



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

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Information on the current standing of Tehrik-e-Insaf including involvements in protests against the government;

In April 2015 *Reuters* notes that:

“...the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, ended a seven-month long boycott of parliament” (Reuters (6 April 2015) *Pakistan says Saudi asked for warplanes, warships and soldiers*).

Jane's in April 2015 points out that:

“The opposition Pakistan Movement for Justice (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf: PTI) party ended its seven-month boycott of parliament yesterday (6 April). Party leader Imran Khan and other PTI members of parliament (MPs) attended a joint sitting of parliament to debate Pakistan's potential role in Saudi Arabia's intervention in Yemen. The PTI has the third largest representation in the National Assembly, with 38 seats, but secured the second largest number of votes in the 2013 parliamentary election. However, PTI allegations of vote-rigging during the election triggered the party's parliamentary boycott in 2014 and the subsequent anti-government protest in August that year, during which Khan demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif” (*Jane's* (6 April 2015) *End of Pakistani opposition party's parliamentary boycott increases government stability and reduces risk of widespread rioting*).

A report released in March 2015 by *Dawn* notes:

“The Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf-led (PTI) government in KP...” (Dawn (13 March 2015) *Nearly 275 schools non-functional in KP: report*).

Reporters Sans Frontiers in December 2014 points out that:

“As Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, the opposition party led by former cricket champion Imran Khan, has grown more powerful, the media have been increasingly targeted in confrontations directed a wing of the government or by various political factions. PTI, for its part, has become the third-ranking political force following its showing in the 2013 legislative elections” (*Reporters Sans Frontiers* (24 December 2014) *Pakistan - Geo TV, target of Pakistan spy agency*).

Information on Tehrik-e-Insaf members being attacked by supporters of the government;

In April 2015 a report issued by the *Human Rights Commission of Pakistan* commenting on events of 2014 notes that:

“The main incidents of political violence during the year were reported from Lahore, Bhera, Islamabad and Faisalabad when police and anti-government protesters from the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and Pakistan Awami Tehreek clashed, leaving at least

30 persons dead and several wounded in separate incidents” (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (16 April 2015) *State of Human Rights in 2014*, p.66).

This document also notes:

“The year saw one of the most sustained political protests in Pakistan’s history. Between August and December, the airwaves were dominated by the protests and sit-ins held by PTI and PAT. The PTI started its rallies on August 14 against what it called rigging in the national elections in May 2013. The PAT rallies, known as ‘Inquilab March’ were held for removal of the primeminister as well as revamping the political system of the country. Holding protests in D-chowk of Islamabad, in immediate vicinity of the Red Zone where important state institutions like the Parliament house are situated, was meant to send out a clear message. They did have the right to exercise their freedom of assembly but in storming the Red Zone in the hopes of entering the Prime Minister’s House, they perhaps exceeded their rights and invited retaliation by the police. Late at night on August 19, Imran Khan, leader of PTI ordered the marchers to force their way into the Red Zone. On September 1, the protestors stormed the head office of Pakistan Television (PTV) in Islamabad, disrupting its transmission, destroying property and harassing staff inside. In the third phase of the PTI protests, Imran Khan announced a schedule to shut down major cities in the country. On December 8, when Faisalabad was shut down, the workers of the ruling party Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N) also took out a rally on the same locations announced by PTI. A clash erupted between the party workers which left one PTI protestor dead and 14 others injured, three of whom were policemen. Even though the PML-N workers could have chosen a different location for their gathering, the PTI leadership was also blamed for inciting the young party workers to engage in violent behaviour. The chief minister ordered a probe and an FIR was registered under PPC as well as ATA by the brother of the deceased PTI worker. In response to his death, PTI workers held protests throughout Pakistan. Main roads were blocked in Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore. Similarly, on December 16, Lahore was locked down and 28 key points were blocked. The PTI workers burnt tyres, put up barbed wire and barricaded Lahore’s main roads” (ibid, pp.159-160).

This report also points out that:

“Over the course of roughly five months of the PTI and PAT protests, the police set new records of arbitrarily detaining individuals over flimsy charges” (ibid, p.163).

This report also stated:

“The government responded to the protests in curious ways. Much of Lahore was sealed with containers to prevent protestors from marching to Islamabad on August 14, followed by much of Islamabad being blocked with containers to prevent more protestors from joining the sit-ins. This was coupled with a wave of preventive detention of dozens of PAT and PTI workers. After the storming of Parliament, the government’s misdirected response took new turns. On many occasions, First Information Reports (FIRs) or police complaints were registered against PTI and PAT members, including the leaders of both parties, under the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), 1997. Some protestors were also arrested before being released on bail. Finally, the government relied on the police force to manage the increasingly agitated crowds, despite ample warning signs –including the loss of life in the Model Town incident – that the Punjab police was not trained in the essential skill of peaceful crowd-control. On 8 December, for example, during PTI’s “shutdown” of Faisalabad, a PTI worker

was killed during a clash with supporters of PML-N. On many occasions, in addition to unarmed protestors, police also attacked journalists and reporters” (ibid, p.187).

It is also pointed out in this report that:

“Incidents of persons targeted for their political affiliation and association continued to be reported throughout the year” (ibid, p.175).

No further current information on this issue could be found among sources available to the RDC.

Information on reprisal attacks on Tehrik-e-Insaf/opposition party members, where government party members have originally been attacked;

In April 2015 a report published by the *Asian Human Rights Commission* notes that:

“The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has received information that a political worker died after severe torture in the custody of Pakistan Rangers including the injuries by drill machine at his both knees. He was arrested by Pakistan Rangers on the suspicion that he was involved in facilitating the target killing” (Asian Human Rights Commission (29 April 2015) *Pakistan: A political activist dies in the custody of Rangers after severe torture including the drilling of his knees*).

No further current information on this issue could be found among sources available to the RDC.

Available state protection

In April 2015 a report issued by the *Human Rights Commission of Pakistan* commenting on events of 2014 notes:

“With coercive laws being abused to persecute minorities and dissident voices, questions arise about the quality of our laws and their ability to produce justice” (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (16 April 2015) *State of Human Rights in 2014*, p.31).

This document also notes:

“Not only was the police, the premier law enforcement agency, ill-equipped to face the challenge in terms of resources and training, it was also criticised for inefficiency, corruption and politicisation” (ibid, p.58).

This report also states:

“The police and the security forces continued to enjoy impunity for indiscriminate or excessive use of force. Extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, torture, and other abuses were common” (ibid, p.140).

It is also noted in this document that:

“Though many large-scale protests were held in the country in 2014, the government did not ensure the freedom of assembly, as guaranteed in the national and

international laws, for most protesters. It differentiated between different groups of protesters on the space provided to them to exercise their right to peaceful assembly” (ibid, p.153).

This document also notes:

“Incidents of violence and use of excessive force against protesters set many examples during the year” (ibid, p.161).

In February 2015 a report published by *Amnesty International* reviewing events of the preceding year notes that:

“The National Assembly approved the Protection of Pakistan Act in July and other security laws during the year that enshrined sweeping powers for law enforcement and security forces, expanding the scope for arbitrary arrests, indefinite detention, the use of lethal force, and secret court proceedings which go well beyond international law enforcement and fair trial standards” (Amnesty International (25 February 2015) *Amnesty International Report 2014/15, Pakistan*).

Human Rights Watch in January 2015 commenting on events of 2014 points out that:

“Political instability reached a crisis point in August and September, as prolonged and violent opposition protests threatened to undermine gains achieved by the country’s first civilian transfer of power following the May 2013 election of Nawaz Sharif as prime minister. The protests in Islamabad—led by opposition politicians Imran Khan and Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri, who demanded Sharif’s resignation and the formation of a new government—prompted violence by both protesters and the security forces that resulted in at least three deaths and hundreds of injuries. The government responded to the protests by imposing a state of emergency in Islamabad and suspending fundamental rights such as the right to petition the courts to enforce constitutional guarantees. During the height of the crisis, the military intervened at the government’s request, allowing it to dangerously reinsert itself into democratic political decision-making” (Human Rights Watch (29 January 2015), *World Report 2015, Pakistan*).

This document also notes that:

“Accountability of law enforcement agencies showed no signs of improving in 2014. In June, one of the most egregious incidents of excessive use of force against political protesters occurred in Model Town, a Lahore suburb. Police fired without warning on supporters of the Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT), an opposition political party, whose workers had tried to stop police demolition of security barriers erected in front of PAT headquarters. Authorities confirmed the deaths of at least eight PAT members” (ibid).

A report issued in December 2014 by the *Asian Human Rights Commission* notes that:

“The newly enacted Pakistan Protection Act (PPA), 2014, has given sweeping powers of arrest and detention to law enforcement agencies, to the extent that they now have powers to shoot on sight. The Act has legalized disappearance following arrest and exonerated past incidents of disappearance. It has allowed law

enforcement agencies to detain suspects for 90 days without producing them before the courts. Following the enactment of PPA, incidents of torture, disappearances, and extrajudicial killings have increased further in comparison to the same during the previous military government” (Asian Human Rights Commission (10 December 2014) *Pakistan: A Lawless State*).

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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