani group or the Lahori group.¹²⁴⁷ Pakistani Penal Code criminalizes various aspects of Ahmadi faith.¹²⁴⁸ While Ahmadis consider themselves as Muslims,¹²⁴⁹ orthodox Muslims reject Ahmadis because they believe that their founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, declared himself as a prophet, which contradicts a core belief in Islam that considers Prophet Mohammad as the final prophet.¹²⁵⁰ Thus, the Ahmadis are perceived as ‘blasphemous unbelievers’ in Pakistan.¹²⁵¹ Since 1974, Ahmadis have been subjected to repeated attacks by Islamic extremists in the country.¹²⁵² Some aspects of the religious identity and practice of Ahmadis have been further criminalised since April 1984.¹²⁵³ Between 1984 and September 2023, 280 Ahmadis were killed in targeted violence.¹²⁵⁴

Sources indicated that the crucial issue is that while the government does not recognise Ahmadiyya as Muslims, they consider themselves Muslims.¹²⁵⁵ Ahmadis face ‘systemic and structural barriers’ when it comes to participation in public and political life¹²⁵⁶ and sometimes refuse to participate in political life because of discrimination.¹²⁵⁷ Because Ahmadis are neither considered to be Muslims nor one of the non-Muslim minorities by the government, when voting, they have to register separately.¹²⁵⁸ The violence against Ahmadis has been reportedly fuelled by the Tehreek-e Labbaik Pakistan (TLP),¹²⁵⁹ a proscribed organisation, which later

¹²⁴⁴ Global Order, Religious Minorities in Pakistan: A Vicious Cycle of Violence and Suppression, 8 May 2023, [url](#); VOA News, Pakistan's Religious Minorities Say They Were Undercounted in Census, 1 July 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁴⁵ MRG, Ahmadiyyas in Pakistan, 17 August 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁴⁶ MRG, Ahmadiyyas in Pakistan, 17 August 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁴⁷ Pakistan, The Constitution Of The Islamic Republic Of Pakistan, 1973, amendments up to February 2012, [url](#), art. 260

¹²⁴⁸ Pakistan, The Pakistan Penal Code, n.d., [url](#), p. 105

¹²⁴⁹ France24, ‘We don’t exist’: Pakistan’s Ahmadi minority living in fear, 5 October 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁵⁰ MRG, Ahmadiyyas in Pakistan, 17 August 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁵¹ France24, ‘We don’t exist’: Pakistan’s Ahmadi minority living in fear, 5 October 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁵² AP, Pakistan arrests top leader of radical party on charges of ordering the killing of chief justice, 29 July 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁵³ AI, Pakistan: Authorities must end escalating attacks on minority Ahmadiyya community, 21 June 2024, [url](#);

Pakistan, NCHR, Situation Report: Monitoring the plight of the Ahmadiyya Community, [2024] [url](#), p. 2

¹²⁵⁴ Pakistan, NCHR, Situation Report: Monitoring the plight of the Ahmadiyya Community, [2024] [url](#), p. 6

¹²⁵⁵ Aly N., Executive Director Asma Jahangir Legal Aid Cell (AGHS), Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024; Amnesty International, The State of the World's Human Rights; Pakistan 2023, 24 April 2024, [url](#); Senior representatives at the NCHR, Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹²⁵⁶ CERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan, 23 August 2024, [url](#), para 19

¹²⁵⁷ Aly N., Executive Director Asma Jahangir Legal Aid Cell (AGHS), Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹²⁵⁸ Farhatullah Babar, Senior council member at the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹²⁵⁹ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report Pakistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 30; CSJ, Human Rights Observer 2024; A fact sheet on key issues related to religious freedom and minorities' rights in Pakistan, 1 March 2024, [url](#), p. 2; VOA News, Pakistani Ahmadis Face Growing Attacks on Places of Worship, 27 September 2023, [url](#)



became a political party,¹²⁶⁰ whose spokesperson described Ahmadis as ‘blasphemers’.¹²⁶¹ According to Human Rights Watch, ‘the persecution of the Ahmadiyya community is embedded in Pakistani law and encouraged by the Pakistan government.’¹²⁶²

According to Nida Aly, Executive Director of the Asma Jahangir Legal Aid Cell (AGHS) interviewed by EUAA, ‘the moment individuals are identified as Ahmadis, their life is in danger.’¹²⁶³ Targeting of Ahmadis increased in 2023¹²⁶⁴ and continued in 2024.¹²⁶⁵ Among the abuses that the Ahmadiyya have faced are discrimination and hate speech,¹²⁶⁶ false blasphemy accusations,¹²⁶⁷ arbitrary arrests,¹²⁶⁸ desecration of graves,¹²⁶⁹ targeted killings,¹²⁷⁰ attacks on places of worship¹²⁷¹ and cemeteries,¹²⁷² and they were prevented from practicing their religion both at home¹²⁷³ and in public.¹²⁷⁴ Despite the 2022 decision of the Supreme Court of Pakistan that religious minorities including Ahmadis have a right to practice their religion at home¹²⁷⁵ they continued facing attacks within their houses.¹²⁷⁶ Police officers were reportedly fearful of providing protection to Ahmadis out of fear that they themselves can be attacked by a mob.¹²⁷⁷ According to the Centre for Social Justice, 65 Ahmadis were accused of

¹²⁶⁰ Diplomat (The), Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan: From Street Power to Electoral Force?, 17 May 2021, [url](#); Vice, How This Extremist Political Party Got Itself Banned and Then Unbanned, 12 November 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁶¹ VOA News, Pakistani Ahmadis Face Growing Attacks on Places of Worship, 27 September 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁶² HRW, Pakistan: Mob Attacks Christian Settlement, 22 August 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁶³ Aly N., Executive Director Asma Jahangir Legal Aid Cell (AGHS), Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹²⁶⁴ UN OHCHR, Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief et al, 11 August 2023, [url](#), p. 1; HRW, Pakistan: Mob Attacks Christian Settlement, 22 August 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁶⁵ UN OHCHR, Pakistan: Experts urge immediate end to discrimination and violence against Ahmadis, 25 July 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁶⁶ Farhatullah Babar, Senior council member at the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024; Senior representatives at the NCHR, Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024; UN OHCHR, Pakistan: Experts urge immediate end to discrimination and violence against Ahmadis, 25 July 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁶⁷ Farhatullah Babar, Senior council member at the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹²⁶⁸ AI, Escalating attacks on minority Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan must end, 21 June 2024, [url](#); CERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan, 23 August 2024, [url](#), para. 23; UN OHCHR, Pakistan: Experts urge immediate end to discrimination and violence against Ahmadis, 25 July 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁶⁹ Amnesty International, Escalating attacks on minority Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan must end, 21 June 2024, [url](#); UN OHCHR, Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief et al, 11 August 2023, [url](#), p. 4; UN OHCHR, Pakistan: Experts urge immediate end to discrimination and violence against Ahmadis, 25 July 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁷⁰ AI, Escalating attacks on minority Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan must end, 21 June 2024, [url](#); CERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan, 23 August 2024, [url](#), para. 23; The Times of India: Doctor from Pakistan's persecuted Ahmadi group shot dead, [url](#); Voicepk.net, Ahmadi doctor shot dead outside his clinic, 27 July 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁷¹ CERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan, 23 August 2024, [url](#), para. 23; UN OHCHR, Pakistan: Experts urge immediate end to discrimination and violence against Ahmadis, 25 July 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁷² AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Pakistan 2023, 24 April 2024, [url](#); UN OHCHR, Pakistan: Experts urge immediate end to discrimination and violence against Ahmadis, 25 July 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁷³ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 | Pakistan, 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 42

¹²⁷⁴ AI, Escalating attacks on minority Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan must end, 21 June 2024, [url](#); CERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan, 23 August 2024, [url](#), para. 23

¹²⁷⁵ Farhatullah Babar, Senior council member at the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹²⁷⁶ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 | Pakistan, 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 42

¹²⁷⁷ Senior representatives at the NCHR, Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024



blasphemy in 2023.¹²⁷⁸ NCHR recorded 334 Ahmadis facing blasphemy charges in 2023.¹²⁷⁹ When a mob attacked an Ahmadi in Lahore in August 2023, the authorities have charged eight Ahmadis with blasphemy instead of prosecuting the attackers.¹²⁸⁰

Ahmadis are not only forbidden to call themselves Muslims but also to use features that can be associated with Islam.¹²⁸¹ An Ahmadiyya representative indicated that the number of attacks on their places of worship in 2023 was the highest since 1984.¹²⁸² USDOS reported that according to Ahmadiyya representatives, their religious sites continued lacking police protection in 2023.¹²⁸³ The NCHR recorded 39 attacks on Ahmadi places of worship in the period January-September 2023¹²⁸⁴ and CERD reported that 36 Ahmadiyya places of worship were destroyed in 2023.¹²⁸⁵

In September 2023, 74 Ahmadi graves were desecrated in Daska, Punjab province.¹²⁸⁶ On 12 June 2024, 17 graves were desecrated in Bahawalpur district, Punjab.¹²⁸⁷

In September 2023, in Shahdara Town, Lahore, a mob attacked an Ahmadi place of worship because it allegedly looked like ‘a traditional mosque’. Police failed to stop the attack despite being present at the scene.¹²⁸⁸ In September 2023, the Lahore High Court ruled that Ahmadi places of worship built before 1984 shall not be affected by the provisions of the Pakistan Penal Code that criminalise certain aspects of Ahmadi faith, such as using architectural aspects associated with traditional mosques, such as minarets.¹²⁸⁹ Despite the ruling, attacks on Ahmadi places of worship continued, reaching an ‘alarming number’,¹²⁹⁰ including in April 2024 in Punjab¹²⁹¹ and in May 2024 in Mirpur Khas.¹²⁹² In October 2024, partial destruction of several Ahmadi mosques in cooperation with the police officers was reported from Punjab.¹²⁹³

In 2023, CRSS did not record any Ahmadi casualties of sectarian violence.¹²⁹⁴ In March 2024, a local Ahmadi leader was shot dead in Multan.¹²⁹⁵ Also in March 2024, an Ahmadi was killed in District Hasilpur.¹²⁹⁶ On 8 June 2024, two Ahmadis were shot dead for religious reasons by

¹²⁷⁸ IPS, In Pakistan, Death Can Be Just a WhatsApp Share Away, 20 March 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁷⁹ Pakistan, NCHR, Situation Report: Monitoring the plight of the Ahmadiyya Community, [2024] [url](#), p. 6

¹²⁸⁰ HRW, Pakistan: Mob Attacks Christian Settlement, 22 August 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁸¹ VOA News, Pakistani Ahmadis Face Growing Attacks on Places of Worship, 27 September 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁸² VOA News, Pakistani Ahmadis Face Growing Attacks on Places of Worship, 27 September 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁸³ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 34

¹²⁸⁴ Pakistan, NCHR, Situation Report: Monitoring the plight of the Ahmadiyya Community, [2024] [url](#), p. 13-15

¹²⁸⁵ CERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan, 23 August 2024, [url](#), para. 23

¹²⁸⁶ AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Pakistan 2023, 24 April 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁸⁷ AI, Escalating attacks on minority Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan must end, 21 June 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁸⁸ VOA News, Pakistani Ahmadis Face Growing Attacks on Places of Worship, 27 September 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁸⁹ Dawn, Ahmadi structures built before 1984 Ord not mandatory to be razed, 14 September 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁹⁰ UN OHCHR, Pakistan: Experts urge immediate end to discrimination and violence against Ahmadis, 25 July 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁹¹ Bitter Winter, Pakistan: Yet Another Ahmadi Mosque Vandalized in Punjab, 21 April 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁹² UN OHCHR, Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief et al, 11 August 2023, [url](#), p. 4

¹²⁹³ Bitter Winter, Police Itself Resorts to Illegal Violence Against Ahmadis in Pakistan, 22 October 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁹⁴ CRSS, Annual Security Report 2023 | Pakistan, 19 February 2024, [url](#), pp. 40-41

¹²⁹⁵ The Times of India: Doctor from Pakistan's persecuted Ahmadi group shot dead, [url](#); Voicepk.net, Ahmadi doctor shot dead outside his clinic, 27 July 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁹⁶ Voicepk.net, Ahmadi doctor shot dead outside his clinic, 27 July 2024, [url](#)





a Sunni extremist student in Mandi Bahauddin district of Punjab province.¹²⁹⁷ On 27 July 2024, an Ahmadi dentist was shot dead near his clinic in Punjab's Gujrat district.¹²⁹⁸ On 8 July 2024, two Ahmadis were killed in Saad Ullah Pur.¹²⁹⁹

In February 2024, the Supreme Court acquitted an Ahmadi, who was accused of 'distributing a proscribed book' (a commentary on Koran¹³⁰⁰). The court ruled that the act happened before it was made illegal and noted that he had already spent over 13 months in prison, even though the maximum sentence for the crime was six months. The decision was challenged by the Punjab government and some religious parties.¹³⁰¹ The Council of Islamic Ideology, a state body advising the parliament and the government on religious issues, objected the part of the court's verdict allowing Ahmadis to practice their faith within their places of worship.¹³⁰²

In June 2024, Ahmadis were prevented from participating at the Muslim holiday Eid and faced police harassment, arbitrary arrests and detention.¹³⁰³ According to Amnesty International, between 10 and 19 June 2024, during Eid, 36 cases of arbitrary arrests of Ahmadis were recorded in Punjab.¹³⁰⁴ Public officials allowing Ahmadis to conduct ritual sacrifices like Muslims faced harassment from the lawyers.¹³⁰⁵ Reports of Ahmadis not being allowed to freely celebrate Eid also occurred in 2023.¹³⁰⁶

6.2.5. Zikris

The Zikri Muslim community is mainly residing in Balochistan¹³⁰⁷ and their population is estimated at between 500 000 and 800 000 people.¹³⁰⁸ It is estimated that some 100 000 live

¹²⁹⁷ AI, Escalating attacks on minority Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan must end, 21 June 2024, [url](#); Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Summary, Pakistan – January to June 2024, 30 June 2024, [url](#), p. 8

¹²⁹⁸ The Times of India: Doctor from Pakistan's persecuted Ahmadi group shot dead, [url](#); Voicepk.net, Ahmadi doctor shot dead outside his clinic, 27 July 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁹⁹ UN OHCHR, Pakistan: Experts urge immediate end to discrimination and violence against Ahmadis, 25 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁰⁰ Bitter Winter, Pakistan, Council of Islamic Ideology Asks for Even Harsher Persecution of the Ahmadis, 20 August 2024, [url](#).

¹³⁰¹ Sulema Jahangir, Mubarak Sani case : divine sanction for religious groups, available at Voicepak.net, 7 September 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁰² Bitter Winter, Pakistan, Council of Islamic Ideology Asks for Even Harsher Persecution of the Ahmadis, 20 August 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁰³ AI, Escalating attacks on minority Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan must end, 21 June 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁰⁴ AI, Pakistan: Authorities must end escalating attacks on minority Ahmadiyya community, 21 June 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁰⁵ CERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan, 23 August 2024, [url](#), para. 23

¹³⁰⁶ AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Pakistan 2023, 24 April 2024, [url](#); HRCP, A Culture of Hate Mongering, Freedom of Religion or Belief in 2022/23, 2024, [url](#), pp. 22-23

¹³⁰⁷ Tribune, Balochistan - the bogey of Baloch in angst, 12 September 2024, [url](#); USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 6; USDOS, International religious freedom report for 2023, 29 December 2023, [url](#), p.6

¹³⁰⁸ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 26 June 2024, [url](#), p. 6; USDOS, International religious freedom report for 2023, 29 December 2023, [url](#), p.6





in Karachi and there is a sizeable community in Sindh.¹³⁰⁹ Zikris identify as Muslims¹³¹⁰ but practice a distinct version of Islam¹³¹¹ linked to Sufism.¹³¹² They are ethnic Baloch.¹³¹³

Zikris have been historically persecuted¹³¹⁴ and targeted by religious extremists who tried to prevent their religious practices; persecution was started by Salafi clerics and later Deobandi clerics and other sectarian groups preaching against them.¹³¹⁵ Pakistani authorities have allegedly supported religious extremism to suppress the nationalist movements in Balochistan,¹³¹⁶ which has had negative consequences for minorities such as Zikris.¹³¹⁷ According to Muhammad Amir Rana, an Islamabad-based security analyst, as reported by Dawn in October 2023, local IS-groups in Balochistan targeted Zikris.¹³¹⁸ Sources related that Zikris were targeted for killings, with cases reported in 2014,¹³¹⁹ 2015,¹³²⁰ 2016,¹³²¹ 2017¹³²² and 2022.¹³²³ No violent incidents were found in the reference period of the report.

The Zikri holy place is Koh-e-Murad in Turbat¹³²⁴ and according to the Balochistan Post, the Koh-e-Murad holiday in 2024 saw a ‘record attendance’.¹³²⁵ While six Zikri pilgrims were killed by a religious fundamentalist group associated with ISIS in 2015,¹³²⁶ a vehicle carrying Zikri pilgrims on a way to Koh-e-Murad was bombed by ISIS in 2017¹³²⁷ and several Zikri pilgrims were detained by the authorities in 2022;¹³²⁸ no similar reports were found in the reference period of the report.

¹³⁰⁹ Dawn, Religion, Nationalism And Insurgency In Balochistan, 14 July 2019, [url](#)

¹³¹⁰ The Friday Times, Who are the Zikris?, 29 September 2019, [url](#)

¹³¹¹ The Friday Times, Who are the Zikris?, 29 September 2019, [url](#); Tribune, Balochistan - the bogey of Baloch in angst, 12 September 2024, [url](#)

¹³¹² The Friday Times, Who are the Zikris?, 29 September 2019, [url](#)

¹³¹³ The Friday Times, Who are the Zikris?, 29 September 2019, [url](#)

¹³¹⁴ The Balochistan Post, TTP spreads wings in Balochistan — TBP Report, 27 December 2022, [url](#); Dawn, Religion, Nationalism And Insurgency In Balochistan, 14 July 2019, [url](#)

¹³¹⁵ Dawn, Religion, Nationalism And Insurgency In Balochistan, 14 July 2019, [url](#)

¹³¹⁶ The Balochistan Post, Balochistan Teacher Killing: Signalling Rise of Religious Extremism? — TBP Report, 7 August 2023, [url](#); India Narrative, Pakistani generals are Islamising secular Baloch society: Rights activist Qambar Malik Baloch, 29 July 2022, [url](#)

¹³¹⁷ The Balochistan Post, Balochistan Teacher Killing: Signalling Rise of Religious Extremism? — TBP Report, 7 August 2023, [url](#)

¹³¹⁸ Dawn, Inside Balochistan’s sectarian shift — the rise of IS from Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, 3 October 2023, [url](#)

¹³¹⁹ The BNM, Pakistan’s policy of religious radicalization in Balochistan, last updated 15 November 2022, [url](#); Dawn, Religion, Nationalism And Insurgency In Balochistan, 14 July 2019, [url](#)

¹³²⁰ The BNM, Pakistan’s policy of religious radicalization in Balochistan, last updated 15 November 2022, [url](#)

¹³²¹ The BNM, Pakistan’s policy of religious radicalization in Balochistan, last updated 15 November 2022, [url](#); Dawn, Religion, Nationalism And Insurgency In Balochistan, 14 July 2019, [url](#)

¹³²² The Balochistan Post, Zikri pilgrims attacked by religious extremists near Panjgur, 29 August 2017, [url](#)

¹³²³ The BNM, Pakistan’s policy of religious radicalization in Balochistan, last updated 15 November 2022, [url](#)

¹³²⁴ The Friday Times, [url](#), 24 March 2022, [url](#); The Baloch News, Zikri community and Koh-e-Murad, 28 July 2019, [url](#)

¹³²⁵ The Balochistan Post, Turbat: Record Attendance at Zikri Community’s Choghhan Festival, 8 April 2024, [url](#)

¹³²⁶ The BNM, Pakistan’s policy of religious radicalization in Balochistan, last updated 15 November 2022, [url](#)

¹³²⁷ The Balochistan Post, Zikri pilgrims attacked by religious extremists near Panjgur, 29 August 2017, [url](#)

¹³²⁸ The Balochistan Post, Turbat: Pakistani security forces detain Zikri pilgrims, 25 April 2022, [url](#)



6.3. Individuals accused of blasphemy

Sources reported that blasphemy laws have increasingly been misused in Pakistan to settle personal disputes, not only against the religious minorities (especially Ahmadis, Christians and Hindu) but also against Muslims.¹³²⁹ Executive Director at AGHS, Nida Aly observed that the law has been ‘weaponised’, and most blasphemy cases are now triggered by false accusations, often premeditated to settle personal issues.¹³³⁰ Several populist politicians and religious political parties in the country reportedly use blasphemy laws for their political agendas and as a way to win additional votes.¹³³¹ TLP (a proscribed organisation, which later became a political party)¹³³² is reported to be the party exercising maximum political pressure on blasphemy cases, as well as growing ideological influence on segments of society.¹³³³ Nida Aly stated that the party is bringing forward certain demands that are detrimental to all rights, including those of women and religious minorities, adding that ‘the government seems willing to entertain these demands while a huge population of youth in Pakistan is also very vulnerable to such opinions.’¹³³⁴ As pointed out by HRCP senior council member Farhatullah Babar, ‘with some religious political groups whose sole agenda is to propagate hatred, there is a general ambience of hatred in the society as well’.¹³³⁵

The discussion on blasphemy law and its use remains a highly sensitive and dangerous issue in Pakistan. Although many believe that these laws are being misused, the fear of repercussions makes it difficult to challenge such abuse publicly. Activists and individuals who speak against the misuse of these laws face threats, violence, and even death.¹³³⁶ NCHR stated that, along with other organisations, they have continued advocating for changes to the mindset of an ‘increasing radicalised’ society, which allows for the law to be distorted and misused. At the same time, NCHR admitted that ‘advocacy on this issue is difficult, especially in an environment where you might be accused of being complicit.’¹³³⁷ Unfounded accusations of blasphemy,¹³³⁸ as well as misinformation and disinformation campaigns on social media can lead to *fatwas*¹³³⁹ and death sentences and can trigger mob violence against alleged perpetrators.¹³⁴⁰ In March 2024, a 22-year-old student was sentenced to death and a 17-year-

¹³²⁹ Babar F., Senior council member at HRCP, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024; Al Jazeera, Pakistan’s blasphemy law: All you need to know, 18 August 2023, [url](#); DW, Pakistan: Police blasphemy killings raise new concerns, 26 September 2024, [url](#); USCIRF, Issue Update: Assessing Blasphemy in Pakistan, December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

¹³³⁰ Aly, N., Executive Director at AGHS, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹³³¹ Kuru A. T., The politics of blasphemy: Why Pakistan and some other Muslim countries are passing new blasphemy laws, 6 February 2023, [url](#); USCIRF, Issue Update: Assessing Blasphemy in Pakistan, December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

¹³³² Diplomat (The), Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan: From Street Power to Electoral Force?, 17 May 2021, [url](#); Vice, How This Extremist Political Party Got Itself Banned and Then Unbanned, 12 November 2021, [url](#)

¹³³³ Atlantic Council, Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan: An emerging right-wing threat to Pakistan’s democracy, 15 January 2022, [url](#); Reuters, Who are the Pakistani Islamists vowing ‘death to blasphemers’?, 21 August 2023, [url](#); Aly, N., Executive Director at AGHS, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹³³⁴ Aly, N., Executive Director at AGHS, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹³³⁵ Babar, F., Senior council member at HRCP, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹³³⁶ Aurat Foundation, Pakistan based NGO, online interview with EUAA, 20 September 2024

¹³³⁷ Senior representatives at NCHR Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹³³⁸ BBC, Tourist accused of blasphemy killed by mob in Pakistan, 21 June 2024, [url](#)

¹³³⁹ A fatwa is ‘a non-binding opinion, interpretation or academic opinion on an issue within the Sharia, rendered by a suitably qualified legal scholar. Fatwas are usually issued in response to queries from individuals or Islamic courts.’ See Netherlands, General Country of Origin Information Report on Pakistan July 2024, [url](#), p. 101

¹³⁴⁰ Aly, N., Executive Director at AGHS, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024



old student to life imprisonment for sharing pictures and videos deemed blasphemous on WhatsApp. According to their lawyers, the two students had been ‘trapped in a false case’.¹³⁴¹

Law enforcement officers and judges face similar fear and threats. When mob violence occurs, in some cases, local police is reluctant to intervene for fear of being branded as blasphemers themselves.¹³⁴² Similarly, judges hearing blasphemy cases face pressure in handing down accusations, regardless of the evidence.¹³⁴³ As explained by Executive Director at AGHS, protecting people accused of blasphemy is ‘a big risk’ for police, lawyers, judges. ‘The lack of protection from the government creates a climate of fear. Police officers are underpaid and offered very little protection. High Court judges are more protected, yet they are reluctant in acquitting people accused of blasphemy even when there is no evidence, as this can backfire.’¹³⁴⁴ For more information, please see section [5.3. Blasphemy law](#).

6.3.1. Vigilante justice and response by state authorities

Various sources reported on an intensification of mob violence against individuals perceived as blaspheme, especially against religious minorities,¹³⁴⁵ (for more information, please see Section [6.2 Religious minorities](#)), but also politicians, students, clerics and people with mental illnesses.¹³⁴⁶ Farhatullah Babar stated that, in the current environment in Pakistan, ‘anyone accused of blasphemy is highly likely to be killed by a mob.’¹³⁴⁷ There have been several reports of individuals being attacked or lynched to death by mobs after being accused of ‘blasphemous’ actions,¹³⁴⁸ such as wearing a dress adorned with Arabic calligraphy, mistakenly considered as Quran verses.¹³⁴⁹ So-called vigilante justice mobs have also vandalised and set fire on worship places, houses and cemeteries of religious minorities over blasphemy accusations.¹³⁵⁰ Between May and June 2024, incidents of mob violence in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces are reported to have caused injuries, killings, and destruction of property.¹³⁵¹

¹³⁴¹ BBC, Pakistan blasphemy: Student sentenced to death over Whatsapp messages, 8 March 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁴² Aly, N., Executive Director at AGHS, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024; Senior representatives at NCHR Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024; Aurat Foundation, Pakistan based NGO, online interview with EUAA, 20 September 2024

¹³⁴³ Al Jazeera, Pakistan’s blasphemy law: All you need to know, 18 August 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁴⁴ Aly N., Executive Director at AGHS, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹³⁴⁵ UN CERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan*, CERD/C/PAK/CO/24-26, 24 September 2024, [url](#), para 15; HRW, World Report 2024 – Events of 2023, Pakistan, 11 January 2024, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Pakistan: When a blasphemy accusation is evidence; the sentence often death, 29 February 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁴⁶ Al Jazeera, Pakistan’s blasphemy law: All you need to know, 18 August 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁴⁷ Babar F., Senior council member at HRCP, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹³⁴⁸ HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), pp. 8, 16; BBC, Tourist accused of blasphemy killed by mob in Pakistan, 21 June 2024, [url](#); Reuters, Pakistani Christian community attacked after blasphemy accusation, 25 May 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁴⁹ BBC, Pakistan woman in Arabic script dress saved from mob claiming blasphemy, 26 February 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁵⁰ Reuters, Pakistan crowd vandalises churches, torches homes after blasphemy accusation, 16 August 2023, [url](#); HRW, Pakistan: Mob Attacks Christian Settlement, 22 August 2023, minorities over the last 12 months, 18 August 2023, [url](#); Dawn, A timeline of attacks on religious, [url](#)

¹³⁵¹ UN CERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan*, CERD/C/PAK/CO/24-26, 24 September 2024, [url](#), para 15



Human rights groups pointed out that state authorities have responded with impunity towards mob violence linked to blasphemy cases.¹³⁵² NCHR noted that ‘due to the increasing radicalisation of the society, there is a certain lack of implementation of existing legal safeguards and protections.’¹³⁵³ According to AGHS, since August 2023, following the vigilante justice incidents in Jaranwala, Sargodha and Swat,¹³⁵⁴ (for more information, please see section [6.2 Religious minorities](#)), ‘a very dangerous precedent has been set, with no accountability for these incidents: not a single person has been convicted, most of the accused have been let out on bail. Such is the pressure of the religious parties.’ The same source further stated that, while it is true that police officers have also come under fire in some areas where they intervened to protect minorities from mob violence, in some other cases they have been complicit, ‘standing by and watching the violence unfold.’¹³⁵⁵ UN CERD stated to be concerned that less than 7 % of suspects were arrested over the violent attacks that took place in Sialkot in 2021 and Jaranwala in 2023, adding to be concerned about the ‘insufficient measures’ taken by the state to enforce laws safeguarding the right to fair trial or to prevent reprisals.¹³⁵⁶

In addition, HRCP has warned about a trend¹³⁵⁷ recently observed, regarding reports of extrajudicial killings by police officers of individuals suspected of blasphemy.¹³⁵⁸ In two separate cases, in September 2024, a police officer in Quetta shot and killed a man who was being held in custody on blasphemy allegations,¹³⁵⁹ while a doctor was reportedly shot and killed by a police officer in a police station in Sindh province.¹³⁶⁰ Referring to these recent incidents, senior council member at HRCP, Farhatullah Babar, told the EUAA that these cases show how ‘vigilantism mentality has grown to such an extent that it is not only perpetrated by the mob, but also by state institutions.’¹³⁶¹

¹³⁵² AI, Pakistan: One year since Jaranwala attack, minority Christians await justice, 16 August 2024, [url](#); Babar F., Senior council member at HRCP, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024; Aly N., Executive Director at AGHS, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹³⁵³ Senior representatives at NCHR Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹³⁵⁴ For more information on these incidents see AI, Pakistan: One year since Jaranwala attack, minority Christians await justice, 16 August 2024, [url](#); Dawn, HRCP blames loudspeaker, pulpit misuse for Sargodha blasphemy cases, 7 October 2023, [url](#); Dawn, A timeline of attacks on religious minorities over the last 12 months, 18 August 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁵⁵ Aly N., Executive Director at AGHS, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹³⁵⁶ UN CERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan*, CERD/C/PAK/CO/24-26, 24 September 2024, [url](#), para 15

¹³⁵⁷ Babar F., Senior council member at HRCP, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹³⁵⁸ DW, Pakistan: Police blasphemy killings raise new concerns, 26 September 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁵⁹ AP, A Pakistani policeman shoots and kills a blasphemy suspect held at a police station, 12 September 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁶⁰ AP, The family of a doctor accused of blasphemy in Pakistan says police killed him in a fake encounter, 23 September 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁶¹ Babar F., Senior council member at HRCP, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024



6.4. Critical voices and individuals perceived as opposing the state

6.4.1. Members and supporters of opposition parties

The Constitution guarantees freedom of association (article 17), '[...] subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of sovereignty or integrity of Pakistan, public order or morality.'¹³⁶²

On 29 December 2023, the Islamabad High Court ruled that the federal capital's deputy commissioner has no authority to issue detention orders under section 3 of the 1960 Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) Ordinance.¹³⁶³

Alleged crackdown on supporters of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) by Pakistani authorities continued in 2024¹³⁶⁴ with reported arrests of PTI-affiliated supporters.¹³⁶⁵ Prior to the general election in February 2024, sources expressed their concern on election-related violence against political parties and candidates.¹³⁶⁶ Sources reported on PTI supporters being subjected to political repression¹³⁶⁷ and arrests.¹³⁶⁸ In July 2024, the police raided the PTI's offices.¹³⁶⁹ According to the police, 'the raid was conducted due to [PTI] running a disinformation campaign against the country.'¹³⁷⁰ On 7 October 2024, police filed a case against Khan, 200 PTI members, workers, and lawyers.¹³⁷¹ The case was filed under First Information Report (FIR) on sedition, terrorism and attempted murder charges.¹³⁷² The PTI founder and 200 members were allegedly accused of 'rebellion and terrorism', inciting

¹³⁶² Pakistan, National Assembly of Pakistan, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, [url](#), Art. 17

¹³⁶³ Pakistan, Punjab Laws, The Punjab Maintenance of Public Order Ordinance, 1960, [url](#); Dawn, IHC rules Islamabad DC lacks authority to issue orders under MPO, 30 December 2023, [url](#); Pakistan Today, Arrest under MPO without sufficient evidence tantamount to abuse of power: IHC, 30 December 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁶⁴ Guardian (The), Pakistan bans Pashtun group as government cracks down on dissent, 7 October 2024, [url](#); HRW, Pakistan Government Intensifies Crackdown on Political Dissent, 9 October 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁶⁵ Reuters, Pakistan police arrests jailed ex-PM Imran Khan's aides, 22 July 2024, [url](#); AA, Pakistan arrests opposition lawmakers, leaders day after massive rally, 10 September 2024, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Pakistan police arrest lawmakers, leaders from former PM Imran Khan's party, 10 September 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁶⁶ UN OHCHR, Concerns over violence against political parties and candidates ahead of Pakistan elections, 6 February 2024, [url](#); ACLED, Election-related violence in Pakistan, ACLED Insight, 14 February 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁶⁷ ACLED, Political Repression and Militant Targeting Set the Stage for Pakistan's 2024 Elections, 1 February 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁶⁸ Al Jazeera, Pakistan ex-PM Imran Khan sentenced to 10 years jail in state secrets case, 30 January 2024, [url](#); Guardian (The), Imran Khan handed 10 years in prison for leaking state secrets, 30 January 2024, [url](#); BBC, Imran Khan: Pakistan former PM jailed for 10 years in state secrets case, 30 January 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁶⁹ Al Jazeera, Pakistan police raid ex-Prime Minister Imran Khan's party HQ, 22 July 2024, [url](#); AA, Pakistani police raid opposition party office amid ex-Premier Imran Khan's legal wins, 22 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁷⁰ AA, Pakistani police raid opposition party office amid ex-Premier Imran Khan's legal wins, 22 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁷¹ Express Tribune (The), Imran Khan, 200 PTI workers charged with 'rebellion against state' and 'terrorism', 6 October 2024, [url](#); Dawn, FIR amid Lahore PTI protest carries sedition, terrorism, attempted murder charges against Imran, others, 7 October 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁷² Express Tribune (The), Imran Khan, 200 PTI workers charged with 'rebellion against state' and 'terrorism', 6 October 2024, [url](#); Dawn, FIR amid Lahore PTI protest carries sedition, terrorism, attempted murder charges against Imran, others, 7 October 2024, [url](#)



violence against the state.¹³⁷³ In October 2024, police raided the house of PTI-affiliated politician Zartaj Gul and arrested her¹³⁷⁴ under section 3 of the MPO Ordinance.¹³⁷⁵ Gul was released from jail on 9 October 2024 on court orders.¹³⁷⁶

On 6 October 2024, the federal government issued an official ban on Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM),¹³⁷⁷ designating it as a 'proscribed organization'.¹³⁷⁸ The state authorities invoked the Section 11-B of the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997¹³⁷⁹ and banned the PTM due to security concerns.¹³⁸⁰ Sources indicated that the ban on PTM alienates the Pashtun minority¹³⁸¹ instead of engaging it.¹³⁸² AI demanded a revocation of the ban.¹³⁸³

In March 2024, CIVICUS reported a continues crackdown on opposition protests.¹³⁸⁴ On 5 March 2024, the CIVICUS Monitor 'added Pakistan to its watchlist of countries experiencing rapid declines in civic freedoms following the repression against the opposition, the censorship of journalists and attacks on peaceful protests'.¹³⁸⁵ According to CIVICUS, as of 25 October 2024, the civic space in Pakistan remained 'repressed'.¹³⁸⁶

Following the judicial changes introduced by the government under the title 'Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Bill 2024', PTI supporters organised nationwide protests in October 2024.¹³⁸⁷ The central government deployed the national army under article 245 of the Constitution while the Punjab authorities enforced section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).¹³⁸⁸ Sources reported on increased security deployments,¹³⁸⁹ violence,¹³⁹⁰

¹³⁷³ Express Tribune (The), Imran Khan, 200 PTI workers charged with 'rebellion against state' and 'terrorism', 6 October 2024, [url](#); Pakistan Today, PTI founder, 200 workers charged with 'rebellion' and 'terrorism', 7 October 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁷⁴ Dawn, Zartaj Gul arrested in raid at house, 6 October 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁷⁵ Lead Pakistan, Zartaj Gul arrested from residence, 6 October 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁷⁶ Pakistan Today, PTI's Zartaj Gul released from jail on court orders, 9 October 2024, [url](#); Frontier Post (The), PTI's Zartaj Gul released from DG Khan central jail, 9 October 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁷⁷ Hindu (The), Pakistan government bans ethnic Pashtun party, 7 October 2024, [url](#); Pakistan Today, Federal government officially bans Pashtun Tahafuz Movement, 6 October 2024, [url](#); ANI, Widespread condemnation as Pakistan bans Pashtun Rights Movement, 6 October 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁷⁸ RFE/RL, Pakistan Bans Pashtun Civil Rights Movement As Threat To Security, 6 October 2024, [url](#); VoA, Pakistan counters criticism of crackdown on ethnic rights group, 9 October 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁷⁹ AI, Pakistan: Authorities must immediately revoke ban on Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement, 8 October 2024, [url](#); Express Tribune (The), Govt bans PTM under anti-terror law, 7 October 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁸⁰ Al Jazeera, Pakistan bans prominent Pashtun rights group citing security concerns, 7 October 2024, [url](#); RFE/RL, Pakistan Bans Pashtun Civil Rights Movement As Threat To Security, 6 October 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁸¹ RFE/RL, Pakistan Bans Pashtun Civil Rights Movement As Threat To Security, 6 October 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁸² Asia Times, Instead of banning the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement, engage it, 11 October 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁸³ AI, Pakistan: Authorities must immediately revoke ban on Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement, 8 October 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁸⁴ CIVICUS, Pakistan: New government continues blocking the internet and persecuting journalists and activists, 25 March 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁸⁵ CIVICUS, Pakistan added to human rights watchlist amid election fallout, 5 March 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁸⁶ CIVICUS, Pakistan, n.d.,, [url](#)

¹³⁸⁷ ANI, PTI to hold nationwide protests following judicial overhauls in Pakistan, 1 October 2024, [url](#); Crisis 24, Pakistan: Security curbs active in several cities amid planned rallies by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party /update 1, 1 October 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁸⁸ Dawn, Punjab govt imposes Section 144 in Faisalabad, Bahawalpur, Mianwali ahead of planned PTI protests, 1 October 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁸⁹ Crisis 24, Pakistan: Tight security, traffic curbs affecting Islamabad and Rawalpindi as of Oct. 4 due to risk of unrest through at least early October /update 1, 4 October 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁹⁰ Dawn, Violence once again, 6 October 2024, [url](#)



including clashes between police and protesters,¹³⁹¹ use of excessive force by police,¹³⁹² mass arrests of protesters,¹³⁹³ and casualties.¹³⁹⁴ Mobile and internet services were suspended by the authorities in multiple cities.¹³⁹⁵

6.4.2. Human rights defenders and activists

The right to freedom of assembly is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (article 16).¹³⁹⁶ However, the same article also outlines that the freedom of assembly is ‘[...] subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of public order.’¹³⁹⁷ In addition, the Constitution stipulates that ‘Every citizen shall have the right to form associations or unions, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of sovereignty or integrity of Pakistan, public order or morality’.¹³⁹⁸ While the Constitution guarantees freedom of assembly and association, according to Freedom House, ‘the government can harness legal provisions to arbitrarily ban any gathering that [the state authorities] designate as a threat to public order.’¹³⁹⁹

In a 2024 report, Bertelsmann Stiftung indicated that ‘[...] laws like PECA [Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act] continue to be used by agencies such as FIA [Federal Investigation Agency] to conduct far-reaching and often opaque investigations into the activities of dissidents, activists and citizens.’¹⁴⁰⁰ The same source reported that ‘[...] investigative agencies such as the FIA and laws such as PECA are routinely used to harass and intimidate activists, while hundreds of individuals have gone “missing” in Pakistan over the past two decades.’¹⁴⁰¹ Moreover, ‘[...] social movements that voice dissent or opposition to the state or entrenched interests, such as those of the military, are often met with repression and persecution.’¹⁴⁰²

In March 2024, CIVICUS reported a continues crackdown on protests by the opposition.¹⁴⁰³

¹³⁹¹ Reuters, Dozens of Pakistan police injured in clashes with supporters of former PM Khan, 5 October 2024, [url](#); Dawn, As police clash with PTI over protest, army deployed in Islamabad for security ahead of SCO moot, 4 October 2024, [url](#); Dawn, Interior minister vows strict action after day of clashes between Islamabad police, PTI protesters, 5 October 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁹² Arab News, Tear gas shelling, arrests at site of Islamabad protest by PTI party as government vows action, 4 October 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁹³ Al Jazeera, Supporters of jailed ex-PM rally in Pakistan despite police crackdown, 5 October 2024, [url](#); Dawn, At least 30 arrested as mobile, internet services remain suspended in twin cities amid PTI rally, 4 October 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁹⁴ Dawn, Islamabad policeman passes away after being injured in weekend clashes: police, 6 October 2024, [url](#); Pakistan Today, Casualties and arrests reported as PTI protest in Islamabad continues, 6 October 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁹⁵ Dawn, Mobile services suspended in twin cities as all entry, exit points blocked ahead of PTI rally, 4 October 2024, [url](#); Washington Post (The), Pakistan capital locked down to thwart a rally to support ex-leader Imran Khan, 4 October 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁹⁶ Pakistan, National Assembly of Pakistan, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, [url](#), Art. 16

¹³⁹⁷ Pakistan, National Assembly of Pakistan, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, [url](#), Art. 16

¹³⁹⁸ Pakistan, National Assembly of Pakistan, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, [url](#), Art. 17

¹³⁹⁹ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024, Pakistan, 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰⁰ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report - Pakistan. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2024, [url](#), p. 13

¹⁴⁰¹ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report - Pakistan. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2024, [url](#), p. 30

¹⁴⁰² Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report - Pakistan. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2024, [url](#), p. 30

¹⁴⁰³ CIVICUS, Pakistan: New government continues blocking the internet and persecuting journalists and activists, 25 March 2024, [url](#)



In September 2024, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) legislators¹⁴⁰⁴ introduced a new bill titled the Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Act in the Senate.¹⁴⁰⁵ The president signed the bill into law one week later.¹⁴⁰⁶ According to Al Jazeera the bills grant the authorities the right to regulate and ban public demonstrations and gatherings in Islamabad.¹⁴⁰⁷ Moreover, the bill increases the maximum penalty for taking part in an ‘unlawful assembly’ to three years of imprisonment.¹⁴⁰⁸ According to the Deputy Regional Director for South Asia at Amnesty International (AI) Babu Ram Pant, the Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Act ‘is yet another attack on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly in Pakistan.’¹⁴⁰⁹

In 2022, the federal government enacted the Policy for Local non-governmental organisations (NGOs)/non-profit organisations (NPOs) Receiving Foreign Contributions to regulate and streamline the foreign funding process for NGOs and NPOs.¹⁴¹⁰ However, in February 2024, the policy was challenged in court by HRCP.¹⁴¹¹ In September 2024, the Lahore High Court issued a judgement¹⁴¹² overturning the policy¹⁴¹³ and declaring it ‘unlawful, invalid, and of no legal effect.’¹⁴¹⁴

According to the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL), which reports on the legal environment aspect of civic space,¹⁴¹⁵ despite recent government regulations causing many civil society organisations (CSOs) in Pakistan to become inactive, the country still has numerous organisations that employ thousands of staff.¹⁴¹⁶ As reported by the ICNL, the not-for-profit sector in Pakistan has grown in size and scope of work over the recent years.¹⁴¹⁷ According to the same source, there are approximately 45 000 organisations in Pakistan, employing around 300 000 people.¹⁴¹⁸

Freedom House indicated that ‘[f]oreign and domestic non-governmental organizations (NGOs) face government-imposed restrictions. Organizations are subject to intrusive registration requirements and vetting by military intelligence officials’¹⁴¹⁹ Similarly, Human Rights Watch indicates that the government uses regulation policies to impede the registration and functioning of international humanitarian and human rights groups.¹⁴²⁰ The same source reported that many civil society groups resorted to self-censorship due to the climate of fear

¹⁴⁰⁴ Al Jazeera, Why is Pakistan planning to ban rallies and public gatherings in Islamabad?, 4 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰⁵ Pakistan, Senate of Pakistan, The Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Act, 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰⁶ Dawn, President signs public order bill into law in ‘haste’, 8 September 2024, [url](#); Al, Pakistan: The new Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Act threatens the right to protest, 9 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰⁷ Al Jazeera, Why is Pakistan planning to ban rallies and public gatherings in Islamabad?, 4 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰⁸ Dawn, President signs public order bill into law in ‘haste’, 8 September 2024, [url](#); Al, Pakistan: The new Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Act threatens the right to protest, 9 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰⁹ Al, Pakistan: The new Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Act threatens the right to protest, 9 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴¹⁰ Voicepk.net, LHC strikes down federal cabinet’s NGO foreign funding policy, 6 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴¹¹ News International (The), HRCP welcomes LHC verdict on NGOs, 7 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴¹² ICNL, Writ Petition No.15453/2024, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan vs Federation of Pakistan through Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Islamabad and another, Judgement, 6 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴¹³ Voicepk.net, LHC strikes down federal cabinet’s NGO foreign funding policy, 6 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴¹⁴ Dawn, LHC sets aside govt policy to regulate NGOs’ funding, 8 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴¹⁵ ICNL, About Us, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴¹⁶ ICNL, Pakistan, 17 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴¹⁷ ICNL, Pakistan, 17 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴¹⁸ ICNL, Pakistan, 17 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴¹⁹ Freedom House, Freedom in the world 2024, Pakistan, 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴²⁰ HRW, Pakistan, Events of 2023, 2024, [url](#)



created by government threats and attacks on the media.¹⁴²¹ According to Human Rights Watch, NGOs reported surveillance of various groups by government authorities.¹⁴²² In an interview with the EUAA in September 2024, a senior representatives at the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) stated that Pakistan has a very broad spectrum of NGOs.¹⁴²³ The same source observed a trend of more people actively standing up for their rights and freedoms in Pakistan.¹⁴²⁴ In 2024, VoA reported that Pakistan's military is increasingly threatening individuals involved in 'digital terrorism', a vague term that is not present in Pakistan's legal framework, with legal action.¹⁴²⁵ Some rights activists fear anyone who posts criticism of the military online can be accused of 'digital terrorism'.¹⁴²⁶

According to Front Line Defenders (FLD), 'human rights defenders in Pakistan are subjected to attacks and abuses, including extra-judicial killings and violence, arbitrary arrest and detention, brutal sectarian violence, abduction and enforced disappearance, surveillance, threats and judicial harassment.'¹⁴²⁷ Sources reported on allegedly false criminal cases filed against human rights defenders by the state authorities.¹⁴²⁸ Moreover, in 2023 and 2024, human rights defenders were subjected to the excessive use of force,¹⁴²⁹ arrests,¹⁴³⁰ enforced disappearances,¹⁴³¹ and killings.¹⁴³² In 2024, CIVICUS expressed concern about the failure to hold perpetrators accountable for violence against human rights defenders.¹⁴³³

¹⁴²¹ HRW, Pakistan, Events of 2023, 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴²² HRW, Pakistan, Events of 2023, 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴²³ Senior representatives at the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁴²⁴ Senior representatives at the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁴²⁵ VoA, 'Digital terrorism' spurs debate on social media use in Pakistan, 27 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴²⁶ VoA, 'Digital terrorism' spurs debate on social media use in Pakistan, 27 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴²⁷ FLD, #Pakistan, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴²⁸ FLD, False criminal cases including sedition charges filed against Baloch woman human rights defender Dr. Mahrang Baloch, 7 June 2024, [url](#); FLD, Brutal violence and reprisals against human rights defenders and peaceful protesters attending the Baloch National Gathering in Gwadar, 30 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴²⁹ ANI, Baloch Protest in Gwadar continues, activists allege massive use of force by Pakistan establishment, 4 August 2024, [url](#); CIVICUS, Pakistan: 'The government must hold accountable those responsible for excessive force against protesters', 29 June 2024, [url](#); FLD, Excessive use of force and arrest of Sasui Lohar, Sorath Lohar and other human rights defenders seeking justice in the killing of Hidayat Lohar in Sindh Province, 19 April 2024, [url](#); Voicepk.net, Aurat March condemns police blockade in Islamabad, 9 March 2024, [url](#); Protect Defenders, Pakistan: Excessive use of force and arrest of Baloch human rights defenders and peaceful protesters, 23 January 2024, [url](#); FLD, Pakistan: Excessive use of force and arrest of Baloch human rights defenders and peaceful protesters, 21 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴³⁰ AP, Pakistani police free 290 Baloch activists arrested while protesting extrajudicial killings, 25 December 2023,

[url](#); FLD, Pakistan: Excessive use of force and arrest of Baloch human rights defenders and peaceful protesters, 21 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴³¹ FLD, Hafeez Baloch, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴³² HRCP, HRCP calls for justice in suspected targeted killing of Hidayatullah Lohar, 25 March 2024, [url](#); FLD, Women human rights defenders Sasui Lohar and Sorath Lohar's father killed in Sindh Province, 6 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴³³ CIVICUS, Pakistan: Activists and journalists targeted, increased controls on online expression and crackdown on protests, 14 May 2024, [url](#)



Activists were subjected to persecution,¹⁴³⁴ intimidation¹⁴³⁵ and harassment¹⁴³⁶ by the state authorities. In 2023 and 2024, sources reported on cases of violence,¹⁴³⁷ arrests,¹⁴³⁸ and excessive use of force against activists by police.¹⁴³⁹

According to Bertelsmann Stiftung, Pakistan continues to witness the enforced disappearance of activists and individuals, who are allegedly kidnapped by the military and intelligence agencies.¹⁴⁴⁰ The same source reported that attempts to hold the government accountable for these acts have thus far foundered in the courts and in parliament.¹⁴⁴¹ The 2023 EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World indicated that Pakistan made ‘no progress on legislation criminalising and prosecuting enforced disappearances.’¹⁴⁴² In April 2024, sources expressed their concern about the forced disappearance of the Baloch civil society activist Jamil Umar.¹⁴⁴³

Extrajudicial killings continued to be used to target human rights activists and people voicing criticism of the authorities in 2023.¹⁴⁴⁴ In February 2024, in a demonstration organised by the HRCP, activists protested against the killing of a political activist and teacher Hidayat Lohar.¹⁴⁴⁵

6.4.3. Journalists and media workers

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan stipulates that ‘[e]very citizen shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression, and there shall be freedom of the press [...]’.¹⁴⁴⁶ However, the same article further stipulates that the freedom of speech is ‘[...] subject to any

¹⁴³⁴ CIVICUS, Pakistan: New government continues blocking the internet and persecuting journalists and activists, 25 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴³⁵ HRW, Pakistan, Events of 2023, 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴³⁶ USA, USDOS, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Pakistan, 2024, [url](#); CIVICUS, Pakistan: Activists and journalists targeted, increased controls on online expression and crackdown on protests, 14 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴³⁷ ANI, Geneva: Activists at UN highlight rampant human rights abuses in Pakistan, 4 October 2024, [url](#); HRW, Pakistan: Respect Rights in Response to Balochistan March, 31 July 2024, [url](#); Crisis 24, Pakistan: Baloch groups to protest in Gwadar, Balochistan Province, July 28, 25 July 2024, [url](#); CIVICUS, Pakistan: Activists and journalists targeted, increased controls on online expression and crackdown on protests, 14 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴³⁸ AP, Pakistani police free 290 Baloch activists arrested while protesting extrajudicial killings, 25 December 2023, [url](#); FLD, Pakistan: Excessive use of force and arrest of Baloch human rights defenders and peaceful protesters, 21 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴³⁹ ANI, Baloch Protest in Gwadar continues, activists allege massive use of force by Pakistan establishment, 4 August 2024, [url](#); CIVICUS, Pakistan: ‘The government must hold accountable those responsible for excessive force against protesters’, 29 June 2024, [url](#); FLD, Excessive use of force and arrest of Sasui Lohar, Sorath Lohar and other human rights defenders seeking justice in the killing of Hidayat Lohar in Sindh Province, 19 April 2024, [url](#); Voicepk.net, Aurat March condemns police blockade in Islamabad, 9 March 2024, [url](#); ProtectDefenders.eu, Pakistan: Excessive use of force and arrest of Baloch human rights defenders and peaceful protesters, 23 January 2024, [url](#); FLD, Pakistan: Excessive use of force and arrest of Baloch human rights defenders and peaceful protesters, 21 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴⁰ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report - Pakistan. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2024, [url](#), p. 13

¹⁴⁴¹ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report - Pakistan. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2024, [url](#), p. 13

¹⁴⁴² EEAS, EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2023 Country Updates, 24 May 2024, [url](#), p. 212

¹⁴⁴³ ThePrint, Human rights groups condemn Baloch social activist Jameel Umar’s disappearance, 19 April 2024, [url](#); HRCP, [X], posted: 18 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴⁴ EEAS, EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2023 Country Updates, 24 May 2024, [url](#), p. 212

¹⁴⁴⁵ Dawn, Rights activists protest murder of nationalist worker, 19 February 2024, [url](#); Balochistan Post (The), Sindh Activist Hidayat Lohar Assassinated in Naseerabad, 17 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴⁶ Pakistan, National Assembly of Pakistan, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, [url](#), Art. 19



reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of the glory of Islam or the integrity, security or defence of Pakistan [...].¹⁴⁴⁷ Enacted in 2016, the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA)¹⁴⁴⁸ is ‘used more to restrict online freedom of expression than to crack down on online crime’ as indicated by Reporters Without Borders (RSF).¹⁴⁴⁹

In 2021, the government passed the Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Act¹⁴⁵⁰ to ‘[...] promote, protect and effectively ensure the independence, impartiality, safety and freedom of expression of journalists and media professionals.’¹⁴⁵¹ As per article 12 of the 2021 Act, the government was tasked with the establishment of an independent commission for the protection of journalists and media professionals.¹⁴⁵² The creation of the commission was approved by the Senate in August 2024¹⁴⁵³, following the Sindh government’s commitment, expressed in June 2024 to ensure the safety of journalists.¹⁴⁵⁴

In an interview with the EUAA in September 2024, a senior council member at the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), Farhatullah Babar, described Pakistan as an over-regulated country in terms of media freedoms.¹⁴⁵⁵

In a 2024 report, Bertelsmann Stiftung stated that ‘while Pakistan has an often-combative media landscape, recent years have seen successive governments attempt to impose formal and informal curbs on the media by harassing journalists, making use of the PTA [Pakistan Telecommunications Authority] to discipline media outlets, and employing social media to disseminate propaganda and stifle dissent online.’¹⁴⁵⁶ In 2023 Human Rights Watch reported that ‘government threats and attacks on the media created a climate of fear among journalists [...], with many resorting to self-censorship.’¹⁴⁵⁷ The same source indicated that authorities pressured or threatened media outlets not to criticize government institutions or the judiciary.¹⁴⁵⁸ Also, according to the HRCP, ‘journalists reported self-censorship as well as censorship in 2023.’¹⁴⁵⁹

In an interview with the EUAA in September 2024, senior representatives at the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) in Pakistan stated that the NCHR is lobbying the

¹⁴⁴⁷ Pakistan, National Assembly of Pakistan, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, [url](#), Art. 19

¹⁴⁴⁸ Pakistan, National Assembly of Pakistan, The Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴⁹ RSF, Pakistan: Legal Framework, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴⁵⁰ IFJ, Pakistan: Senate passes bill to protect journalists and media professionals, 23 November 2021, [url](#); IPI, Pakistan passes milestone journalist safety legislation, 3 December 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵¹ Pakistan, National Assembly of Pakistan, Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Act, 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵² Pakistan, National Assembly of Pakistan, Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Act, 2021, [url](#), Art. 12

¹⁴⁵³ Express Tribune (The), Senate committee passes Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Bill with amendments, 28 August 2024, [url](#); Voicepk.net, UN body urges Pakistan to expedite formation of safety commission for journalists, 28 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵⁴ Dawn, Sindh govt says it is committed to journalists’ safety, 8 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵⁵ Farhatullah Babar, Senior council member at the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁴⁵⁶ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report - Pakistan. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2024, [url](#), p. 38

¹⁴⁵⁷ HRW, Pakistan: Events of 2023, 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵⁸ HRW, Pakistan: Events of 2023, 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵⁹ HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 15



government and working with the relevant departments on matters relating to the right to free speech and the issue of censorship of journalists and activists.¹⁴⁶⁰

In December 2023, the government suspended mobile internet and social media (including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube) amidst the clampdown of the PTI.¹⁴⁶¹ Also in 2024, the government imposed the suspension of mobile phone services,¹⁴⁶² internet shutdowns,¹⁴⁶³ and the ban of X (former Twitter)¹⁴⁶⁴ over national security concerns. In April 2024, the Pakistan High Court ordered the government to restore access to X (former Twitter) after more than two months of disruptions.¹⁴⁶⁵

Pakistan is 'one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists' according to RSF in 2024.¹⁴⁶⁶ The organisation reported 6 journalists killed between January and August 2024.¹⁴⁶⁷ According to Voice of America (VoA), 11 journalists were reportedly killed between January and September 2024, making it the deadliest year for journalists in Pakistan.¹⁴⁶⁸ Multiple other sources also reported on journalists killed in the line of duty.¹⁴⁶⁹ The RSF World Press Freedom Index ranks Pakistan on place 152 out of 180 countries in 2024.¹⁴⁷⁰ This constituted a decrease from place 150 in 2023.¹⁴⁷¹

According to Freedom House, 'journalists who are deemed to have antagonised the military through their reporting have been subject to enforced disappearance and other abuses.'¹⁴⁷² The same source stated that 'journalists also face assaults and intimidation while reporting on demonstrations.'¹⁴⁷³ Between January and October 2024, journalists experienced online

¹⁴⁶⁰ Senior representatives at the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁴⁶¹ EEAS, EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2023 Country Updates, 24 May 2024, [url](#), p. 212

¹⁴⁶² ANI, Amid ongoing unrest, mobile phone services remain suspended in Rawalpindi, Islamabad for third day, 6 October 2024, [url](#); Washington Post (The), Pakistan capital locked down to thwart a rally to support ex-leader Imran Khan, 4 October 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁶³ AI, Pakistan: Election-day internet shutdown is a reckless attack on people's rights, 8 February 2024, [url](#); CIVICUS, Pakistan: New government continues blocking the internet and persecuting journalists and activists, 25 March 2024, [url](#); AI, Pakistan: Civil Society Joint Statement Responding to Network Shutdowns and Platform Blocking, 15 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁶⁴ Dawn, The ministry of (dis)information and the ban on X, 25 April 2024, [url](#); Pakistan Today, Twitter still banned in Pakistan, clarifies PTA, 18 September 2024, [url](#); Reuters, Social media platform X blocked in Pakistan over national security, ministry says, 17 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁶⁵ France 24, Court orders Pakistan to restore social media site X: lawyer, 17 April 2024, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Pakistan says it blocked social media platform X over 'national security,' 17 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁶⁶ RSF, Pakistan, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴⁶⁷ RSF, Barometer: Pakistan, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴⁶⁸ VoA, Pakistan braces for deadliest year for journalists, setting grim record, 15 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁶⁹ Guardian (The), Record number of journalists killed in Pakistan already this year, 10 July 2024, [url](#); CPJ, Journalists Muhammad Bachal Ghunio and Nisar Lehri killed amid rising violence against press in Pakistan, 13 September 2024, [url](#); IFJ, Pakistan: Journalist shot and killed, 29 August 2024, [url](#); IPI, Pakistan: IPI condemns killing of journalist Malik Hassan Zeb, 27 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷⁰ RSF, 2024 World Press Freedom Index: Pakistan, 2024, 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷¹ RSF, 2023 World Press Freedom Index: Pakistan, 2023, 2024, [url](#); Dawn, Pakistan slides two places in RSF's press freedom index, 3 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷² Freedom House, Freedom in the World, 2024: Pakistan, 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷³ Freedom House, Freedom in the World, 2024: Pakistan, 2024, [url](#)



harassment,¹⁴⁷⁴ police raids,¹⁴⁷⁵ attacks,¹⁴⁷⁶ detention,¹⁴⁷⁷ arrests,¹⁴⁷⁸ and mutiny charges.¹⁴⁷⁹ Journalists were subjected to enforced disappearances¹⁴⁸⁰ with cases of enforced disappearances reported in 2024.¹⁴⁸¹

As reported by the United States Department of State (USDOS) in 2024, ‘observers alleged that some police and influential landlords harassed journalists attempting to protect victims and raise awareness of bonded labor crimes.’¹⁴⁸²

In an interview with the EUAA in September 2024, Nida Aly, Executive Director of AGHS in Pakistan, explained that ‘journalists have faced problems to continue working on mainstream TV channels to the extent that most of them have their private YouTube channel now.’¹⁴⁸³

Al Jazeera Media Institute reported the rise of the exiled Pakistani journalists in 2024.¹⁴⁸⁴ According to Deutsche Welle, some reasons forcing media professionals to leave [Pakistan] include ‘acute security risks, intimidation, online abuse and severe financial woes.’¹⁴⁸⁵ In 2023, USDOS reported that some Pakistan journalists were subjected to harassment and physical violence abroad when investigating and reporting on the Pakistani military’s actions and alleged human rights abuses.¹⁴⁸⁶

¹⁴⁷⁴ CFWIJ, Pakistan: Nadia Mirza Speaks Out Against Relentless Online Harassment, 16 September 2024, [url](#); CFWIJ, Pakistan: Benazir Shah Endures Coordinated Online Harassment and Hacking - Women Press Freedom Calls for Stricter Regulations, 26 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷⁵ CPJ, Pakistani journalist in hiding after police raid his home over protest reports, 7 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷⁶ IFJ, Pakistan: Two journalists attacked and tortured, 20 August 2024, [url](#); JURIST, CPJ calls for investigation of attacks against journalists in Pakistan, 5 June 2024, [url](#); IFJ, Pakistan: Journalist attacked in office in Islamabad, 9 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷⁷ RSF, Two Pakistani journalists detained for objecting to police raid on press club, 22 May 2024, [url](#); IFJ, Pakistan: Journalists detained at election site, 1 May 2024, [url](#); CFWIJ, Pakistan: Somiyah Hafeez Released After Unjust Detention Amid Baloch Protest Coverage, 20 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷⁸ VoA, Pakistan arrests prominent journalist for third time in a year, 12 June 2024, [url](#); Dawn, Anchorperson Imran Riaz handed over to police in fraud case, 12 June 2024, [url](#); OCCRP, Committee to Protect Journalists to Pakistan: Stop Harassing Reporter, 18 March 2024, [url](#); CPJ, Pakistan court remands journalist Asad Ali Toor in cybercrime case, 15 March 2024, [url](#); IFJ, Pakistan: Pakistani authorities arrest tv anchor Imran Riaz Khan again, 7 March 2024, [url](#); CPJ, Pakistani journalist Imran Riaz Khan held in terrorism investigation, 5 March 2024, [url](#); IFJ, Pakistan: Journalist arrested amid allegations of anti-judiciary campaign, 28 February 2024, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Pakistani journalist arrested for social posts against government officials, 27 February 2024, [url](#); Dawn, Anchorperson Imran Riaz sent to jail in corruption case following late-night arrest, 23 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷⁹ RSF, [X], posted on: 27 June 2024, [url](#); Nation (The), Mutiny case against journalists, vloggers: ATC records statement of witnesses, 1 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸⁰ AI, Human Rights Charter – Pakistan, 25 March 2024, [url](#), p. 2; HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 13

¹⁴⁸¹ AI, Pakistan: Journalist and poet faces charges after abduction: Ahmad Farhad, 3 July 2024, [url](#); HRCP, Post on X (former Twitter), 18 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸² USA, USDOS, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Pakistan, 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸³ Aly N., Executive Director Asma Jahangir Legal Aid Cell (AGHS), Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁴⁸⁴ Al Jazeera Media Institute, From TV Screens to YouTube: The Rise of Exiled Journalists in Pakistan, 28 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸⁵ DW, Press Freedom Day: Why are journalists fleeing Pakistan?, 3 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸⁶ USA, USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 2023, [url](#)



6.5. Women

Women in Pakistan face discrimination,¹⁴⁸⁷ including legal and economic, as well as various forms of societal violence.¹⁴⁸⁸ They are excluded or marginalised from public and political spheres, including in the electoral rolls,¹⁴⁸⁹ with a substantial voter gender gap in the country (9.94 million).¹⁴⁹⁰ The majority of out-of-school children in the country are girls.¹⁴⁹¹ For more information, please see section [6.6 Children](#).

Women engaged in activism against patriarchal practices are reported to face ‘some level of risk’ from family members and society,¹⁴⁹² experiencing significant barriers and backlash.¹⁴⁹³ Nonetheless, some positive changes were noted in recent years, including the emergence of a country-wide movement, specifically advocating for domestic violence laws,¹⁴⁹⁴ as well as an emerging growing awareness on domestic violence issues and relevant legal rights, especially among younger generations and university students.¹⁴⁹⁵ During the reference period of this report, in what was deemed as a ‘heartening development’ by the HRCP,¹⁴⁹⁶ Baloch women held demonstrations in Islamabad and Balochistan to protest against enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings.¹⁴⁹⁷ UN Women stated that in recent years the Pakistani Government has taken significant measures to improve gender equality, and many good practices have been implemented. At the same time, ‘highly patriarchal society, regressive social norms and gender stereotypes’ have continued to represent barriers, creating conditions for discrimination and violence against women and girls.¹⁴⁹⁸

In northwestern Pakistan, where the TTP is maintaining its presence with attempts to regain foothold,¹⁴⁹⁹ freedom and rights of the population living in these areas have reportedly been curbed, including those of women. For instance, restrictions on leaving their homes have been imposed on women in parts of these areas. Some schools for girls are reported to have been closed or destroyed,¹⁵⁰⁰ reflecting the influence of Taliban’s ban on girls’ education in

¹⁴⁸⁷ UN Women, National report on the status of women in Pakistan, June 2024, [url](#), p. 2; USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 73; BTI, BTI 2024 Country Report Pakistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 13, 18

¹⁴⁸⁸ HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 7; UN Women, National report on the status of women in Pakistan, June 2024, [url](#), pp. 2, 82-91

¹⁴⁸⁹ HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁴⁹⁰ AI, Pakistan: Human Rights Charter, 25 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 6-7

¹⁴⁹¹ World Bank, Five major challenges to girls’ education in Pakistan, June 2024, [url](#); Pakistan, Pakistan Institute of Education, Pakistan Education Statistics 2022-2023, [url](#), pp. 70-72

¹⁴⁹² Khan A., Pakistan’s National Commission on the Status of Women: a sandwich strategy initiative, CSSR and ARC, May 2021, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁴⁹³ AI, Pakistan: Human Rights Charter, 25 March 2024, [url](#); HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 75

¹⁴⁹⁴ Senior representatives at NCHR Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁴⁹⁵ Aurat Foundation, Pakistan based NGO, online interview with EUAA, 20 September 2024

¹⁴⁹⁶ HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁴⁹⁷ New Lines Magazine, Why Baloch Women in Pakistan Led an Unprecedented March, 13 May 2024, [url](#); Diplomat (The), Women Are Leading an Unprecedented Protest Movement in Balochistan, 19 December 2023, [url](#); HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁴⁹⁸ UN Women, National report on the status of women in Pakistan, June 2024, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁴⁹⁹ Akhtar S., Ahmed Z. S., Understanding the resurgence of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, in Dynamics Of Asymmetric Conflict, Vol. 16, N. 3, 285–306, 15 November 2023, [url](#), pp. 289-290

¹⁵⁰⁰ RFE/RL, ‘No One Is Safe’: Life Under The Rule Of The Pakistani Taliban, 10 September 2024, [url](#)



neighbouring Afghanistan.¹⁵⁰¹ For more information, please see sections [3.2.1 Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan \(TTP\)](#) and section [4.2.2 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa \(KP\)](#). According to HRCP, a *jirga* (assembly of tribal leaders) in the Khyber district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa banned women from visiting wheat distribution points for free flour established under the Benazir Income Support Programme.¹⁵⁰²

6.5.1. Violence against women

Gender-based violence is prevalent,¹⁵⁰³ and documented cases of violence against women reportedly increased during 2023, compared to 2022.¹⁵⁰⁴ The main forms of violence against women in Pakistan include domestic and honour-related violence, sexual assault, forced marriage, harassment in workplaces and public spheres, trafficking, and increasingly new emerging forms of online harassment.¹⁵⁰⁵

Despite a legal framework directed at tackling violence against women mostly being in place, implementation of the law remains an issue due to structural issues, a deeply rooted patriarchal environment,¹⁵⁰⁶ as well as a weak and ineffective judicial system.¹⁵⁰⁷ Conviction rates for gender-based crimes in Pakistan range from 1 % to 2.5 %.¹⁵⁰⁸ As noted by Executive Director at AGHS, Nida Aly, the current government is taking positive steps to implement the law, for instance by nominating special judges, special prosecutors, special investigating units in police. However, there is a ‘cultural mindset in society and a preset mindset within all actors of the criminal justice system which does not understand and acknowledge women as survivors or victims of violence.’ This is the case for instance for rape cases as well as for cases of so-called honour killings. The same source further observed that a ‘worrying and dangerous precedent’ was recently set by the Supreme Court by overturning ‘a rape conviction into consensual fornication’.¹⁵⁰⁹

(a) Sexual violence

The law defines rape as a criminal offence, although it does not explicitly criminalise spousal rape. Rape cases are reported as occurring frequently, but their prosecution remains rare.¹⁵¹⁰ According to HRCP’s monitoring, at least 631 women were raped and 277 gang-raped in 2023.¹⁵¹¹ The conviction rate in rape cases has been around 3 %, and only recently risen to 5 %. The general mindset within the criminal justice system, including judges and prosecutors,

¹⁵⁰¹ Lowy Institute, Targeting girls education: Pakistan’s tribal areas suffer under Taliban influence, 14 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰² HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁵⁰³ AI, Pakistan: Human Rights Charter, 25 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 6-7

¹⁵⁰⁴ HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 23

¹⁵⁰⁵ UN Women, National report on the status of women in Pakistan, June 2024, [url](#), pp. 82-89

¹⁵⁰⁶ Aurat Foundation, NCHR, UN women, More than Shelter: Needs Assessment of Dar ul Aman’s and Shelters in Pakistan, December 2023, [url](#), pp. 17-18; UN Women, National report on the status of women in Pakistan, June 2024, [url](#), p. 89

¹⁵⁰⁷ Aly N., Executive Director at AGHS, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024; AI, Pakistan: Human Rights Charter, 25 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 6-7; UN Women, National report on the status of women in Pakistan, June 2024, [url](#), pp. 92-93

¹⁵⁰⁸ AI, Pakistan: Human Rights Charter, 25 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 6-7

¹⁵⁰⁹ Aly N., Executive Director at AGHS, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁵¹⁰ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 64-65

¹⁵¹¹ HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 17



is that ‘every rape complaint is false.’¹⁵¹² Women might be reluctant to report violence – among other reasons – also to avoid harassment, including by law enforcement officers.¹⁵¹³

(b) Domestic and honour-related violence

In 2021, the proposal of a Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Bill faced significant opposition from lawmakers and religious groups.¹⁵¹⁴ The bill is enacted in all provinces except at federal level in the Islamabad Capital Territory.¹⁵¹⁵ The implementation of the law remains weak.¹⁵¹⁶ A cultural acceptance of violence against women is reported within the societal mindset at large.¹⁵¹⁷ Domestic violence, in particular, is perceived as a private matter which ‘shouldn’t be made public and shouldn’t be brought to court. Therefore, women are discouraged from talking about it.’¹⁵¹⁸

Honour-related killings are described as rampant.¹⁵¹⁹ According to HRCP’s media monitoring, at least 226 women were reportedly victims of honour-related crimes during 2023.¹⁵²⁰ Human Rights Watch, citing human rights defenders, reported an estimation of 1 000 women murdered for honour-related killings every year.¹⁵²¹ Some of the reasons that can trigger honour-related violence include refusing to enter into an arranged marriage; have been raped or sexually assaulted; dressing in ways deemed inappropriate; behaving in ways seen as disobedient. Some reports of honour related killings of women during the reference period of this report include the case of a 18-year-old girl in Kohistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, who was shot dead by her father and uncle in November 2023 after being seen with a man in a viral photo. The murder had reportedly been ordered by elders of a tribal *jirga*.¹⁵²² For more information, please see section [5.1. Formal and informal systems](#). In a separate case, in March 2024, a 22-year-old woman was strangled by her own brother and in the presence of her father for honour-related reasons.¹⁵²³ So-called ‘dowry death’ – also known as ‘bride burning’ or ‘stove deaths’ – is reportedly among the common forms of violence against women in Pakistan.¹⁵²⁴ Despite being banned in 2020, dowry and other family-related disputes have continued to occur and in some cases have resulted in death or disfigurement of women by burning. Other reports of disfigurement of women for ‘honour’ included cutting off their nose or ears or throwing acid in their face.¹⁵²⁵

¹⁵¹² Aly N., Executive Director at AGHS, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁵¹³ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 67-68; UN Women, National report on the status of women in Pakistan, June 2024, [url](#), pp. 91-92

¹⁵¹⁴ AI, Pakistan: Human Rights Charter, 25 March 2024, [url](#), p. 7; Diplomat (The), Shattering Silence: Pakistan’s Journey Against Gender-Based Violence, 1 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵¹⁵ Aly N., Executive Director at AGHS, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024; Aurat Foundation, Pakistan based NGO, online interview with EUAA, 20 September 2024

¹⁵¹⁶ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 67; Diplomat (The), Shattering Silence: Pakistan’s Journey Against Gender-Based Violence, 1 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵¹⁷ Aly N., Executive Director at AGHS, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁵¹⁸ Senior representatives at NCHR Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁵¹⁹ AI, Pakistan: Human Rights Charter, 25 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 6-7

¹⁵²⁰ HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 17

¹⁵²¹ HRW, World Report 2024 – Events of 2023, Pakistan, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵²² BBC, Pakistan: Woman killed after being seen with man in viral photo, 28 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵²³ RFE/RL-AFP, Pakistani Man Who Allegedly Filmed Sister’s ‘Honor’ Killing Arrested, 31 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵²⁴ Zia M. H., Hassan H. Laws against Domestic Violence in Pakistan: An Appraisal, in Journal of Development and Social Sciences Jan-Mar 2023, Vol. 4, No.1, [url](#), p. 282

¹⁵²⁵ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 69-72



Legal repercussions related to honour-related violence are said to be rare.¹⁵²⁶ AGHS observed that, despite all legislative efforts to counter honour killings, perpetrators of these crimes always find a way to get exonerated through loopholes in the system and due to a criminal justice system, which is ‘un-sensitised’ towards violence against women.¹⁵²⁷ According to the Aurat Foundation, since Pakistan’s legal framework includes provisions like ‘blood money’ (*diyeh*) for crimes such as murder, such system can sometimes be exploited by wealthy individuals, allowing them to avoid accountability by paying the victim’s family, leading to out-of-court settlements. This often leaves women without support, especially within the structure of nuclear families, which can compound their vulnerabilities.¹⁵²⁸ *Jirgas* (despite being declared unlawful by the Supreme Court of Pakistan in 2019),¹⁵²⁹ have continued to operate in the country and in some extreme cases have delivered death sentences for women accused of transgressing moral codes.¹⁵³⁰ Nadia Rahman, Amnesty International’s Deputy Regional Director for research in South Asia, said that ‘the continued failure of the Government of Pakistan to curb the extra-legal power of jirgas or tribal councils to run parallel legal systems’ has perpetuated patriarchal violence with impunity.¹⁵³¹ For more information, please see section [5. Structure and functioning of the judiciary](#).

Shelters for women and protection units centres exist in all provinces.¹⁵³² There are both state-run and private shelter homes.¹⁵³³ As of 2023, there were 48 government shelters for women (called Dar-ul-Aman) nation-wide and another 20 called Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Human Rights Centres for Women Crisis Centres (SBBWCCs).¹⁵³⁴ A study published in 2023,¹⁵³⁵ and conducted jointly by the Aurat Foundation, NCHR and UN women on 7 Dar-ul-Aman and 2 SBBWCCs shelters across the country found that these shelters are inadequate in terms of infrastructure and services provided. Nonetheless, residents surveyed stated to feel secure while staying there.¹⁵³⁶ Noting some positive developments, the Aurat Foundation stated that while previously, state-run shelters were bound by legal procedures to request a court order before admitting women in distress, now women are admitted immediately, with legal formalities to follow later. Also, increased presence of female managers in these shelters, coupled with the availability of helplines, has made these shelters more accessible and responsive to survivors’ needs. The same source also noted that private shelters tend to be

¹⁵²⁶ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 72

¹⁵²⁷ Aly N., Executive Director at AGHS, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁵²⁸ Aurat Foundation, Pakistan based NGO, online interview with EUAA, 20 September 2024

¹⁵²⁹ RSIL, Jirga System in Pakistan: A transgression of human rights, 11 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵³⁰ UN OHCHR, Experts of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Commend Pakistan on “A” Status for National Human Rights Commission, Raise Questions on Blasphemy Laws and the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan, 9 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵³¹ AI, Pakistan: Authorities must end impunity of tribal councils as so-called “honour killings” continue unabated, 30 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵³² Senior representatives at NCHR Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁵³³ Aurat Foundation, Pakistan based NGO, online interview with EUAA, 20 September 2024

¹⁵³⁴ Aurat Foundation, NCHR, UN women, More than Shelter: Needs Assessment of Dar ul Aman’s and Shelters in Pakistan, December 2023, [url](#), pp. 17-19, 39 ; Pakistan, Ministry of Human Rights, Women Centres, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁵³⁵ The study was conducted during 2018-2019 and updated in 2023. For more information on the methodology see Aurat Foundation, NCHR, UN women, More than Shelter: Needs Assessment of Dar ul Aman’s and Shelters in Pakistan, December 2023, [url](#), pp. 37-42

¹⁵³⁶ Aurat Foundation, NCHR, UN women, More than Shelter: Needs Assessment of Dar ul Aman’s and Shelters in Pakistan, December 2023, [url](#), pp. 17-19, 39





more effective in providing assistance to women survivors of violence and human trafficking.¹⁵³⁷

(c) Forced conversion, forced and child marriage

Forced and child marriage of women is a serious and widespread issue throughout Pakistan.¹⁵³⁸ Women and underage girls from religious minorities have been particularly affected not only by forced and early marriage, but also by forced conversion to Islam.¹⁵³⁹ For more information, please see Section [6.2 Religious minorities](#). The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimated that 18.9 million girls in Pakistan are married before the age of 18 and 4.6 million before the age of 15. This means that one in six girls were married in childhood.¹⁵⁴⁰

Under the Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929,¹⁵⁴¹ the legal age for marriage is 16 for women and 18 for men, except in Sindh Province where the age was raised to 18 for both women and men. In the recently amended Christian Marriage Act 1872 and Hindu Marriage Act 2017, the legal age for marriage is 18 for both men and women.¹⁵⁴² Legislative proposals to raise the age of marriage for girls from 16 to 18 years at federal level have faced opposition in Parliament.¹⁵⁴³ Executive Director at AGHS Nida Aly noted that, besides the need to increase the age of marriage as a measure to fight forced conversion and forced marriage of girls, the law itself would need other amendments in order to ensure full protection to girls even under 16. She noted that whilst the law criminalises anybody who engineers a child marriage, not one single person has been convicted under this law since 1980.¹⁵⁴⁴ Despite a 'robust ecosystem of laws' in place,¹⁵⁴⁵ and despite the recent legal reforms (e.g., Hindu and Sikh marriage laws), the implementation of these laws remains a problem¹⁵⁴⁶ and the government has made little efforts to stop such early and forced marriages.¹⁵⁴⁷

The phenomenon of forced conversion and forced marriage of girls affected Hindu, Christian and Sikh communities,¹⁵⁴⁸ but mostly Hindu and Christian girls in Sindh¹⁵⁴⁹ and Punjab Provinces.¹⁵⁵⁰ Referring to data by the Centre for Social Justice, Nida Aly stated that between 2021 and 2023, 338 cases of forced conversions were recorded, out of which 230 were

¹⁵³⁷ Aurat Foundation, Pakistan based NGO, online interview with EUAA, 20 September 2024

¹⁵³⁸ HRW, World Report 2024 – Events of 2023, Pakistan, 11 January 2024, [url](#); Babar F., Senior council member at HRCP, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024; Aurat Foundation, Pakistan based NGO, online interview with EUAA, 20 September 2024

¹⁵³⁹ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 30 June 2024, [url](#), pp. 1-3; AI, Pakistan: Human Rights Charter, 25 March 2024, [url](#), p. 7; HRW, World Report 2024 – Events of 2023, Pakistan, 11 January 2024, [url](#); UN CERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan*, CERD/C/PAK/CO/24-26, 24 September 2024, [url](#), para 15

¹⁵⁴⁰ UNICEF, Child Marriage Country Profile, Pakistan, *n.d.*, [url](#)

¹⁵⁴¹ Pakistan: Act No. XIX of 1929. Child Marriage Restraint Act. [url](#)

¹⁵⁴² Child Identity Protection, Children's right to identity in Pakistan, September 2024, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁵⁴³ AI, Pakistan: Human Rights Charter, 25 March 2024, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁵⁴⁴ Aly N., Executive Director at AGHS, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁵⁴⁵ Senior representatives at NCHR Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁵⁴⁶ Aurat Foundation, Pakistan based NGO, online interview with EUAA, 20 September 2024

¹⁵⁴⁷ HRW, World Report 2024 – Events of 2023, Pakistan, 11 January 2024, [url](#); Babar F., Senior council member at HRCP, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁵⁴⁸ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 30 June 2024, [url](#), pp. 25-26

¹⁵⁴⁹ Aurat Foundation, Pakistan based NGO, online interview with EUAA, 20 September 2024

¹⁵⁵⁰ Babar, F., Senior council member at HRCP, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024





Hindus and 106 were Christians. This data is however not exhaustive.¹⁵⁵¹ Civil society organisations and the media have reported incidents of young Hindu and Christian women being abducted and raped by Muslim men throughout 2023.¹⁵⁵² UN CERD stated to be ‘deeply concerned about the frequent reports that women and girls, in particular Hindu Dalit and Christian women and girls, face threats, harassment and intimidation, abductions, sexual violence, forced marriages and forced conversions.’ The UN Committee further stated that, while acknowledging steps taken to establish a legal framework, the measures taken by the State to address the root causes have been insufficient, adding to be concerned about the response by law enforcement, investigators, prosecutors and judges, which have failed to effectively sanction forced marriages.¹⁵⁵³ State actions against alleged perpetrators were said to be rare, with reports that some clerics and government officials completely denied the existence of this practice.¹⁵⁵⁴ According to HRCP senior council member, Farhatullah Babar, there seems to be ‘denial at state level that forced conversion is taking place in the country’. When a law was proposed in Parliament to eradicate forced conversions, Babar noted, the Council of Islamic Ideology (a constitutional body which has almost assumed a role of Supra Parliament), advised the parliamentary committee that there was no need for such law since there are no forced conversions taking place in the country.¹⁵⁵⁵

To avoid prosecution, abductors reportedly forced their victims to overstate their age and claim that they converted to Islam and married willingly. In many cases, judges accepted this testimony and granted custody to the abductor.¹⁵⁵⁶ NCHR told the EUAA that, in fact, measures taken by the government to protect women from forced conversion and forced marriages have been effective, adding that they have been involved in multiple cases of recovery of women and girls who were abducted, converted by force, married off at younger age, claiming to be love marriages and consensual conversions. When these girls are retrieved, they are often brought to the Dar-ul-Aman shelters, ‘since the state is not sure whether the family would be as willing to keep them or as willing to support them in their legal battles.’¹⁵⁵⁷ The same source noted that the general social attitude is supportive of these practices, since the perception is that women and girls are converting to Islam and marrying Muslims willingly. ‘There is a general positive feeling towards people converting of their own free will and it is very hard to prove that they didn't do it out of their own free will’.¹⁵⁵⁸ The Aurat Foundation observed also that tribal chiefs have continued to hold significant authority over marriage decisions. While on the one hand, civil society organisations have made efforts to change the general mindset, on the other hand traditional practices and tribal customs regarding girls' marriages still dominate, making reform difficult.¹⁵⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵¹ Aly, N., Executive Director at AGHS, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁵⁵² USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 30 June 2024, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁵⁵³ UN CERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan*, CERD/C/PAK/CO/24-26, 24 September 2024, [url](#), para 15

¹⁵⁵⁴ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 30 June 2024, [url](#), pp. 25-26

¹⁵⁵⁵ Babar, F., Senior council member at HRCP, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁵⁵⁶ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 30 June 2024, [url](#), pp. 25-26

¹⁵⁵⁷ Senior representatives at NCHR Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁵⁵⁸ Senior representatives at NCHR Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁵⁵⁹ Aurat Foundation, Pakistan based NGO, online interview with EUAA, 20 September 2024



6.6. Children

Birth registration for children under five years stood at 42.2 % as of September 2024, making Pakistan the country with the highest number of unregistered children in South Asia.¹⁵⁶⁰ Pakistan is also one of the countries with the highest numbers of out-of-school children in the world,¹⁵⁶¹ with an estimated number of around 26 million children who are not attending any kind of school. Most out-of-school children are in primary level. Out of the total number, 42 % of out-of-school children are girls and 35 % are boys.¹⁵⁶²

Children in Pakistan have continued to be vulnerable to many forms of violence,¹⁵⁶³ as well as the ‘worst forms of child labour’, including commercial sexual exploitation,¹⁵⁶⁴ domestic work,¹⁵⁶⁵ and exploitation in brick manufacturing.¹⁵⁶⁶ Employment of child domestic workers has remained prevalent.¹⁵⁶⁷ An estimated 700 000 children were reportedly subjected to child labour in brick kilns and agriculture across Pakistan, which constitute more than 70 % of bonded labourers in the country.¹⁵⁶⁸ Pakistan is a signatory to all key international conventions concerning child labour. During 2023, the government made some ‘moderate advancement’ towards eliminating these crimes. For instance, Punjab passed the Punjab Home-Based Workers Act of 2023, prohibiting the employment of children under 15 years in domestic work. Some inspections were carried out, which resulted in 34 arrests. Nonetheless, laws at either federal and provincial level do not meet international standards for the protection of children against hazardous work and illicit activities. In addition, there were reports of corruption within the law enforcement, with some officers accepting bribes from suspected perpetrators to ignore child labour crimes.¹⁵⁶⁹ See also Section [6.8 Trafficking in Human Beings \(THB\)](#).

Child sexual abuse is described as common,¹⁵⁷⁰ rampant and under-reported.¹⁵⁷¹ According to data by local children’s rights organisation Sahil, a total of 2 227 cases of child sexual abuse were reported from January to June 2023. Out of this total number, 54 % of victims were girls, and 46 % were boys. Within the age range 6–15-year-old (which is the most vulnerable age group), 593 victims were boys and 457 were girls. The number of boys victim of child abuse has slightly increased compared to previous year. Out of the total number of 2 227 cases, 74 % were reported from Punjab, 14 % cases from Sindh, and the rest across other provinces.¹⁵⁷² Domestic sexual abuse of children is a taboo subject in Pakistan, and when perpetrators are either relatives, teachers or clerics, it is less likely to be reported. Victims include homeless children, children studying in Islamic religious schools,¹⁵⁷³ and those exploited in domestic labour. Child

¹⁵⁶⁰ Child Identity Protection, Children’s right to identity in Pakistan, September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶¹ World Bank, Five major challenges to girls’ education in Pakistan, June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶² Pakistan, Pakistan Institute of Education, Pakistan Education Statistics 2022-2023, [url](#), pp. 70-72

¹⁵⁶³ UNICEF, Pakistan Child Protection, *n.d.*, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶⁴ USDOL, 2023 findings on the worst forms of child labor, 2024 [url](#); Pakistan, NCHR, Policy brief on child trafficking, December 2023, [url](#), pp. 7-8

¹⁵⁶⁵ HRW, World Report 2024 – Events of 2023, Pakistan, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶⁶ HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 18

¹⁵⁶⁷ HRW, World Report 2024 – Events of 2023, Pakistan, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶⁸ USDOS, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Pakistan, 24 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶⁹ USDOL, 2023 findings on the worst forms of child labor, 2024 [url](#)

¹⁵⁷⁰ HRW, World Report 2024 – Events of 2023, Pakistan, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁷¹ HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 8

¹⁵⁷² Sahil, Sahil Six Months Cruel Numbers Report January - June 2023, August 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵⁷³ DW, Pakistan: What’s fueling child sexual abuse in Punjab?, 25 July 2023, [url](#)



sexual abuse within *madrassas* (Islamic religious schools) is considered of significant concern across the country.¹⁵⁷⁴

The federal government as well as the provincial governments in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have not enacted laws prohibiting the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict by non-state actors. During 2023, there were reports of children as young as 12, being kidnapped from *madrassas* by non-state armed groups and forcibly recruited to spy, fight or carry out suicide attacks.¹⁵⁷⁵ According to the UN, a total of 73 children were killed during 2023. Out of these, 72 killings were attributed to unidentified armed actors and 1 was claimed by Islamic State. The UN further reported 5 attacks on schools, stating to be concerned about the increase in reports of these kinds of attacks as well as the killing and maiming of children in the border areas with Afghanistan, noting that casualties were caused by explosive ordnance and gunshots.¹⁵⁷⁶

Attacks on schools were also reported in 2024: in January 2024, a girls' higher secondary school in Bannu district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, was set on fire by unknown attackers. No group claimed responsibility for the attack, although a note mentioning TTP was reportedly left on the school gate.¹⁵⁷⁷ Another girls' school was bombed in South Waziristan district in May 2024.¹⁵⁷⁸ In total, four girls' schools had been destroyed in attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces in May 2024, according to a statement by a UN official in Pakistan.¹⁵⁷⁹ While Prime Minister Sharif promised that one of the schools would be rebuilt, analyst Syed Fazl-e-Haider pointed to the continuing 'Talibanisation' of the region – growing radical attitudes shaped by cross-border extremist extremism –, making education for girls in the tribal area close to impossible.¹⁵⁸⁰ For more information, please see section [4. Security situation](#).

6.7. LGBTIQ

Consensual same-sex sexual acts are a criminal offense¹⁵⁸¹ under Pakistan's criminal code,¹⁵⁸² with penalties including a fine, two years to life imprisonment or both.¹⁵⁸³ Unlike other

¹⁵⁷⁴ USDOL, 2023 findings on the worst forms of child labor, 2024 [url](#); DW, Investigating sexual abuse in Pakistan madrasas, 29 June 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁷⁵ USDOL, 2023 findings on the worst forms of child labor, 2024 [url](#)

¹⁵⁷⁶ UNGA-SC, Children and armed conflict Report of the Secretary-General, A/78/842-S/2024/384, 3 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁷⁷ Arab News, Suspected militants burn girls' school in Pakistan's northwest, say police, 1 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁷⁸ AP, Suspected militants bomb a girl's school overnight in northwest Pakistan, 17 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁷⁹ UN, Statement by Mohamed Yahya, the United Nations Resident & Humanitarian Coordinator in Pakistan, on the recent string of attacks against girls' schools, 1 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁸⁰ Fazl-E-Haider, S., Targeting girls education: Pakistan's tribal areas suffer under Taliban influence, Lowy Institute, 14 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁸¹ As reported by the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), 'Section 377 of the Penal Code (Act No. XLV) (1860) punishes "carnal intercourse against the order of nature" with up to life in prison. It is further explained that "penetration is sufficient to constitute the carnal intercourse" (i.e., no need to prove emission of seed). Additionally, Section 294 of the Penal Code criminalises "any obscene act in any public place" and "singing, reciting or uttering any obscene songs, ballad or words, in or near any public place", "to the annoyance of others", which may result in imprisonment for up to 3 months, a fine, or both. This section is reportedly often deployed to target male, trans and hijra sex workers.' ILGA Database, Pakistan, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁵⁸² HRW, World Report 2024 – Events of 2023, Pakistan, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁸³ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 84-86



individuals belonging to the LGBTIQ community, transgender people have legally recognised rights.¹⁵⁸⁴ In 2018, the Parliament passed a ‘far-reaching and a very important’ Transgender Act on the protection of transgender individuals and their rights. However, the law was not fully implemented and there was resistance from the religious lobby, from the vigilante groups and from some other segments of society.¹⁵⁸⁵ In May 2023, the Federal Shariat Court declared some provisions of the 2018 Transgender Act as ‘un-Islamic.’ This verdict was however challenged in the Supreme Court of Pakistan, and it was still pending by the time of drafting this report.¹⁵⁸⁶

Sexual minorities,¹⁵⁸⁷ transgender and other gender-diverse people face systemic discrimination, harassment and violence,¹⁵⁸⁸ at the hands of the state and society.¹⁵⁸⁹ There are societal taboos surrounding LGBTIQ issues in Pakistan,¹⁵⁹⁰ and persons belonging to these communities rarely reveal their sexual orientation or gender identity in the public sphere.¹⁵⁹¹ As noted by a senior representative at local NGO Vision, same sex relationships from the government’s perspective do not exist in Pakistan. The country is ‘by the virtue of its constitution an Islamic Republic, and therefore anything repugnant to the tenets of Islam is rejected legally and should be rejected by the society.’ The same source explained that there is a general lack of awareness on sexual orientation in Pakistan. For instance - the source noted - bisexuality is not even understood by the ones who are bisexual, both men and women, ‘unless they belong to a certain class and are exposed to the conceptual framework of bisexuality.’ These individuals, ‘exist in their own bubble mostly in urban areas of Pakistan. Families are okay with that as long as they do not disclose their sexual orientation, and the *status quo* is maintained.’ The senior representative at Vision further added that most of those who claim to be transgender are ‘actually gay men who use the garb of transgender for sexually interacting with other men’.¹⁵⁹²

Some transgender persons (also called *Khwaja Siras* or *hijras*)¹⁵⁹³ openly declare themselves as such.¹⁵⁹⁴ Despite *hijras* raising awareness about transgender rights, safety, and acceptance in Pakistan,¹⁵⁹⁵ these individuals face significant challenges, including marginalisation, harassment and violence.¹⁵⁹⁶ Sometimes, members of the transgender community are forced into prostitution or begging, which makes them more vulnerable to societal backlash. Attacks on transgender people are reported more frequently than incidents involving lesbians or gay individuals due to their greater visibility.¹⁵⁹⁷ Following the appeal lodged with the Federal

¹⁵⁸⁴ USDOS, 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 58.

¹⁵⁸⁵ Babar F., Senior council member at HRCPC, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁵⁸⁶ HRW, World Report 2024 – Events of 2023, Pakistan, 11 January 2024, [url](#); Babar F., Senior council member at HRCPC, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁵⁸⁷ BTI, 2024 Country Report, Pakistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 13

¹⁵⁸⁸ AI, Pakistan: Human Rights Charter, 25 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 6-7

¹⁵⁸⁹ HRCPC, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁵⁹⁰ Aurat Foundation, Pakistan based NGO, online interview with EUAA, 20 September 2024

¹⁵⁹¹ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 84

¹⁵⁹² Senior representative at Vision, email communication with EUAA, 23, 30 September 2024

¹⁵⁹³ Jaffer A., Embodying Sufism: The Spiritual Culture of Third Gender (Khwaja Sira) Communities in Pakistan, LSE blog, 8 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁹⁴ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 84

¹⁵⁹⁵ Voicepk.net, A Call for Acceptance: Hijra Festival Shines a Light on Transgender Issues, 11 November 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁹⁶ AI, Pakistan: Human Rights Charter, 25 March 2024, [url](#), p. 7; Aurat Foundation, Pakistan based NGO, online interview with EUAA, 20 September 2024;

¹⁵⁹⁷ Aurat Foundation, Pakistan based NGO, online interview with EUAA, 20 September 2024



Shariat Court against the Transgender Act in September 2022, a disinformation campaign waged on social networks. For several weeks, accounts associated with Islamist parties spread false information about the law, sparking renewed hostility and violence against transgender people.¹⁵⁹⁸ According to HRCP's media monitoring, at least 9 transgender persons were victims of honour-related crimes and 11 of sexual violence during 2023.¹⁵⁹⁹ Crimes against these individuals went often unreported, and when reported, police took generally little action.¹⁶⁰⁰ Particularly in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province, transgender women faced attacks,¹⁶⁰¹ while conviction in relation to these attacks were reported as rare.¹⁶⁰²

There are some organisations actively supporting LGBTIQ rights in Pakistan, including by providing them with legal aid, although progress has been slow and met with significant societal resistance.¹⁶⁰³ Activists working on LGBTIQ rights can be seen by the authorities 'as promoting same-sex-relationships'. There were cases of activists and their family members being approached by state authorities and warned not to promote 'any capacity building of transgender populations.'¹⁶⁰⁴ NCHR informed that they have been actively lobbying for the transgender bill and taken efforts to ensure the respect of transgenders' rights, including for the issuance of their identity cards (which was ostracised by some religious elements of the country), for their education, medical treatment and employment. The same source noted that some positive changes have been achieved, such as better representation of transgender persons in every department of the government, in political parties, also in police departments across various provinces.¹⁶⁰⁵ In September 2024, a 'transgender school' was established in the Lodhran district of Punjab by the government aiming at improving access to education for these communities.¹⁶⁰⁶

6.8. Trafficking in Human Beings (THB)

With an estimated total number of 2.4 million people experiencing forced labour or forced marriage, Pakistan is rated as one of the countries with the highest vulnerability to modern slavery in the region.¹⁶⁰⁷ The country is located on a major trafficking route, including trade of human organs. Despite having laws in place to combat trafficking in human beings, the country's fragile democracy and poor state accountability were said to have hindered effective enforcement of those laws.¹⁶⁰⁸ As of 2023, Pakistan did not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, although the government has made significant efforts to this end, including by increasing law enforcement measures. However, corruption and complicity

¹⁵⁹⁸ ILGA, Our identities under arrest, 11/2023, [url](#), p. 201; HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2022, 2023, [url](#) p. 7; AI, « Reject proposed rollbacks on the transgenders persons act », 17/05/2023, [url](#) p. 1

¹⁵⁹⁹ HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 17

¹⁶⁰⁰ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 84

¹⁶⁰¹ HRW, World Report 2024 – Events of 2023, Pakistan, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁰² Dawn, Convictions rare despite rising violence against transgenders in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 14 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁰³ Aurat Foundation, Pakistan based NGO, online interview with EUAA, 20 September 2024

¹⁶⁰⁴ Senior representative at Vision, email communication with EUAA, 23, 30 September 2024

¹⁶⁰⁵ Senior representatives at NCHR Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁶⁰⁶ Tribune, Follow-up urged on first-ever school for transgender, 9 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁰⁷ Walk Free 2023, Global Slavery Index 2023 Modern slavery in Pakistan, *n.d.*, [url](#)

¹⁶⁰⁸ Aurat Foundation, Pakistan based NGO, online interview with EUAA, 20 September 2024



of state officials in trafficking crimes have hampered law enforcement action and created a culture of impunity.¹⁶⁰⁹

The main human trafficking issue in Pakistan is bonded labour (or debt-bondage).¹⁶¹⁰ Estimates of people affected by this phenomenon range between over 3 million¹⁶¹¹ and 4.5 million individuals nationwide.¹⁶¹² The system of debt-bondage is based on a traditional practice of binding loan called *peshgi* or *begar*. Repayment of such loans are said to be virtually impossible due to the high interest rates and exploitative practices of creditor employers. Due to weak implementation of the law, authorities have failed to protect individual victims of bonded labour.¹⁶¹³ An estimated 700 000 children were reportedly subjected to child labour in brick kilns across Pakistan,¹⁶¹⁴ with many children forced into domestic work as a result of their parent's debt bondage to landlords (please see section [6.6 Children](#)). Lower-caste Hindus, Christians, and Muslims, as well as ethnic groups such as Bengali, Bihari, Rohingya, Afghan refugees and stateless persons were also targeted by traffickers. Bonded labour has been exacerbated by climate change, for instance by recent floods across the country which have increased poverty, displacement, food insecurity. Similarly, the number of children in domestic work is reported to have increased because of flooding between March and July 2023. Some bonded labourers were also victims of sexual exploitation and domestic servitude in the homes of landlords.¹⁶¹⁵ Debt-bondage is especially prevalent in the agricultural and brick kiln sector in Punjab and in the tenant farms in Sindh.¹⁶¹⁶ Many feudal landlords and brick manufacturer employers are reported to be local government officials or individuals using their connection with local authorities to protect their involvement in this practice. In some cases, landlords have used armed guards to restrict freedom of movement of people victims of bonded labour. There are also reports of victims being sold by perpetrators among each other.¹⁶¹⁷ In 2023, Balochistan minister, Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran, was arrested and then released on bail¹⁶¹⁸ after being accused of murdering three members of the same family who had been kept in his 'private jail' for four years.¹⁶¹⁹ The victims, who were also subject to sexual exploitation during captivity, were killed allegedly for not complying with the minister's wishes.¹⁶²⁰

¹⁶⁰⁹ USDOS, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Pakistan, 24 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶¹⁰ USDOS, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Pakistan, 24 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶¹¹ Pakistan, NCHR, The issue of bonded labour in Pakistan, August 2023, [url](#), pp. 1, 4

¹⁶¹² USDOS, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Pakistan, 24 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶¹³ Pakistan, NCHR, The issue of bonded labour in Pakistan, August 2023, [url](#), pp. 1, 4

¹⁶¹⁴ HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 18

¹⁶¹⁵ USDOS, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Pakistan, 24 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶¹⁶ Pakistan, NCHR, The issue of bonded labour in Pakistan, August 2023, [url](#), pp. 1, 4

¹⁶¹⁷ USDOS, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Pakistan, 24 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶¹⁸ Ani news, Balochistan minister Sardar Abdul Rahman Khetran freed in murder case, 12 March 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶¹⁹ Dawn, Balochistan minister Khetran arrested on suspicion of killing 3 people: police, 22 February 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶²⁰ HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 12



7. Socio-economic and humanitarian situation

7.1. Economy

Human Rights Watch (HRW) stated in its human rights report for 2023 that Pakistan faced one of the worst economic crises in its history, with poverty, inflation and unemployment ‘soaring’. Low-income groups were particularly affected by IMF-required austerity measures and the cancelling of fuel and energy subsidies without sufficient compensation.¹⁶²¹ In July 2024, Pakistan reached a preliminary agreement with the IMF on a 37-month Extended Fund Facility of an amount of around USD 7 billion.¹⁶²² VOA noted that Pakistan had received 23 loans from the IMF since its independence in 1947.¹⁶²³

As of June 2024, Pakistan’s total external debt and liabilities amounted to 34.3 % of the country's GDP, according to information provided by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).¹⁶²⁴ In January 2024, the SBP informed that almost USD 29 billion in external debt had to be paid back over the next 12 months – almost 45 % of the expected dollar income, as Ahmed Pirzada, an economist at the University of Bristol, noted. While internal factors like political instability and mismanagement were partly responsible for the country’s ‘journey back into the debt trap’, the concessional financing provided by external partners for ‘questionable initiatives or against dubious targets’ also contributed to the situation, according to Pirzada. He named the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as an example,¹⁶²⁵ a network of road and energy infrastructure projects linking the port city of Gwadar to China’s Xinjiang province.¹⁶²⁶ BBC News noted that experts were in doubt as to whether the projects would generate enough revenue to repay the bilateral loans to China, which according to IMF-estimates amounted to USD 30 billion.¹⁶²⁷ Moreover, CPEC-related projects and personnel have been targeted by armed groups operating in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces,¹⁶²⁸ and Chinese security concerns might have influenced the government’s plan – announced in June 2024 – to launch a new military operation called Azm-e-Istehkam in these regions.¹⁶²⁹ DW reported on protests by the local population against a CPEC-related project in Balochistan province in August 2024, and quoted the leader of the Baloch rights group BYC as claiming that foreign investment in the province intended to exploit natural resources without gains for the local population.¹⁶³⁰

¹⁶²¹ HRW, World Report 2024: Pakistan, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶²² IMF, Pakistan: IMF Reaches Staff-Level Agreement on Economic Policies with Pakistan for 37-month Extended Fund Facility, 12 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶²³ VOA, Cash-starved Pakistan acquires \$7 billion IMF loan, 13 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶²⁴ Pakistan, SBP, Pakistan’s Debt and Liabilities-Summary, 15 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶²⁵ Pirzada, A., The phoenix that never rises: what’s holding back Pakistan’s economy?, 22 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶²⁶ BBC News, Pakistan economy: Price spikes, political woes hit millions, 4 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶²⁷ BBC News, Pakistan economy: Price spikes, political woes hit millions, 4 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶²⁸ Al Jazeera, March of ‘terror’: Pakistan grapples with deadly attacks on China interests, 29 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶²⁹ Al Jazeera, ‘Azm-e-Istehkam’: Can new Pakistani military operation curb armed attacks?, 24 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶³⁰ DW, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor sparks Pakistan protests, 14 August 2024, [url](#)



In November 2023, the Express Tribune reported that, following a review of 20 World Bank-funded projects with a total lending value of USD 6.7 billion, more than half of these projects were assessed to be unsatisfactory or problematic by the World Bank and the Pakistani Ministry of Economic Affairs. Worst-performing departments reportedly included the Water and Power Development Authority, the National Transmission and Despatch Company, the Federal Board of Revenue, the Planning and Finance Ministries and the SBP.¹⁶³¹

According to the SBP's Inflation Monitor, national CPI (Consumer Price Index) inflation stood at 9.6 % on a year-on-year basis in August 2024, a slight decrease compared to 11.1 % in the previous month. During the reference period, inflation peaked at 29.70% at the end of 2023 and subsequently declined.¹⁶³² The Government of Pakistan's monthly economic update of August 2024 explained that the main drivers of inflation were perishable food items, housing, water and energy (electricity, gas, fuel) costs as well as health, clothing, transport and others.¹⁶³³

Al Jazeera noted, in an article of June 2024, that fuel prices had declined, the state's foreign exchange reserves improved, and the national currency somewhat stabilised, at an exchange rate of PKR 280 against one dollar. It further noted, however, that while economists agreed that there were signs of stability, they also pointed to the fact that it had been reached by limiting imports and high energy prices.¹⁶³⁴

7.2. Poverty and unemployment

UNICEF noted in December 2023 that the impact of natural and human-caused disasters was aggravated by 'entrenched inequality, climate change and political and economic uncertainty'.¹⁶³⁵ In its monthly country report for July 2024, the World Food Programme (WFP) similarly observed that 'economic fragility, political polarisation, recurrent natural disasters, and high inflation' led to rising poverty levels and undermined resilience.¹⁶³⁶

According to the World Bank Group, 40 % of the country's population was living below the poverty line as of April 2024.¹⁶³⁷ According to the Pakistan Economic Survey 2023-24, published by the Government of Pakistan's Finance Division, the cost of a minimum food basket per capita per month was 6 384 PKR (EUR 20.6)¹⁶³⁸ in March 2024. The survey stated that between July 2023 and March 2024 these costs had increased by 9.6 %.¹⁶³⁹ UNICEF noted that about 16 % of the country's population was food insecure and had no access to

¹⁶³¹ Express Tribune (The), Projects face lengthy delays, 12 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶³² Pakistan, SBP, Inflation Monitor August 2024, [url](#), p. 18

¹⁶³³ Pakistan, Government of Pakistan - Finance Division, Monthly Economic Update & Outlook, August 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁶³⁴ Al Jazeera, Is Pakistan's crisis-ridden economy finally recovering?, 12 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶³⁵ UNICEF, Humanitarian Action for Children 2024 – Pakistan, 11 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁶³⁶ WFP, WFP Pakistan Country Brief, July 2024, 13 August 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁶³⁷ World Bank Group (The), PAKISTAN: Implementing an Ambitious, Credible and Clearly Communicated Economic Reform Plan Critical for Robust Recovery, Poverty Reduction, says World Bank, 2 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶³⁸ All currency calculations in this report are based on the exchange rate from European Commission, Exchange rate (InforEuro), n.d., [url](#)

¹⁶³⁹ Pakistan, Government of Pakistan – Finance Division, Pakistan Economic Survey 2023-24, June 2024, [url](#), p. 192



essential services such as healthcare and nutrition, with the majority of vulnerable people living in the three provinces of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh.¹⁶⁴⁰

The economist Ahmed Pirzada observed that Pakistan's labour productivity growth rates were among the lowest worldwide,¹⁶⁴¹ and Safiya Aftab, an economist quoted by Al Jazeera, stated in June 2024 that while the situation had stabilised, growth was slow and employment not increasing.¹⁶⁴² Economists pointed to political instability, a lack of structural reforms,¹⁶⁴³ and the military's involvement in politics and the economy as factors affecting the country's investment climate.¹⁶⁴⁴ As of 2024, the unemployment rate was 8.2 % according to International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates, while the World Bank projected it at 10.3 %. The last official figures are from 2021 when the unemployment rate was 6.3 %, according to the Express Tribune.¹⁶⁴⁵

In its Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan of September 2024, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD) expressed its concern about 'high levels of poverty and unemployment' among ethnic minorities, including the Baloch people.¹⁶⁴⁶ A journalist and commentator quoted by RFE/RL noted that, due to poverty, high unemployment and political suppression, the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) had been successful in recruiting young people. According to RFE/RL, many of the armed separatist group's leaders were former trained professionals and university students.¹⁶⁴⁷

The non-governmental Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) pointed in a press release of November 2023 to an increase in suicides (especially in Sindh, Gilgit and Southern Punjab), noting that many of these cases were linked to rising poverty. For the same reason, many people would send their children not to school but to religious seminaries (*madrassas*) where, according to HRCP, radicalisation could 'be expected'.¹⁶⁴⁸ For more information, please see section [6.6 Children](#).

7.3. Healthcare

The US government's International Trade Association (ITA) Healthcare Technologies Resource Guide explained that Pakistan's public and private healthcare systems operated in parallel. While private health-related facilities were predominantly located in urban areas, public sector health services were available at all levels, including through rural health centres and Basic Health Units (BHUs).¹⁶⁴⁹ According to the Pakistan Economic Survey 2023-24, Pakistan had

¹⁶⁴⁰ UNICEF, Humanitarian Action for Children 2024 – Pakistan, 11 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁶⁴¹ Pirzada, A., The phoenix that never rises: what's holding back Pakistan's economy?, 22 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴² Al Jazeera, Is Pakistan's crisis-ridden economy finally recovering?, 12 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴³ Al Jazeera, Can Pakistan's allies help revive its economy through investment dollars?, 18 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴⁴ Pirzada, A., The phoenix that never rises: what's holding back Pakistan's economy?, 22 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴⁵ Express Tribune (The), Govt admits unemployment rising to 10.3%, 12 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴⁶ UNCERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan, CERD/C/PAK/CO/24-26, 24 September 2024, [url](#), para. 21

¹⁶⁴⁷ RFE/RL, The Rise Of The Baloch Liberation Army In Pakistan, 1 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴⁸ HRCP, HRCP deplors damage to democracy, calls for economic justice, 12 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴⁹ US, ITA, Healthcare Technologies Resource Guide Pakistan, n.d., [url](#)





1 284 hospitals, 5 520 BHUs and 299 113 registered doctors as of 2023. The same year, public health expenditures amounted to 1 % of the country's GDP.¹⁶⁵⁰

In an article of April 2024, Saroop Ijaz, Senior Counsel at Human Rights Watch stated with reference to the Pakistani healthcare NGO Sehat Kahani that about 42 % of the country's population did not have access to health coverage. An even higher percentage – more than 50 % – had no access to basic primary healthcare services,¹⁶⁵¹ an issue that particularly affected the population in conflict-affected and rural areas as well as minority groups and marginalised communities, according to the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP) network.¹⁶⁵²

ITA pointed to some of the main challenges for the country's healthcare system, such as insufficient funding, an uneven distribution of health professionals as well as a lack of personnel, high population growth and limitations in accessing quality healthcare.¹⁶⁵³ Population growth and private healthcare unaffordable to most led to increased pressure on the public health system, affecting the quality of care due to a shortage of bed, wards and long waiting times. High turnover rates among healthcare professionals further reduced an already scarce workforce.¹⁶⁵⁴ The Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) noted that limited resources for prevention, testing and treatment, as well as the presence of 'quacks' (unqualified medical practitioners) contributed to the spread of diseases such as Hepatitis B and C.¹⁶⁵⁵ Local media sources reported on government operations against 'quacks' in April,¹⁶⁵⁶ June,¹⁶⁵⁷ and September 2024.¹⁶⁵⁸

In October 2023, DW reported an increase in drug shortages and pointed to several factors contributing to the situation: high inflation, which made importing medicines or their active ingredients more costly; the hoarding of medicines by some traders to sell them for profit during shortages; and government-approved price increases for essential and non-essential drugs, directly affecting more than 80 000 drugs. The increases came into force in September 2023 and exacerbated the situation to the extent that also hospitals lacked access to about 100 lifesaving drugs, according to a lawyer and activist quoted by DW. Moreover, domestic drug production depended to 90 % on the import of raw materials from different countries, according to DW. Due to the ongoing inflation, these imports had become costly, leading to the shutdown of about 200 of Pakistan's small pharmaceutical plants.¹⁶⁵⁹ Another increase in prices for 146 essential medicines was approved in February 2024.¹⁶⁶⁰

¹⁶⁵⁰ Pakistan, Government of Pakistan – Finance Division, Pakistan Economic Survey 2023-24, June 2024, [url](#), pp. 181, 184

¹⁶⁵¹ Ijaz, S., In Sickness and in Debt: The Right to Health, The News International, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵² GCAP, Country Position Paper on Universal Health Coverage Pakistan (2023), 4 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵³ US, ITA, Healthcare Technologies Resource Guide Pakistan, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁶⁵⁴ Amir Ali, F. and Zehra Zaidi, N., Health Under Pressure. Population Growth Challenges and Solutions for Pakistan's Healthcare, Indus Hospital & Health Network, 11 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵⁵ Dawn, PMA report calls for urgent, comprehensive reforms in health sector, 12 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵⁶ Express Tribune (The), Health authority launches anti-quackery drive, 14 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵⁷ Pakistan, IHRA, IHRA raids drive quacks out of capital, qualified doctors open clinics, 6 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵⁸ Dawn, Seven quacks' clinics sealed in Swabi, 9 September 2024, [url](#); Pakistan Observer, Punjab seals 970 quacks' outlets, 11 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵⁹ DW, Pakistan's soaring drug prices leave patients scrambling, 24 October 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶⁶⁰ Dawn, Govt approves increase in prices of 146 essential life-saving medicines, 1 February 2024, [url](#)





According to Insecurity Insight’s interactive global map on attacks against healthcare, there were 18 reported incidents of conflict-related violence¹⁶⁶¹ that affected healthcare in Pakistan in the period 1 October 2023 to 9 October 2024. These incidents resulted in 1 health facility damaged, 12 health workers killed, 6 health workers abducted, and 3 health workers wounded. During the same period, 13 vaccination-related incidents¹⁶⁶² were reported, in which 4 health workers were killed, 5 abducted and 2 injured.¹⁶⁶³

According to Al Jazeera, health workers and accompanying security forces were often ‘harassed, ridiculed, taunted, threatened and targeted physically’.¹⁶⁶⁴ The USDOS similarly noted in its human rights report for the year 2023 that security forces who provided protection to polio vaccination teams remained a target of attacks across the country.¹⁶⁶⁵ Voicepk.net explained in June 2024 that the number of attacks on polio teams was increasing and that according to records by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Emergency Response Cell, 51 persons had been killed or injured in 2024 thus far in that province alone, including 46 security personnel and 3 health workers.¹⁶⁶⁶ In one incident in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in January 2024, at least six police officers tasked with protecting a vaccination team were killed when a bomb exploded near their car. The TTP claimed responsibility for the attack.¹⁶⁶⁷ One police officer assigned to protect polio workers was shot dead in Lakki Marwat district in June 2024,¹⁶⁶⁸ while another one and a health worker were killed in the Bajaur district in September 2024.¹⁶⁶⁹

7.4. Water and sanitation

A 2023 report on Global Water Security by the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH) described Pakistan as one of 23 countries with a critically low level of water security, marked, among other things, by a low level of access to safe drinking water and sanitation services, high mortality rates linked to water and sanitation issues, and insufficient and/or contaminated freshwater.¹⁶⁷⁰

According to UNICEF, an estimated 50 % of the country’s households consumed contaminated water, which increased the risk of waterborne diseases like diarrhoea.¹⁶⁷¹ The Pakistan Medical Association (PMA), cited by Dawn, equally pointed to ongoing high health risks from unsafe drinking water and stated that 40 % of deaths nationwide were related to contaminated water. The PMA named diarrhoea as a ‘leading cause of infant mortality’.¹⁶⁷² The

¹⁶⁶¹ When accessing the map, select “Conflict” from the “Incident Category” column on the left-hand side and select or enter the respective dates. On the map, zoom in on the respective country and click. On the right-hand side a separate window will open, showing country-specific information.

¹⁶⁶² When accessing the map, select ‘Vaccination’ from the ‘Incident Category’ column on the left-hand side. Then proceed as explained above.

¹⁶⁶³ Insecurity Insight et al., Attacked and Threatened: Health Care at Risk [interactive map], n.d., [url](#)

¹⁶⁶⁴ Al Jazeera, Pakistan’s health workers fight the spread of polio, 18 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁶⁵ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 30

¹⁶⁶⁶ Voicepk.net, Polio vaccination drives face deadly attacks in Pakistan, 4 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁶⁷ AP, Pakistani Taliban claims responsibility for bomb that killed 6 police guarding anti-polio campaign, 8 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁶⁸ AP, Gunmen kill a police officer assigned to protect polio workers in Pakistan’s northwest, 3 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁶⁹ Express Tribune (The), Polio team attacked in Bajaur: Worker and security officer killed, 11 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁷⁰ UNU-INWEH, Global Water Security 2023 Assessment, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 105

¹⁶⁷¹ UNICEF, Access to clean water gives girls the freedom to learn, 22 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁷² Dawn, PMA report calls for urgent, comprehensive reforms in health sector, 12 January 2024, [url](#)





international charity Save the Children mentioned water and vector-borne diseases such as cholera and malaria as the leading causes of death in children.¹⁶⁷³

Researcher Uzair Sattar noted that unequal access to drinking water was deepening existing socio-economic gaps, thereby increasing the risk of social conflicts and unrest. He observed that the country's water crisis was an issue of 'equity, access, and intersectoral distribution' rather than an issue of water scarcity, aggravated by factors such as the country's ageing infrastructure, weak management of resources, a lack of policy continuity, water-intensive agriculture (such as sugar cane and cotton) and water-intensive 'urban beautification' and gardening projects related to private luxury housing projects, as well as the impacts of climate change.¹⁶⁷⁴ Pollution of freshwater sources from untreated sewage and industrial waste further contributed to the country's water insecurity.¹⁶⁷⁵ The Express Tribune reported in June 2024 that, according to a report on bottled water quality, out of 185 brands collected, 19 brands were found to be unsafe for drinking due to microbiological or chemical contamination.¹⁶⁷⁶

Almost 97 % of the country's freshwater was reportedly used in agriculture, and about 40 % of the total was estimated to be lost through evaporation and theft.¹⁶⁷⁷ Water theft had become a lucrative business, according to a report by the Pakistani Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), as urban households increasingly relied on buying water from water tankers because public water supply was often available only a few hours per day.¹⁶⁷⁸

The Pakistani newspaper Dawn observed that the existing water insecurity for millions of people was perpetuated by political instability, economic uncertainty and disputes between provinces over water distribution.¹⁶⁷⁹ Although there were laws and institutions established for dealing with conflicts over water distribution between the country's provinces, the challenge consisted in implementing the existing legislation concerning water resources management, as Waseem Ishaque from the National University of Modern Languages in Islamabad and co-authors pointed out in February 2024.¹⁶⁸⁰ Implementation of the country's National Water Policy was equally difficult, according to researcher Abdur Rehman Cheema, as it foresaw reforms in the management of water resources, which might face resistance from influential agricultural and industrial interest groups,¹⁶⁸¹ such as the country's so-called sugar barons.¹⁶⁸²

Meanwhile, uneven distribution of water resources increased social and economic gaps, with small farmers and marginalised communities having difficulties in gaining sufficient access to water.¹⁶⁸³ In rural areas, women and girls were disproportionately affected by water scarcity as

¹⁶⁷³ Save the Children, Pakistan: Children face risk of deadly diseases such as cholera and malaria as floods expected this month, 17 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁷⁴ Sattar, U., Pakistan's Political Economy Perpetuates Its Water Crisis, The Stimson Center, 27 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶⁷⁵ WaterAid, Rethinking Drinking Water Policies in Pakistan, 1 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁷⁶ Express Tribune (The), Bottled water boom exploits thirst for clean water, 20 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁷⁷ Dawn, Water crisis, 8 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁷⁸ PIDE, Pakistan's Urban Water Challenges and Prospects, March 2024, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁶⁷⁹ Dawn, Water crisis, 8 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸⁰ Ishaque, W. et al., Water management and sustainable development in Pakistan: environmental and health impacts of water quality on achieving the UNSDGs by 2030, *Frontiers in Water*, 8 February 2024, [url](#), p. 13

¹⁶⁸¹ Cheema, A.R., Pakistan is facing a looming water crisis, D+C, 11 October 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸² Sattar, U., Pakistan's Political Economy Perpetuates Its Water Crisis, The Stimson Center, 27 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸³ Cheema, A.R., Pakistan is facing a looming water crisis, D+C, 11 October 2023, [url](#)





collecting water was traditionally considered to be one of their household tasks. During their trips to often far away freshwater sources, they faced the risk of sexual or physical assault,¹⁶⁸⁴ and due to the long hours needed for the way, girls were often unable to go to school.¹⁶⁸⁵ Girls' school attendance was also affected by the lack of adequate sanitation facilities at some schools.¹⁶⁸⁶

7.5. Education

The Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) stated in a report from May 2024, that the country's public school system had contributed to religious fundamentalism for many years as the education system had promoted faith-based discrimination and exclusion. PIPS noted that the connection between education and extremism had been pointed out by many observers in the past. The newly created 'single national curriculum' (SNC), while a step towards a much-demanded educational reform, still had a focus on religious education.¹⁶⁸⁷ In its report on Pakistan's compliance with UNCERD, the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) noted that the country's minorities often had only limited access to quality education and that they faced discrimination when trying to access education opportunities, which reinforced the existing inequalities.¹⁶⁸⁸

The Pak Alliance for Maths and Science (PAMS) in August 2024 presented a research study on out-of-school children in Pakistan based on data from the 2023 Population and Housing Census. According to the study, an estimated 36 % or 25.3 million of the 71 million children aged 5-16 were out of school.¹⁶⁸⁹ Human Rights Watch presented different numbers: more than 6 million primary school-age children and 13 million secondary school-age children were out of school as of 2023, the majority of them being girls. Reasons for school absenteeism included lack of schools, lack of financial means to pay for school-related costs, child marriage and child labour,¹⁶⁹⁰ as well as culturally motivated restrictions for girls to access education. Children from isolated, rural or conflict-affected areas were equally facing difficulties in obtaining access to schools.¹⁶⁹¹ In Balochistan, 58 % or 2,9 million of the 5 million children aged 5-16 were out of school.¹⁶⁹² For more information, please see section [6.6. Children](#).

¹⁶⁸⁴ Sheikh, N., Water Scarcity in Pakistan Is a Gendered Issue, Earth.org, 22 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸⁵ UNICEF, Access to clean water gives girls the freedom to learn, 22 March 2024, [url](#); Rehman, A., Unravelling the climate-water nexus and seeking sustainable solutions, HPN, 21 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸⁶ Rehman, A., Unravelling the climate-water nexus and seeking sustainable solutions, HPN, 21 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸⁷ PIPS, Pakistan's Evolving Militant Landscape: State Responses and Policy options, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 106

¹⁶⁸⁸ Pakistan, NCHR, Report on Pakistan's Compliance with CERD, July 2024, [url](#), pp. 1-2

¹⁶⁸⁹ PAMS, The Missing Third of Pakistan: A tehsil-wise analysis of out of school childrenl, August 2024, [url](#), p. 3, p. 12

¹⁶⁹⁰ HRW, World Report 2024: Pakistan, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁹¹ News International (The), Education emergency in Pakistan: Facing the stark realities, 8 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁹² PAMS, The Missing Third of Pakistan: A tehsil-wise analysis of out of school childrenl, August 2024, [url](#), p. 20



8. Situation of Afghan refugees

For information on the situation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan prior to mid-December 2023, see also the [EUAA COI Query Response Pakistan, 'Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan' \(IFRP\) \(14 December 2023\)](#), the [EUAA Query Response Situation of Afghan returnees from Pakistan amid the campaign linked to the 'Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan' \(IFRP\) \(14 December 2023\)](#), and the [EUAA COI report Pakistan – Situation of Afghan refugees \(20 May 2022\)](#).

8.1. Background information

As of September 2024, over 3 million Afghan citizens holding various legal statuses were residing in Pakistan, according to estimates by the GoP¹⁶⁹³ and an international organisation working on Pakistan.¹⁶⁹⁴ These included between 1.3 and 1.4 million holders of Proof of Registration (PoR) cards issued under UNHCR mandate¹⁶⁹⁵ and around 803 000 Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders¹⁶⁹⁶ (i.e. former undocumented Afghans and individuals with expired PoR cards¹⁶⁹⁷ who were registered by the Government of Pakistan (GoP) with technical support from IOM in 2017-2018¹⁶⁹⁸). PoR cardholders and Afghans assessed by UNHCR to be asylum-seekers fell within the scope of work of UNHCR¹⁶⁹⁹ (though the latter are still considered 'undocumented' by the GoP), whereas IOM's work focused on holders of ACCs and undocumented Afghans. Moreover, there were an estimated 800 000 undocumented Afghan citizens, as well as other Afghans residing in Pakistan on visas or with resettlement letters issued by embassies. The international organisation, however, emphasised that these numbers were mere estimates, given that different sources reported different figures, making it difficult to provide an exact count.¹⁷⁰⁰

¹⁶⁹³ M. Abbas Khan, Chief Commissioner at Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees, Government of Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁶⁹⁴ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁶⁹⁵ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024; UNHCR, Operational Data Portal: Afghanistan situation – Pakistan (Islamic Republic of), last updated 31 October 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁹⁶ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024; UNHCR, Operational Data Portal: Afghanistan situation – Select location, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁶⁹⁷ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁶⁹⁸ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024; IOM, Pakistan: Flow Monitoring of Afghan nationals – Quarterly Report July–September 2024, 1 November 2024, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁶⁹⁹ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024; UNHCR, Voluntary Repatriation, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁷⁰⁰ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024



8.2. Implementation of the ‘Illegal Foreigners’ Repatriation Plan’ (IFRP) and returns to Afghanistan

On 26 September 2023, Pakistan’s Ministry of Interior’s (MoI) enacted an ‘Illegal Foreigners’ Repatriation Plan’ (IFRP)¹⁷⁰¹ which was subsequently approved by the country’s national Apex Committee,¹⁷⁰² a central body under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister that was formed by the National Security Committee (NSC) in 2022 to deal with security issues in the country.¹⁷⁰³ It was officially announced by Interior Minister Sarfraz Bugti on 3 October 2023¹⁷⁰⁴ and encompassed three successive phases of repatriation of Afghans.¹⁷⁰⁵

The first phase required foreign citizens who were not in possession of valid documents to leave Pakistan by 1 November 2023¹⁷⁰⁶ or risk being forcibly deported.¹⁷⁰⁷ While this plan ostensibly addressed all undocumented foreign citizens, an international organisation working on Pakistan noted that it was aimed at undocumented Afghans,¹⁷⁰⁸ who accounted for the vast majority of the estimated 1.7 million undocumented refugees residing in the country at the time.¹⁷⁰⁹ This group included Afghans without documentation as well as those with fake Pakistani papers or expired visas.¹⁷¹⁰ The subsequent second and third phases (neither of which has been officially announced by the GoP as of September 2024) were intended to target ACC holders (phase 2) and PoR cardholders (phase 3), respectively.¹⁷¹¹

According to Afghan authorities interviewed by the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), the GoP did not coordinate its repatriation plan with the Taliban *de facto* administration in Afghanistan.¹⁷¹² It was indeed believed that the GoP’s mass expulsion of Afghans had been prompted by the fact that despite repeated requests from the GoP, the Taliban *de facto* government in Afghanistan had failed to rein in Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP)’s attacks on Pakistani territory,¹⁷¹³ including a major early September 2023 attack near Chitral town in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.¹⁷¹⁴

¹⁷⁰¹ UNHCR and IOM, UNHCR-IOM Flash Update No. 30, Arrest and Detention Flow Monitoring (15 September 2023 – 5 October 2024), 11 October 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁷⁰² UNHCR, Pakistan-Afghanistan: Returns Emergency Response as of 30 September 2024, 1 October 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁷⁰³ Express Tribune (The), NSC forms apex committee to deal with unrest, 15 October 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁰⁴ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Pakistan: October 2023-October 2024, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁷⁰⁵ HRW, Pakistan: Widespread Abuses Force Afghans to Leave, 28 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷⁰⁶ UNHCR, Pakistan-Afghanistan: Returns Emergency Response as of 30 September 2024, 1 October 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁷⁰⁷ Dawn, As Pakistan begins second phase of deportation, Afghan women fear what lies ahead, 15 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷⁰⁸ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁷⁰⁹ Dawn, As Pakistan begins second phase of deportation, Afghan women fear what lies ahead, 15 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷¹⁰ International Crisis Group, Pakistan’s Mass Deportation of Afghans Poses Risks to Regional Stability, 13 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷¹¹ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁷¹² Switzerland, SEM, Focus Pakistan: Rückkehr und Rückführung afghanischer Staatsangehöriger 2023-2024 [Focus Pakistan: Return and deportation of Afghan citizens 2023-2024], 5 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 14-15

¹⁷¹³ Ramachandran, S., Pakistan’s Eviction of Afghan Migrants Risks Backfiring, CACI Analyst, 6 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷¹⁴ International Crisis Group, Pakistan’s Mass Deportation of Afghans Poses Risks to Regional Stability, 13 November 2023, [url](#)





The authorities also announced that they would take punitive measures against locals providing accommodation or protection to ‘illegal foreigners’ and would confiscate the money and property of foreign individuals falling into that category. The MoI set up a hotline, encouraging citizens to report any ‘illegal foreigners’ in their communities. The police also threatened to impose fines on landlords renting to or companies employing undocumented Afghans.¹⁷¹⁵

In expectation of the GoP’s decision, returns to Afghanistan already began to surge around mid-September 2023 and reached a peak of more than 25 000 returnees per day recorded at the Torkham and Spin Boldak border crossings in late October/early November 2023.¹⁷¹⁶ UNHCR stated that it had observed three types of returns: facilitated returns of registered Afghan refugees through UNHCR’s voluntary repatriation centres; spontaneous returns, which included PoR cardholders, undocumented Afghans, and ACC holders returning on their own; and deportations, where individuals were arrested and swiftly sent back across the border, often without the opportunity to collect their belongings.¹⁷¹⁷

In March 2024, the MoI expressed its intention to roll out the second phase of the IFRP on 15 April,¹⁷¹⁸ targeting holders of the Afghan Citizen Card (ACC).¹⁷¹⁹ Those who did not return voluntarily were threatened with arrest and deportation.¹⁷²⁰ The declaration initially prompted concerns among the Afghan community in March and April¹⁷²¹ and led to a rise in returns around the announced deadline. However, unlike in the first phase, the authorities did not enforce the 15 April 2024 deadline. As a result, return figures ultimately remained lower than anticipated. While in late June 2024, the GoP announced that repatriations would resume shortly,¹⁷²² the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) informed in July 2024 that the plan was still in a preparatory stage.¹⁷²³ In mid-September 2024, the GoP’s Chief Commissioner at Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees stated in an interview with EUAA that the government was still in the initial phase of consultations regarding phases 2 and 3 and that intra-government talks were being held between the Chief Commissioner at Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees, the MoI, the MoFA, and the governments and departments of the provinces.¹⁷²⁴ Thus, as of August/September 2024, sources agreed that there were no

¹⁷¹⁵ International Crisis Group, Pakistan’s Mass Deportation of Afghans Poses Risks to Regional Stability, 13 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷¹⁶ Border Consortium, Emergency Border Operations 15 September 2023 to 30 June 2024, 23 September 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁷¹⁷ UNHCR-Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁷¹⁸ Border Consortium, Emergency Border Operations 15 September 2023 to 30 June 2024, 23 September 2024, [url](#), p. 1; News International (The), Operation for deportation of Afghan citizen card holders from April 15, 18 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷¹⁹ Border Consortium, Emergency Border Operations 15 September 2023 to 30 June 2024, 23 September 2024, [url](#), p. 1; Dawn, As Pakistan begins second phase of deportation, Afghan women fear what lies ahead, 15 April 2024, [url](#); AI, Pakistan: Government must stop ignoring global calls to halt unlawful deportation of Afghan refugees, 4 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷²⁰ News International (The), Operation for deportation of Afghan citizen card holders from April 15, 18 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷²¹ UNHCR-Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁷²² Border Consortium, Emergency Border Operations 15 September 2023 to 30 June 2024, 23 September 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁷²³ Ahmed, M., Deportation of Afghan Migrants to Continue, Pakistan Government Says, The Diplomat, 12 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷²⁴ M. Abbas Khan, Chief Commissioner at Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees, Government of Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024





indications that the second phase had been launched.¹⁷²⁵ An international organisation in Pakistan observed that there was ‘significant confusion’ surrounding the details of the various phases of the IFRP, especially as to when the second phase would be launched. According to this source, the lack of a coherent policy contributed to widespread uncertainty, anxiety, and unrest among the Afghan community, with many expressing fears of arrest and deportation.¹⁷²⁶

In terms of figures, UNHCR and IOM recorded a total of 738 583 returns to Afghanistan between 15 September 2023 and 5 October 2024. The majority of these returns (490 891) occurred between 15 September and 31 December 2023. From a weekly perspective, returns dramatically rose in October 2023 from around 8 900 returns per week at the beginning of the month to their highest overall peak of 117 667 in late October/early November 2023. Of the 738 583 returnees recorded by UNHCR and IOM between 15 September 2023 and 5 October 2024, 35 248 had been forcibly deported, most of them (29 320) between 15 September and 31 December 2023.¹⁷²⁷

UNHCR and IOM noted that the rate of returns and deportations had ‘decreased significantly since its peak in October and November 2023’,¹⁷²⁸ dropping to around 5 500 by the year’s end. The rate remained below 5 000 per week before slightly rising again in April and reaching the year’s highest peak in late May/early June at above 10 000¹⁷²⁹ (with May and June witnessing 38 000 monthly returns each).¹⁷³⁰ It then declined again and eventually dropped to around 4 600 returns per week in late September/early October 2024,¹⁷³¹ with the month of September 2024 seeing around 22 000 returns.¹⁷³² An international organisation working on Pakistan noted that this development indicated a ‘*de facto* pause’ on the IFRP,¹⁷³³ although Pakistan’s MoFA emphasised in July 2024 that deportations of Afghans without valid documentation had not been suspended.¹⁷³⁴

¹⁷²⁵ UNHCR-Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024; International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024; Border Consortium, Emergency Border Operations 01 to 31 August 2024, 15 October 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁷²⁶ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁷²⁷ UNHCR and IOM, UNHCR-IOM Flash Update No. 30, Arrest and Detention Flow Monitoring (15 September 2023 – 5 October 2024), 11 October 2024, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁷²⁸ UNHCR and IOM, UNHCR-IOM Flash Update No. 30, Arrest and Detention Flow Monitoring (15 September 2023 – 5 October 2024), 11 October 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁷²⁹ UNHCR and IOM, UNHCR-IOM Flash Update No. 30, Arrest and Detention Flow Monitoring (15 September 2023 – 5 October 2024), 11 October 2024, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁷³⁰ UNHCR, Pakistan-Afghanistan: Returns Emergency Response as of 30 September 2024, 1 October 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁷³¹ UNHCR and IOM, UNHCR-IOM Flash Update No. 30, Arrest and Detention Flow Monitoring (15 September 2023 – 5 October 2024), 11 October 2024, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁷³² UNHCR, Pakistan-Afghanistan: Returns Emergency Response as of 30 September 2024, 1 October 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁷³³ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁷³⁴ Ahmed, M., Deportation of Afghan Migrants to Continue, Pakistan Government Says, The Diplomat, 12 July 2024, [url](#)



8.3. Legal situation of PoR and ACC holders

Regarding registered Afghan refugees,¹⁷³⁵ PoR cards have been extended for varying durations and recent years have been marked by extensions for shorter periods.¹⁷³⁶ Thus, the GoP in early November 2023 extended the validity of ID cards of Afghans who had previously obtained PoR cards for two months until 31 December 2023.¹⁷³⁷ In July 2024, however, the GoP officially announced a longer extension of the validity of PoR cards until 30 June 2025,¹⁷³⁸ allowing over 1.45 million Afghans with UNHCR-issued PoR cards to stay in Pakistan for the time being.¹⁷³⁹ At the same time, there has been no similar announcement regarding the ACC, fuelling confusion around the validity of that card.¹⁷⁴⁰ In an interview with the EUAA in September 2024, Abbas Khan, Chief Commissioner at the Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees, stated that, at the moment, the extension did not concern the ACC card holders.¹⁷⁴¹

While the IFRP's first phase targeted undocumented foreigners¹⁷⁴² and a government-wide circular stated that holders of PoR cards and ACCs must not be forcibly repatriated,¹⁷⁴³ the UN in mid-November 2023 pointed to reports of authorities disregarding this order 'at least in some cases'.¹⁷⁴⁴ UNHCR and IOM estimated that 10 % of those who returned between 15 September 2023 and 5 October 2024 were PoR cardholders, while 2 % were ACC holders. PoR cardholders accounted for 6 % of the total deportations of undocumented Afghans and PoR cardholders.¹⁷⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the GoP's Chief Commissioner at Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees stated that Afghan PoR cardholders and ACC holders had not been deported.¹⁷⁴⁶

An international organisation working on Pakistan told EUAA that while ACCs permitted temporary residency in Pakistan, the legal status of ACC holders remained 'highly uncertain' due to the absence of an expiration date and unclear policies regarding its validity and

¹⁷³⁵ The term refugee is technically not used in Pakistan. Pakistan is not a signatory to the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (also known as the 1951 Refugee Convention or the Geneva Convention) of 28 July 1951 and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees of 31 January 1967. UN, Treaty Series, 22 April 1954, vol. 189, [url](#), p. 137

¹⁷³⁶ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁷³⁷ HRW, Pakistan: Widespread Abuses Force Afghans to Leave, 28 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷³⁸ UNHCR and IOM, UNHCR-IOM Flash Update No. 30, Arrest and Detention Flow Monitoring (15 September 2023 – 5 October 2024), 11 October 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁷³⁹ AI, Pakistan: One-year extension of UN-registered Afghan refugees a welcome first step, lifeline must extend to all, 11 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷⁴⁰ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁷⁴¹ M. Abbas Khan, Chief Commissioner at Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees, Government of Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁷⁴² International Crisis Group, Pakistan's Mass Deportation of Afghans Poses Risks to Regional Stability, 13 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷⁴³ UN OHCHR, Türk alarmed by reports of human rights abuses against Afghans forced to leave Pakistan, 15 November 2023, [url](#); M. Abbas Khan, Chief Commissioner at Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees, Government of Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁷⁴⁴ UN OHCHR, Türk alarmed by reports of human rights abuses against Afghans forced to leave Pakistan, 15 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷⁴⁵ UNHCR and IOM, UNHCR-IOM Flash Update No. 30, Arrest and Detention Flow Monitoring (15 September 2023 – 5 October 2024), 11 October 2024, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁷⁴⁶ M. Abbas Khan, Chief Commissioner at Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees, Government of Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024



renewal. There was no system in place for the card's replacement, and its loss or confiscation by law enforcement left the holder *de facto* undocumented.¹⁷⁴⁷

Afghan citizens holding ACC and PoR cards were generally able to move freely throughout the country. However, UNHCR noted that there have been occasions when PoR cardholders were apprehended because they did not have their PoR cards with them at the time of the security check.¹⁷⁴⁸ Once their family members brought their PoR card to the police station, they would be released, a GoP official explained in an interview with the EUAA.¹⁷⁴⁹

The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs quoted a confidential source as saying that, unlike holders of valid PoR cards, who were generally permitted to work in the non-public sector, ACC holders were not allowed to work legally.¹⁷⁵⁰ However, the international organisation working on Pakistan indicated that the ACC offered limited access to the formal labour market, as well as to essential services such as opening a bank account, purchasing a SIM card and renting accommodation. The source specified that ACC holders have been able to access services on a case-by-case basis, often depending on the goodwill of local Pakistani communities.¹⁷⁵¹

Moreover, ACC holders (like undocumented Afghan nationals) faced challenges in accessing healthcare services. Reports consulted by the international organisation working in Pakistan, as highlighted in an interview with the EUAA, indicated that public government-run services were largely inaccessible to ACC holders.¹⁷⁵² According to a government official, Afghans were not allowed to buy property regardless of their legal status and therefore required a Pakistani proxy to hold the property in order to enable Afghans to run their businesses.¹⁷⁵³

8.4. Legal situation of undocumented Afghans

UNHCR and IOM estimated that the vast majority (88 %) of the individuals who returned between 15 September 2023 and 5 October 2024 were undocumented Afghans.¹⁷⁵⁴ However, it was noted that there was no official data on how many undocumented Afghans had left Pakistan since the IFRP was implemented.¹⁷⁵⁵ Amnesty International (AI) noted that the future of ACC holders and undocumented Afghans still remained in limbo.¹⁷⁵⁶ According to UNHCR, the situation related to their freedom of movement has become increasingly difficult for undocumented Afghans due to fears of arrest. Undocumented individuals have faced significant

¹⁷⁴⁷ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁷⁴⁸ UNHCR-Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁷⁴⁹ M. Abbas Khan, Chief Commissioner at Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees, Government of Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁷⁵⁰ Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Algemeen Ambtsbericht Pakistan* [Country report Pakistan], 5 July 2024, [url](#), p. 113

¹⁷⁵¹ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁷⁵² International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁷⁵³ M. Abbas Khan, Chief Commissioner at Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees, Government of Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁷⁵⁴ UNHCR and IOM, UNHCR-IOM Flash Update No. 30, Arrest and Detention Flow Monitoring (15 September 2023 – 5 October 2024), 11 October 2024, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁷⁵⁵ Dawn, As Pakistan begins second phase of deportation, Afghan women fear what lies ahead, 15 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷⁵⁶ AI, Pakistan: One-year extension of UN-registered Afghan refugees a welcome first step, lifeline must extend to all, 11 July 2024, [url](#)



challenges following the implementation of the IFRP, particularly when traveling between provinces. There have been provincial entry points where random security checks were conducted by law enforcement agents. If individuals or families, particularly undocumented Afghans, could not prove their identity during these checks, they faced arrest.¹⁷⁵⁷ According to a confidential source consulted by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, undocumented Afghans were not allowed to work.¹⁷⁵⁸ Additionally, undocumented Afghan nationals faced challenges in accessing healthcare services. Reports indicated that public government-run services were largely inaccessible to undocumented Afghans.¹⁷⁵⁹

Afghans who arrived after the Taliban *de facto* government came to power in Afghanistan in August 2021 have not been granted refugee status or asylum by the GoP. Moreover, following formal communication from the authorities in 2022, UNHCR has not issued documents such as asylum-seeker certificates to these individuals. As a result, many do not possess documentation. This lack of documentation for refugees and asylum seekers resulted in them being treated as undocumented Afghans.¹⁷⁶⁰ Many Afghans who arrived after August 2021 and applied to be resettled in various Western countries were left in a state of legal uncertainty as their Pakistani visas expired and their resettlement procedures turned out lengthy.¹⁷⁶¹ In December 2023, the GoP extended a deadline to allow Afghans awaiting resettlement to remain in Pakistan until the end of February 2024. At the same time, it announced that individuals overstaying the new deadline would be required to pay a fine.¹⁷⁶² As of September 2024, UNHCR noted that this overstay fee for individuals whose visas had expired ranged from USD 50 to USD 400 per person depending on how long the visa had been expired.¹⁷⁶³ Afghans seeking to resettle to other countries who had not obtained or renewed their Pakistani visas were also required to pay an exit fee of USD 830.¹⁷⁶⁴ According to Pakistan's MoFA, there were at least 44 000 Afghans in Pakistan as of early July 2024 who had been approved for relocation to other countries, including 25 000 to the USA, but were still waiting for visas to be issued by those countries.¹⁷⁶⁵

8.5. Arrest, detention and harassment

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, noted in November 2023 that the expulsion of Afghan nationals was 'accompanied by abuse, including ill-treatment, arbitrary arrests and detention, destruction of property and personal belongings, and extortion'.¹⁷⁶⁶

Arrest and detention

¹⁷⁵⁷ UNHCR-Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁷⁵⁸ Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen Ambtsbericht Pakistan [Country report Pakistan], 5 July 2024, [url](#), p. 113

¹⁷⁵⁹ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁷⁶⁰ UNHCR-Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁷⁶¹ HRW, Pakistan: Afghans Detained, Face Deportation, 31 October 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷⁶² RFE/RL, Pakistan Extends Deadline For Afghans Seeking Third Country Resettlement, 14 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷⁶³ UNHCR-Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁷⁶⁴ HRW, Pakistan: Widespread Abuses Force Afghans to Leave, 28 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷⁶⁵ DW, Pakistan steps up clampdown on Afghan migrants, 11 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷⁶⁶ UN OHCHR, Türk alarmed by reports of human rights abuses against Afghans forced to leave Pakistan, 15 November 2023, [url](#)



Due to a widespread campaign by the GoP and law enforcement agencies to pressure Afghan nationals to leave Pakistan (including threats in public spaces), many Afghan nationals, particularly the undocumented, left for Afghanistan. In addition to these ‘self-managed returns’, there were also many Afghans who were arrested, taken to holding sites and subsequently deported.¹⁷⁶⁷

An international organisation working on Pakistan noted in September 2024 that arrests and detentions of Afghan nationals were especially frequent during the implementation of the first phase of the IFRP.¹⁷⁶⁸ During the year 2023, UNHCR and IOM recorded the arrest and detention of 30 667 Afghan nationals (including 4 368 PoR cardholders and asylum-seekers and 26 299 ACC holders and undocumented Afghans).¹⁷⁶⁹ The vast majority (around 28 500) had been arrested or detained between 15 September and 31 December 2023.¹⁷⁷⁰ The authorities carried out mass arrests,¹⁷⁷¹ detaining hundreds of Afghans in Karachi and Quetta,¹⁷⁷² while conducting night raids during which they threatened, beat and arrested Afghans.¹⁷⁷³ UNHCR noted that while those detained in mass arrest campaigns faced expedited deportation without any legal process, those individuals apprehended by regular police forces under Pakistan’s Foreigners Act underwent a judicial process before being deported.¹⁷⁷⁴

As it implemented the first phase of the IFRP, the GoP was reported to have set up nearly 40 holding centres across the country¹⁷⁷⁵ with the intention of detaining a large number of undocumented individuals before their deportation.¹⁷⁷⁶ As of September 2024, sources noted that these centres were ‘dormant’¹⁷⁷⁷ or that merely a few of them remained operational.¹⁷⁷⁸ Arrested individuals, mostly undocumented, were detained in the centres for periods of two to five days before being transported to border crossings for deportation.¹⁷⁷⁹ According to an international organisation working on Pakistan, those detained in holding centres had limited access to legal assistance and very little contact with their families, and there was a general lack of transparency regarding these sites.¹⁷⁸⁰ Numerous Afghans were taken to the main border crossings immediately after their arrest, where the authorities ‘in effect, pushed them

¹⁷⁶⁷ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁷⁶⁸ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁷⁶⁹ UNHCR and IOM, UNHCR-IOM Flash Update No. 30, Arrest and Detention Flow Monitoring (15 September 2023 – 5 October 2024), 11 October 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁷⁷⁰ UNCERD, Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of Pakistan, CERD/C/PAK/CO/24-26, 24 September 2024, [url](#), para. 31

¹⁷⁷¹ HRW, Pakistan: Widespread Abuses Force Afghans to Leave, 28 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷⁷² RFE/RL, Thousands Of Afghans, Facing Expulsion From Pakistan, Continue To Cross Border, 2 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷⁷³ HRW, Pakistan: Widespread Abuses Force Afghans to Leave, 28 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷⁷⁴ UNHCR-Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁷⁷⁵ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

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¹⁷⁷⁸ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁷⁷⁹ UNHCR-Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁷⁸⁰ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024



through', the International Crisis Group reported.¹⁷⁸¹ The GoP, however, disputed that it had set up detention centres for Afghan citizens.¹⁷⁸²

In 2024, arrests and detentions showed a marked decrease compared to the period of implementation of the IFRP in 2023.¹⁷⁸³ Between 1 January and 5 October 2024, 6 382 arrests and detentions of Afghan nationals were recorded (including 1 187 PoR cardholders and asylum-seekers and 5 195 ACC holders and undocumented Afghans).¹⁷⁸⁴ Monthly trends in arrests and detentions recorded between January and September 2024 followed a pattern similar to returns, with September 2024 seeing around 630 individuals being arrested or detained.¹⁷⁸⁵ However, UNHCR and IOM emphasised that figures on the arrest and detention of ACC holders or undocumented Afghans 'should be considered indicative' and that especially those on undocumented Afghan nationals 'should be considered underreported'.¹⁷⁸⁶

As of September 2024, UNHCR noted that the majority of those currently arrested were undocumented Afghans.¹⁷⁸⁷ While there were occasional reports of detentions of PoR cardholders¹⁷⁸⁸ and ACC holders, many cases were resolved through intervention by relevant entities, leading to their release, especially in case of the PoR cardholders. Nonetheless, some of these individuals had still been deported. The complexities of mixed-status families further complicated matters, as some family members may hold PoR cards while others may hold ACC cards or be undocumented. Ultimately, the situation often depended on the documentation status of the head of the family.¹⁷⁸⁹ While the GoP stated that it had no grounds to disagree with data on arrests and detentions of Afghans published by UNHCR and IOM, it claimed that no PoR cardholders and ACC holders had been detained.¹⁷⁹⁰

Harassment

Significant levels of harassment of Afghan nationals by law enforcement agencies were reported, particularly during the implementation of the first phase of the IFRP.¹⁷⁹¹ Several sources pointed to cases of police harassing Afghans irrespective of their status,¹⁷⁹² pressuring

¹⁷⁸¹ International Crisis Group, Pakistan's Mass Deportation of Afghans Poses Risks to Regional Stability, 13 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷⁸² M. Abbas Khan, Chief Commissioner at Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees, Government of Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 18 September 2024

¹⁷⁸³ UNHCR-Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁷⁸⁴ UNHCR and IOM, UNHCR-IOM Flash Update No. 30, Arrest and Detention Flow Monitoring (15 September 2023 – 5 October 2024), 11 October 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁷⁸⁵ UNHCR, Pakistan-Afghanistan: Returns Emergency Response as of 30 September 2024, 1 October 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁷⁸⁶ UNHCR and IOM, UNHCR-IOM Flash Update No. 30, Arrest and Detention Flow Monitoring (15 September 2023 – 5 October 2024), 11 October 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁷⁸⁷ UNHCR-Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁷⁸⁸ UNHCR-Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024; Switzerland, SEM, Focus Pakistan: Rückkehr und Rückführung afghanischer Staatsangehöriger 2023-2024 [Focus Pakistan: Return and deportation of Afghan citizens 2023-2024], 5 April 2024, [url](#), p. 19

¹⁷⁸⁹ UNHCR-Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

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¹⁷⁹² International Crisis Group, Pakistan's Mass Deportation of Afghans Poses Risks to Regional Stability, 13 November 2023, [url](#); UNHCR, Forced returns from Pakistan deepen Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis, 17 November 2023, [url](#); RFE/RL, Complaints Of Abuse Grow As Pakistan Ramps Up Afghan Expulsions, 4 November 2023, [url](#)



even registered refugees and other documented individuals to leave Pakistan.¹⁷⁹³ There were reports that police raided the homes of registered Afghan refugees, seizing their property, destroying¹⁷⁹⁴ or confiscating¹⁷⁹⁵ their PoR cards, making arrests without charges, and demanding bribes.¹⁷⁹⁶ Police reportedly also demanded bribes from detained Afghans in exchange for their release.¹⁷⁹⁷ Thus, harassment by police also prompted some Afghans holding valid documentation to leave Pakistan.¹⁷⁹⁸

While the GoP set a limit of USD 1 000 in cash or valuables per family of spontaneous returnees,¹⁷⁹⁹ the International Crisis Group reported of numerous returnees complaining that police officers were even confiscating cash amounts below that threshold, as well as personal items such as jewellery. The source also pointed to isolated allegations of police demanding sexual favours from women who were seeking to avoid detention.¹⁸⁰⁰ Reports also emerged that authorities in late October 2023, ahead of the 1 November 2023 deadline, demolished informal housing of Afghans in Islamabad¹⁸⁰¹ and other parts of the country¹⁸⁰².

AI noted in July 2024 that hostility towards Afghans had increased since the announcement of the IFRP in October 2023.¹⁸⁰³ Announcements made in mosques warning Pakistanis against engaging with Afghan nationals (e.g., by concluding rental agreements or employment contracts) negatively affected community dynamics, contributing to a hostile atmosphere and increasing tensions within communities where Pakistani and Afghan nationals often interacted on a daily basis.¹⁸⁰⁴

8.6. Socio-economic impact

Arrests of Afghan citizens by law enforcement agencies created fear within the communities,¹⁸⁰⁵ pressuring Afghan residents to stay within the confines of their homes and

¹⁷⁹³ UNHCR, Forced returns from Pakistan deepen Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis, 17 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷⁹⁴ International Crisis Group, Pakistan's Mass Deportation of Afghans Poses Risks to Regional Stability, 13 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷⁹⁵ HRW, Pakistan: Widespread Abuses Force Afghans to Leave, 28 November 2023, [url](#); Switzerland, SEM, Focus Pakistan: Rückkehr und Rückführung afghanischer Staatsangehöriger 2023-2024 [Focus Pakistan: Return and deportation of Afghan citizens 2023-2024], 5 April 2024, [url](#), p. 19

¹⁷⁹⁶ International Crisis Group, Pakistan's Mass Deportation of Afghans Poses Risks to Regional Stability, 13 November 2023, [url](#); RFE/RL, Complaints Of Abuse Grow As Pakistan Ramps Up Afghan Expulsions, 4 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷⁹⁷ HRW, Pakistan: Afghans Detained, Face Deportation, 31 October 2023, [url](#)

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¹⁸⁰¹ RFE/RL, Afghan Refugees' Homes Demolished In Islamabad Ahead of Deportation Deadline From Pakistan, 1 November 2023, [url](#); BBC News, Watch: Bulldozers tear down Afghans' houses in Pakistan, 1 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁸⁰² BBC News, Watch: Bulldozers tear down Afghans' houses in Pakistan, 1 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁸⁰³ AI, Pakistan: One-year extension of UN-registered Afghan refugees a welcome first step, lifeline must extend to all, 11 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁸⁰⁴ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024

¹⁸⁰⁵ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024; HRW, Pakistan: Afghans Detained, Face Deportation, 31 October 2023, [url](#)



avoid going outside for fear of arrest.¹⁸⁰⁶ This negatively affected the financial situation of Afghan families. Moreover, reports indicated that Afghan nationals were struggling to find employment¹⁸⁰⁷ as the government warned the Pakistani population against engaging with them.¹⁸⁰⁸ Due to financial pressures, parents were forced to send their children to work,¹⁸⁰⁹ while some young daughters were being married off to help provide for their families.¹⁸¹⁰ Some children reportedly stopped school attendance,¹⁸¹¹ with Afghans interviewed by the Swiss SEM in Peshawar quoted as saying that many children there were afraid of being detained while at school and thus becoming separated from their families.¹⁸¹²

The IFRP also negatively affected Afghans' ability to rent housing, as landlords were increasingly reluctant to lease their properties to them.¹⁸¹³ Registered Afghan refugees interviewed by the Swiss SEM in Peshawar in January 2024 were quoted as saying that registering a lease contract with the police sometimes entailed harassment. According to sources interviewed by the SEM, many middle-class Afghans had their lease contracts cancelled or were required to pay higher rent.¹⁸¹⁴

¹⁸⁰⁶ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024; DW, Pakistan: Afghans facing deportation seek legal help, 27 October 2023, [url](#)

¹⁸⁰⁷ International organisation working on Pakistan, online interview with EUAA, 19 September 2024; VOA, Afghan refugees' problems in Pakistan compounded by fear of deportation, 19 June 2024, [url](#)

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Annex 2: Terms of Reference

EUAA COI Country Focus report on Pakistan (2024)

The reference period is 1 October 2023 - 25 October 2024.

Country overview

- Overview of the basic information such as geography, demography, ethnic groups and languages, state structure (executive, legislative and judicial branches).

Background and political developments

- Recent political developments
 - Protests and social unrest following Imran Khan's removal from power
 - Information on the latest elections
- International context.

Main actors in the conflict (capacity, areas of operation, motives/activities, methods)

- State actors including the Pakistan army, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), the Frontier Corps (FC), Levies and Khassadars, the Rangers, the Pakistani police, and pro-government armed militia
- Main non-state armed groups including Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Jamaat-ul Ahrar (JuA), Al-Qaeda, Jamaat-ul Ansar Al-Sharia, Punjabi Taliban, Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), Haqqani network, Sipah-e Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ), Sipah-e Mohammed Pakistan (SMP), Balochistan nationalist groups, other local/small militia groups.

Security situation

- Main security/conflict dynamics and drivers. Recent developments in the conflict/major events/trends since the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan and its impact on the security situation in Pakistan. Geographic overview/armed groups presence: main areas of conflict, trends/patterns in security incidents/confrontations.
- **Security situation per region**
Security trends per geographic subdivision including basic geography, population estimates, ethnicity and economy, and background of the violence and actors in each province, general background of the province if relevant to security situation; description on presence and general activity of actors, recent security incidents and their impact on civilian population, displacement, numbers and to link important IDP-movements to their causes, situation of IDPs and returnees:
 - Punjab
 - Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) (including former FATA and a description of the KP tribal districts in detail)
 - Balochistan
 - Sindh
 - Islamabad Capital Territory



- Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

Structure and functioning of the judiciary

- Formal and informal systems
- Applicable laws (including *Sharia*)
- Blasphemy law
- Anti-Terrorism Acts
- Punishments under the law
- Detention and death penalty
- Effectiveness and integrity of law enforcement and judiciary.

Treatment of certain profiles and groups of population

- Ethnic minorities
- Religious minorities
- Individuals accused of blasphemy
- Women
- Children
- LGBTIQ
- Trafficking in human beings
- Members and supporters of opposition parties
- Human rights defenders and activists
- Journalists and media workers.

Socio-economic and humanitarian situation

- Impact of the conflict/violence on the economy, services (healthcare, water sanitation, education, social structures/cohesion).

Situation of Afghan refugees

- Situation of Afghan refugees including information on the implementation of Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan





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