

RESEARCHED AND COMPILED BY THE REFUGEE DOCUMENTATION CENTRE OF IRELAND ON 26 JUNE 2024

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COI QUERY RESPONSE

PAKISTAN – HUMAN RIGHTS

In April 2024 the *United States Department of State* commenting on events of 2023 points out that: “Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings; enforced disappearance; torture and cases of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment by the government or its agents; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary detention; political prisoners; transnational repression against individuals in another country; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; punishment of family members for alleged offenses by a relative; serious abuses in a conflict, including reportedly unlawful civilian deaths and enforced disappearance; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including violence against journalists, unjustified arrests and disappearances of journalists, censorship, criminal defamation laws, and laws against blasphemy; serious restrictions on internet freedom; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, including overly restrictive laws on the operation of nongovernmental organizations and civil society organizations; restrictions of religious freedom; restrictions on freedom of movement; coerced or forced return of individuals to a country where they would likely face torture or persecution; serious government corruption; serious government restrictions on domestic and international human rights organizations; extensive gender-based violence, including domestic or intimate partner violence, sexual violence, child, early, and forced marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting, and other forms of such violence; crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting members of religious, racial and ethnic minorities including members of the Pashtun and Hazara communities...”¹

¹ United States Department of State (22 April 2024) 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, p.2

In May 2024 the *European Union* issued a report commenting on events of the preceding year which included noting that: “The human rights situation in Pakistan continued to present a mixed picture. The Constitution provides the necessary legal framework for fundamental rights, provincial autonomy and local governance to be guaranteed. But human rights defenders, civil society activists and experts point to the insufficient implementation of existing provision or the lack of proper safeguards.”²

In 2024 the *Human Rights Commission of Pakistan* points out that: “Violence in the name of religion has increasingly become the status quo in Pakistan.”³

The *International Crisis Group* in February 2024 notes concerns: “...about militant threats...”⁴

In February 2024 the *Irish Times* includes commentary on: “...a country in crisis.”⁵

In March 2024 *Human Rights Watch* states that: “Human Rights Watch urged the Pakistani government to take concrete steps to protect fundamental civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights in nine key areas. These are economic justice; electoral reforms; digital rights; freedom of expression and protecting civil society; freedom of religion and belief; prison reform; ending violence against women and girls; improving access to education; and protecting rights in counterterrorism operations.”⁶

A report issued in March 2024 by *Amnesty International* states that: “In the lead up to and since the elections on 8 February 2024, Amnesty and a number of other human rights organizations have noted a pattern of human rights violations in Pakistan. These include blanket bans on protests and gatherings curtailing the right to freedom of peaceful assembly; arbitrary arrest and detention of party workers, protestors and candidates limiting the right to liberty; trials of political opponents with little due process; mobile network and social media disruptions; restrictions on reporting by the media through a crackdown on the right to freedom of expression; mass deportation of Afghan refugees in contravention of the principle of non-refoulement; and a continuation of enforced disappearances and reports of extra-judicial killings.”⁷

In March 2024 the *Guardian* points out that: “Islamists mostly operate in Pakistan’s north-west...”⁸

A report issued in March 2024 by the *New York Times* comments on: “...the surging violence from militant and terrorist groups in Pakistan, which have grown more active and violent since U.S. troops withdrew from neighboring Afghanistan in 2021 and the Taliban seized power.”⁹

² European Union (29 May 2024) EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World: 2023 Country Updates – Pakistan, p.1

³ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (2024) A Culture of Hate Mongering, Freedom of Religion or Belief in 2022/2023, p.1

⁴ International Crisis Group (6 February 2024) Pakistan: Inching toward Contested Elections, p.10

⁵ Irish Times (19 February 2024) Shock support for Khan rocks rival parties; Surge for jailed former PM's candidates could weaken incoming coalition

⁶ Human Rights Watch (11 March 2024) Pakistan: New Government Should Protect Rights

⁷ Amnesty International (25 March 2024) Pakistan: Human Rights Charter, p.1

⁸ Guardian (26 March 2024) Six killed after suicide bomber rams convoy of Chinese engineers in Pakistan

⁹ New York Times (27 March 2024) Latest in String of Terrorist Attacks in Pakistan Kills Five Chinese Workers, p.1

The *Guardian* in April 2024 states that: “Balochistan, Pakistan’s south-western province, has been at the centre of a separatist insurgency since the early 2000s. The Pakistani security forces are accused of kidnap, torture and murder in the fight to quell the insurgency, an accusation they have denied on several occasions. According to the NGO Voice for Baloch Missing Persons, more than 5,000 people have been abducted since the early 2000s, their fates unknown. Since December 2016, at least 6,224 people have disappeared in the province, while 2,065 have been released and 2,766 killed, figures from the Human Rights Council of Balochistan show.”¹⁰

In June 2024 the *Guardian* points out that: “...Pakistan is experiencing a blistering heatwave that has overstretched an already poor healthcare system.”¹¹

In June 2024 the *Human Rights Commission of Pakistan* notes that: “The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) calls urgently on the federal government to take strict action following the recent mob lynching of a 40-year-old man in Swat, after he was accused of having desecrated pages of the Quran—a charge he reportedly denied while in police custody. The savagery with which the victim was lynched, the mob’s violent articulation of moral self-righteousness, and the fact that this is the second such incident in less than a month (following the death of Nazir Masih in Sargodha), should make it clear that the state has, knowingly or otherwise, surrendered its writ in matters of faith-based mob violence. Such incidents are no longer merely a question of problematic laws that are easily weaponized on grounds of blasphemy. Instead, they are a direct result of decades of pandering to, and deliberately cultivating, far-right religious groups and militancy. The state has been directly complicit in this: it has accorded impunity to perpetrators of faith-based violence and appeared indifferent to such incidents where decisive action was necessary.”¹²

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¹⁰ Guardian (23 April 2024) ‘I only protest. I want to go to school’: the childhoods lost in Pakistan when loved ones are ‘disappeared’, p.1

¹¹ Guardian (4 June 2024) Improving energy supply in Pakistan could save 175,000 lives, says Unicef

¹² Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (22 June 2024) Parliament must jointly resolve to eliminate radicalization and mob violence

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