COI QUERY

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Title	**Security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province**
Reference period	January 2026 to 5 October 2026
Topic(s)	1. Conflict background and armed actors 2. Recent security trends 3. Impact on civilian population 4. Humanitarian Situation
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COI QUERY RESPONSE – Pakistan

Security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province

1. Conflict background and armed actors

As reported by Amnesty International, in 2025, continued terrorist attacks and heightened tensions with India were accompanied by increased military operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, while militant violence, drone strikes, and security operations resulted in 'dozens of civilian deaths' throughout the year.[1] More specifically, terrorism-related incidents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa claimed the lives of at least 502 people, including civilians and security personnel in 2025, according to a local police report.[2]

In 2026, militant violence continued across the province.[3] According to a local research institute, the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was an 'epicentre' of violence and the worst-affected region in Pakistan during the second quarter of 2026. During this period, the province recorded 475 violence-linked fatalities and 151 violent incidents involving civilians, security personnel, and outlaws, resulting from both militant attacks and the state's counter-terrorism operations.[4] According to the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), militant violence increased in mid-September 2026, with attacks becoming more geographically widespread and increasingly directed at security personnel and installations, 'indicating renewed militant pressure' across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.[5]

Information on the armed groups in the province can be found in section 4.2.2. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, subsection (b), Presence and general activities of the armed actors, of the EUAA COI report Pakistan, Country Focus, published in May 2026.

Additional information on the general security situation can be found in the EUAA COI query response number Q12-2026: Security situation in Khyber district, published in March 2026 and the EUAA COI query response number Q23-2026: Major political, human rights and security developments, published in July 2026.

2. Recent security trends

[1] Amnesty International, The State of the World's Human Rights; Democratic Pakistan 2025, 21 April 2026, url
[2] Nation (The), 502 civilians, security personnel killed in KP terror attacks during 2025, 15 December 2025, url; SATP, South Asia Intelligence Review: Pakistan, Weekly Assessments & Briefings, Volume 24, No. 38, 9 March 2026, url
[3] PICSS, Comprehensive Monthly Security Profile of Pakistan for August 2026, 27 September 2026, url; PICSS, PICSS Weekly Insight 18–24 September 2026, 30 September 2026, url; CRSS, CRSS Security Report | Q2 2026, 1 July 2026, url
[4] CRSS, CRSS Security Report | Q2 2026, 1 July 2026, url
[5] PICSS, PICSS Weekly Insight 18–24 September 2026, 30 September 2026, url

In a report published in February 2026, the International Crisis Group noted that militant attacks in Pakistan's border regions with Afghanistan, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, were increasing, resulting in the deaths of 'hundreds of civilians, police and soldiers', particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.[6] The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and its affiliates were identified as the armed groups responsible for most of the attacks.[7]

Local news sources reported that during the first half of 2026, 122 police personnel were killed and 175 injured in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, representing increases of 93.7 % and 108.3 %, respectively, compared with the same period in 2025. From January to September 2026, the province recorded 680 militant attacks, compared with 508 during the same period in 2025, accounting for a 33.9 % increase.[8] According to CRSS, 63 % of violent incidents recorded in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during the second quarter of 2026 occurred in Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Kurram and Bajaur districts.[9]

During 2026, Pakistani security forces continued to conduct counter-terrorism operations against militant groups, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.[10] According to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police, the Counter Terrorism Department conducted 2 004 intelligence-based operations during the first six months of 2026, resulting in 504 arrests and 182 militants killed in encounters. Local police also reported that 341 drone attacks by militants had been foiled during the same period.[11] In September 2026, following a series of militant attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa attributed to Ittehad-ul-Mujahideen Pakistan (IMP), an Islamic military alliance,[12] Pakistani security forces conducted intelligence-based operations and air strikes in areas around Kohat, Hangu and Thall. According to the Information Ministry, the operations killed 37 militants and were conducted in response to a series of attacks, including an 18 September attack on Kohat Police Lines.[13] Local news sources, citing the Information Ministry, reported on 1 October 2026 that, as part of Operation Ghazab lil Haq and Pakistan's efforts to combat militants, security forces had conducted aerial strikes against sites belonging to militant organisations referred to by the authorities as 'Fitna al Khawarij' and 'Fitna al Hindustan'. The

[6] International Crisis Group, Pakistan: Responding to the Militant Surge on the Afghan Border, 27 February 2026, url, p. 1
[7] International Crisis Group, Pakistan: Responding to the Militant Surge on the Afghan Border, 27 February 2026, url, p. 1
[8] Daily Times, KP Police fatalities rise 93.7% in first half of 2026; attacks increase by 33.9%, 30 September 2026, url; APP, KP police fatalities rise 93.7pc in first half of 2026; attacks increase by 33.9pc, 29 September 2026, url
[9] CRSS, CRSS Security Report | Q2 2026, 1 July 2026, url
[10] Express Tribune (The), Pakistan carried out 'well-planned, calibrated' air strikes on terrorist hideouts in Afghanistan: info ministry, 1 October 2026, url; Dawn, 'Calibrated' air strikes target terrorist hideouts at two locations in Afghanistan: info ministry, 1 October 2026, url; Express Tribune (The), Pakistan carries out 'calibrated' air strikes against terrorist hideouts near Afghan border after K-P attacks, 21 September 2026, url; APP, KP police conducts 1,087 intelligence-based operations against terrorists in 2026, 28 April 2026, url; Dawn, CDF Munir says armed forces remain resolute in defeating terrorism, ensuring lasting peace: ISPR, 22 September 2026, url
[11] Dawn, KP police foiled 341 drone attacks in six months, 8 July 2026, url
[12] PICSS, Emergence of 'Ittehad-ul-Mujahideen Pakistan': A New Militant Alliance Challenges TTP's Monopoly. Weekly Report 11-17 April,2025, 18 April 2025, url
[13] Express Tribune (The), Pakistan carries out 'calibrated' air strikes against terrorist hideouts near Afghan border after K-P attacks, 21 September 2026, url

Information Ministry reported that multiple militants had been killed during this operation.[14] Operation Ghazab lil Haq was launched on 26 February 2026 following what Pakistani authorities described as 'unprovoked' cross-border firing by the Afghan Taliban.[15]

In February 2026, following reported drone attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan's Ministry of Interior imposed an immediate nationwide ban on the outdoor flying of quadcopters and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), with provincial authorities being instructed to enforce the measure.[16] The same day, Pakistani authorities reported that small drones had been brought down in Abbottabad, Swabi and Nowshehra. Afghanistan's authorities stated that they had conducted drone attacks against military targets in Pakistan, while Pakistani officials said the drones had been intercepted.[17] In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, at least 16 drone attacks were recorded during the first quarter of 2026. The TTP claimed responsibility for one of the attacks, while the remaining incidents remained unattributed.[18]

According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), some incidents reported in the districts of Kohat, Swabi, Mardan, and Swat in 2026, targeting state institutions, government personnel, and police officers, include:

- On 24 February, six police personnel, including a Deputy Superintendent of Police, were killed and four others injured when militants ambushed a police vehicle in Kohat District. A person being transferred to court with the vehicle was also killed.[19]
- On 17 June, the Counter Terrorism Department killed three TTP militants during an intelligence-based operation in Shabqadar area of Mardan District.[20]
- On 2 August, a suicide attack at Kabal Police Station in Swat District killed at least 17 people, including seven police officers, and injured 23 others. TTP claimed responsibility for the attack.[21]
- On 31 August, the Counter Terrorism Department killed two militants during an intelligence-based operation in the mountainous area of Katlang in Mardan District.[22]
- On 18 September, an explosives-laden vehicle detonated near a mosque in the old Kohat Police Lines, followed by an attack on police facilities, killing at least 22 people, including 15 police officers, and injuring more than 100 others. The subsequent clearance operation resulted in the deaths of eight attackers.[23]

[14] Express Tribune (The), Pakistan carried out 'well-planned, calibrated' air strikes on terrorist hideouts in Afghanistan: info ministry, 1 October 2026, url; Dawn, 'Calibrated' air strikes target terrorist hideouts at two locations in Afghanistan: info ministry, 1 October 2026, url
[15] Dawn, 'Calibrated' air strikes target terrorist hideouts at two locations in Afghanistan: info ministry, 1 October 2026, url
[16] Al Jazeera, Pakistan-Afghanistan updates: Deadly cross-border fighting intensifies, 27 February 2026, url
[17] BBC News, What we know after latest escalation in Pakistan-Afghanistan tensions, 27 February 2026, url
[18] CRSS, CRSS Security Report – Q1 2026, 1 April 2026, url
[19] SATP, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Timeline (Terrorist Activities)-2026, last updated, 28 September 2026, url
[20] SATP, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Timeline (Terrorist Activities)-2026, last updated, 28 September 2026, url
[21] SATP, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Timeline (Terrorist Activities)-2026, last updated, 28 September 2026, url
[22] SATP, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Timeline (Terrorist Activities)-2026, last updated, 28 September 2026, url
[23] SATP, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Timeline (Terrorist Activities)-2026, last updated, 28 September 2026, url

- On 22 September, Pakistani security forces engaged Taliban positions along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in the Kurram sector of Kohat Division following an alleged cross-border infiltration attempt.[24]

3. Impact on civilian population

In 2025, counterterrorism operations caused civilian casualties in various districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including in Mardan,[25] Swat,[26] and Kohat.[27] Between 1 January 2026 and 28 September 2026, according to SATP, 250 civilians were killed in insurgent attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, compared with 268 civilian casualties reported in 2025.[28]

Some of the incidents involving civilians that occurred during the period from January 2026 to September 2026 in the districts of Kohat, Mardan, Swabi, and Swat included:

- On 27 February, a child was injured by a drone crash into a building in Swabi.[29]
- On March 27, a local leader of the religious-political organisations Aalmi Majlis Tahaffuz Khatm-e-Nubuwat and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) was shot dead by unknown assailants in Mardan.[30]
- On 7 April, the residence of an Awami National Party (ANP) leader was attacked; security forces suppressed the attack and there were no casualties.[31]
- On 17 June, a Sikh gurdwara caretaker and his wife were killed by an unidentified gunman at a gurdwara, a Sikh place of worship, in Mardan.[32]
- On 7 June, in Swat district, a local transport leader was injured, and his companions were killed after an attack on their vehicle; allegedly, some 40 assailants were behind the attack and the police arrested three.[33]
- On 18 June, TTP members allegedly damaged construction equipment in Kohat, causing financial losses but no casualties.[34]
- On 5 July, unknown assailants attacked the residence of the ANP's party district representative in Swat, injuring five people.[35]
- On 5 July, local Pakistan People's Party (PPP) representative in Swat was shot dead by unknown assailants.[36]

[24] SATP, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Timeline (Terrorist Activities)-2026, last updated, 28 September 2026, url
[25] Dawn, KP govt apologises for civilian casualties in Mardan operation; probe underway, 29 March 2025, url; Amnesty International, Pakistan: Recurrent drone strikes in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa signal alarming disregard for civilian life, 24 June 2025, url
[26] Asharq Al Awsat, Pakistan Says it Killed 10 Civilians during Anti-militant Operation in Northwest, 30 March 2025, url; Dawn, Civilian killed, cop hurt as police, terrorists exchange fire in Swat, 7 August 2025, url
[27] The Hindu, 7 killed in gun attack on picnic-goers in northwest Pakistan, 17 August 2025, url
[28] SATP, Datasheet - Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Yearly Fatalities, last updated 28 September 2026, url
[29] SATP, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Timeline (Terrorist Activities)-2026, last updated 28 September 2026, url
[30] SATP, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Timeline (Terrorist Activities)-2026, last updated 28 September 2026, url
[31] SATP, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Timeline (Terrorist Activities)-2026, last updated 28 September 2026, url
[32] SATP, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Timeline (Terrorist Activities)-2026, last updated 28 September 2026, url
[33] SATP, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Timeline (Terrorist Activities)-2026, last updated 28 September 2026, url
[34] SATP, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Timeline (Terrorist Activities)-2026, last updated 28 September 2026, url
[35] SATP, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Timeline (Terrorist Activities)-2026, last updated 28 September 2026, url
[36] SATP, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Timeline (Terrorist Activities)-2026, last updated 28 September 2026, url

- On 2 August, in Swat, at least 17 people, including 10 civilians, were killed after a suicide attack in a police station in Kabal. The attack was claimed by TTP, stating that the police forces and a nearby gathering of the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) were among the targets.[37]
- On 6 August, two religious scholars were attacked and injured by unknown assailants in Kohat.[38]
- On 28 August, during a security forces operation in Kohat, a mosque was hit by a drone and one person was injured.[39]

4. Humanitarian situation

Aside from the security incidents, the humanitarian situation in the province has been affected by environmental disasters,[40] food insecurity,[41] and expulsion of Afghan nationals.[42]

Following the monsoon floods in 2025,[43] Swat was among the worst hit districts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,[44] and over 82 000 people in the district have been displaced, while schools, houses, and drinking water supplies have been damaged or destroyed.[45] Among the affected towns were Mingora, Babuzai, and Golkad.[46] According to UN OCHA, some 450 000 people in Swat were affected by the floods.[47] In May 2026, following heavy rain, weather-related incidents caused several deaths and injuries in Swabi and Mardan.[48] On 22 July 2026, Assessment Capabilities Project (ACAPS) indicated that the armed conflict and excessive rain worsened the situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and monsoon incidents killed 23 people in the province.[49] In a situational update on the monsoon-related humanitarian impact describing developments as of 14 September 2026, UN OCHA reported that 74 people have been killed

[37] SATP, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Timeline (Terrorist Activities)-2026, last updated 28 September 2026, url
[38] SATP, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Timeline (Terrorist Activities)-2026, last updated 28 September 2026, url
[39] SATP, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Timeline (Terrorist Activities)-2026, last updated 28 September 2026, url
[40] UNOCHA, Rapid Needs Assessment: Assessing Scale and Scope of Impact & Response in KP, 3 September 2025, url, p. 3; Vision of Humanity, Pakistan's Flood Crisis and the Fragile Fabric of Peace, 24 September 2025, url
[41] IPC, IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis December 2025 - September 2026, 18 February 2026, url, p. 1
[42] IOM, UNHCR, UNHCR-IOM Pakistan Flash update # 90 on Arrest and Detention/Flow Monitoring, 15 Sep 2023 to 11 April 2026, 17 April 2026, url
[43] The intense monsoon season occurred between June-August 2025. See: PMS (Pak Mission Society), Pakistan flash floods 2025: Humanitarian situation and needs assessment report - Districts Swat, Buner, Shangla, Battagram, and Mansehra, KP, 2 September 2025, url, p. 6
[44] HI Institute on Humanitarian Action, Floods in Pakistan: HI is supporting the population as they cope with the disaster, 4 September 2026, url; UNOCHA, Rapid Needs Assessment: Assessing Scale and Scope of Impact & Response in KP, 3 September 2025, url, p. 3; Vision of Humanity, Pakistan's Flood Crisis and the Fragile Fabric of Peace, 24 September 2025, url
[45] UNOCHA, Pakistan 2025 Monsoon Floods: Support Plan for Relief and Early Recovery (October 2025 - April 2026), October 2025, url, pp. 6, 13, 28, 32
[46] PMS (Pak Mission Society), Pakistan flash floods 2025: Humanitarian situation and needs assessment report - Districts Swat, Buner, Shangla, Battagram, and Mansehra, KP, 2 September 2025, url, p. 6
[47] UNOCHA, Rapid Needs Assessment: Assessing Scale and Scope of Impact & Response in KP, 3 September 2025, url, p. 6
[48] ERCC (Emergency Response Coordination Centre), DG ECHO (Directorate General for Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations), Pakistan - Severe weather and flash floods (PDMA, NOAA-CPC, media) (ECHO Daily Flash of 11 May 2026), 11 May 2026, url
[49] ACAPS, Pakistan, Latest updates on country situation, 22 July 2026, url

and 104 people injured in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa so far. Additionally, 428 houses were either partially or completely damaged.[50]

Covering the period of December 2025 - March 2026, an analysis by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) indicated that 7.5 million people in 45 districts across Pakistan experienced 'high levels of acute food insecurity' caused by a combination of factors including the adverse weather conditions and insecurity.[51] Among the 45 worst affected districts in all of Pakistan, IPC identified 14 districts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including Swat.[52]

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is also one of the provinces affected by the authorities' decision to expel Afghan nationals.[53] Between December 2025 and February 2026, authorities forcibly closed three Afghan refugee camps in the Swabi district, effectively ending legal residence for thousands of their inhabitants.[54] From Gohti camp alone, 20 000 people have been displaced.[55] In the period between 1 January 2026 and 11 April 2026, over 6 700 Afghans were arrested.[56]

Additionally, mass displacement of residents from Tirah Valley (Khyber District) since January 2026,[57] following counterterrorism operations in the area was reported.[58] As of September 2026, people remained displaced,[59] and Khyber authorities indicated that the returns are expected to formally begin on 10 October 2026.[60] For more information about the situation in the Khyber district, see the EUAA COI query response number Q12-2026: Security situation in Khyber district, published in March 2026.

[50] UNOCHA, Pakistan: 2026 Monsoon Situation Updates - 7 (As of 14 Sep 2026), 15 September 2026, url
[51] IPC, IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis December 2025 - September 2026, 18 February 2026, url, p. 1
[52] IPC, IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis December 2025 - September 2026, 18 February 2026, url, p. 4
[53] IOM, UNHCR, UNHCR-IOM Pakistan Flash update # 90 on Arrest and Detention/Flow Monitoring, 15 Sep 2023 to 11 April 2026, 17 April 2026, url
[54] DID Press Agency, Pakistan Closes Afghan Refugee Camp in Swabi, Displacing 20,000 Residents, 25 February 2026, url; Hasht-e Subh Daily, Pakistan Orders Evacuation of Two Major Afghan Refugee Camps, 27 December 2025, url
[55] DID Press Agency, Pakistan Closes Afghan Refugee Camp in Swabi, Displacing 20,000 Residents, 25 February 2026, url
[56] IOM, UNHCR, UNHCR-IOM Pakistan Flash update # 90 on Arrest and Detention/Flow Monitoring, 15 Sep 2023 to 11 April 2026, 17 April 2026, url, p. 1
[57] Jurist News, Pakistan dispatch: Tirah Valley faces humanitarian crisis amid displacement and political tensions, 27 February 2026, url; HRCP, Displaced by Conflict The Humanitarian Crisis in Tirah Valley, An HRCP fact-finding report, July 2026, url, p. 1
[58] Jurist News, Pakistan dispatch: Tirah Valley faces humanitarian crisis amid displacement and political tensions, 27 February 2026, url
[59] Express Tribune (The), Tirah families await return after 255 days, url; Tribal News Network, Tirah Displaced Families Set to Return Home From October 10, 30 September 2026, url
[60] Tribal News Network, Tirah Displaced Families Set to Return Home From October 10, 30 September 2026, url,

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Dawn, CDF Munir says armed forces remain resolute in defeating terrorism, ensuring lasting peace: ISPR, 22 September 2026, https://www.dawn.com/news/2031798/cdf-munir-says-armed-forces-remain-resolute-in-defeating-terrorism-ensuring-lasting-peace-ispr, accessed 1 October 2026

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Dawn, KP police foiled 341 drone attacks in six months, 8 July 2026, https://pass.dawn.com/news/2013769/kp-police-foiled-341-drone-attacks-in-six-months, accessed 2 October 2026

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