



Pakistan – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 20 June 2013

Are there any reports of Interference with election rallies by the Taliban during the 2013 elections in Pakistan?

A Voice of America News report refers to allegations of intimidation by the Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-e-Taleban Pakistan) as follows:

“Next month, Pakistan holds its first election in five years and campaign-related violence is already having an impact. Deadly attacks have targeted secular politicians and their supporters. Other candidates and voters have been intimidated by militants. Militants are hitting early election rallies hard in Pakistan. The victims of one blast: supporters of the secular Awami National Party. The Taliban has threatened the largely secular parties of ANP, its partner, the Pakistan People’s Party and MQM in the southern city Karachi.” (Voice of America News (18 April 2013) *Bombings, Intimidation Mar Run-up to Pakistan Elections*)

A Deutsche Welle article states:

“Pakistan’s liberal Awami National Party says it cannot run its election campaign in northwestern areas because of the attacks on its leaders by the Taliban. The right wing appears set to benefit. The Pakistani Taliban has killed hundreds of secular Awami National Party (ANP) officials in the northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in the last five years. But of late, the banned militant group has increased its attacks on the ANP leaders. This puts the ANP in a difficult situation as it cannot campaign freely for the May 11 parliamentary elections.” (Deutsche Welle (22 April 2013) *The Dilemma of Pakistan’s Liberal Pashtuns*)

A BBC News report states:

“The cancellation of a key political rally that was to kick-start the election campaign of one of the largest political parties in Pakistan is seen by many as indicative of hard times for the country’s secular political forces in the coming days. The Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) abandoned plans for Wednesday night’s rally in its native stronghold of Larkana town following what party leaders called ‘security threats’ from militants. The PPP is one of three parties recently named by a spokesman of the Pakistani Taliban as ‘legitimate’ targets for militant attacks during the elections, due in May.” (BBC News (5 April 2013) *Pakistan election: Taliban threats hamper secular campaign*)

An article from The Times states:

“Concerns are growing about the Taleban’s increasing influence on Pakistan’s upcoming general election after militants warned they were preparing to unleash scores of suicide bombers to back up a series of recent attacks on

candidates and activists. Among the more brazen attempts by militants to disrupt next month's poll, the first after a full term ever completed by a Pakistan president, was a car bomb close to the town of Mingora, which killed Mukaram Shah, an activist for the Awami National Party (ANP). Mingora, in the Swat Valley, was the hometown of Malala Yousafzai, the 15-year-old schoolgirl who was shot in the head last October for writing a blog promoting education for girls in the area. Following the Mingora bombing, Tehrik-e-Taleban Pakistan (TTP) boasted that it had prepared more than 100 suicide bombers to mount attacks on candidates and rallies of those parties, like the ANP, it has blacklisted." (The Times (17 April 2013) *Taleban threatens to unleash bombers on Pakistan election campaign*)

An Inter Press Service report states:

"TTP does not trouble to hide its hatred of the ANP, which has ruled the KP since 2008. In 2009, a major ANP operation evicted the Taliban from the Swat valley. Following the Apr. 14 assassination, militants reiterated their stern warning to osecularo parties that opposition to the Taliban will not be tolerated. All civilians have been instructed to stay away from rallies and public meetings u but the threats have fallen on deaf ears as, time and again, election hopefuls from groups like the ANP, the Pakistan PeopleAEs Party (PPP) and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) come out into the streets, drawing crowds of hundreds, sometimes thousands, of supporters. And as the popularity of secular parties grows, so too does the wrath of the militants. On Tuesday, Apr. 16, a suicide bombing at an ANP public meeting in Peshawar killed 10 people." (Inter Press Service (17 April 2013) *Pakistan: Meeting Terror with Defiance Ahead of Election*)

A Human Rights Watch report states:

"On March 18, a spokesperson for the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (the Pakistani Taliban, TTP) declared elections part of an 'un-Islamic democratic system which only serves the interests of infidels and enemies of Islam,' and warned voters to stay away from political rallies by the major coalition partners in the outgoing government. Particularly at risk have been the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), and the Awami National Party (ANP). On April 28, the TTP again declared that it 'had decided to target those secular political parties which were part of the previous coalition government.'" (Human Rights Watch (29 April 2013) *Pakistan: Ensure Election Security from Taliban Attacks*)

A BBC News report on an attack on an election meeting in Karachi

"At least 10 people have been killed in a bomb attack on an election meeting in the southern Pakistani city of Karachi. Police said a device had exploded near the office of the Awami National Party (ANP) in the western area of Mominabad. The apparent target was an ANP National Assembly candidate scheduled to address the meeting, Bashir Jan, who survived. The Taliban said it carried out the attack as part of the group's policy to target secular political parties who have spoken of fighting against it." (BBC News (26 April 2013) *Bomb attack on Karachi election meeting kills 10*)

A Los Angeles Times report on an attack on the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam party states:

“A bomb blast tore through a political rally held by an Islamist party in northwest Pakistan on Monday. The attack, claimed by the Pakistani Taliban, killed 16 people and underscored an increase in violence ahead of a key election set for Saturday. The explosion, at a rally held in the village of Sewak in the Kurram tribal area, was the latest attack on candidates, political offices and election-related events as the historic vote for a new government approaches. Much of the violence is believed to have been carried out by the Taliban against three liberal and secular parties, but Monday’s blast targeted a gathering of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam party, which generally has a more favorable relationship with the militant group. The bomb, which was apparently planted near the main stage of the rally, killed 16 and left 44 wounded, said Umar Khan, a doctor at the nearby Sada hospital where many of the wounded were initially taken.” (Los Angeles Times (6 May 2013) *At least 16 killed in bombing at Pakistan election rally*)

A Voice of America News report on this incident states:

“A powerful bomb has ripped through an election rally in Pakistan, killing at least 20 people and wounding dozens more. Taliban extremists have claimed responsibility. Militants have stepped up attacks on election-related events as the country prepares to hold national polls on May 11. Local officials told reporters the deadly suicide attack occurred in the northwestern Kurram tribal district and it targeted a campaign rally of a religious party known as Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F).” (Voice of America News (6 May 2013) *Bomb at Pakistan Islamist Party Rally Kills 20*)

See also Agence France Presse report which states:

“A bomb tore through a political rally in Pakistan Monday, killing 18 people and wounding 55 in the most deadly attack so far during the campaign for historic elections at the weekend. The Pakistani Taliban claimed responsibility, saying the target had been a lawmaker elected as an independent but allied to the outgoing government. Officials said the lawmaker escaped unhurt. Monday’s bombing brings to 87 the number of people killed in attacks on politicians and political parties since April 11, according to an AFP tally.” (Agence France Presse (6 May 2013) *Taliban bomb*)

An Inter Press Service report published on the day of the elections states:

“Today marks the first democratic elections held here since 1962, but Pakistanis have not had much cause to celebrate. The weeks leading up to Election Day have seen much blood spilled: as campaigning came to a grinding halt on May 9, 48 hours before the polling stations opened, the death toll stood at 121, including candidates, with 496 injured. Most of the attacks were carried out by the Taliban, which had issued numerous warnings to avowedly secular parties like the MQM, the Pakhtun-dominated ANP and the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) to put a stop to their campaigning. The militants issued an official communiqué on May 1, signed by Pakistani Taliban leader Hakimullah Mehsud, instructing members to carry out suicide bomb attacks across the country on Saturday. ‘We don’t accept the system of infidels, which is called democracy,’ the letter said.” (Inter Press Service (11 May 2013) *The Bloody Road to the Ballot Box*)

This report refers to ANP losses as follows:

“The ANP has borne the brunt of the Taliban’s wrath. Senator Shahi Syed informed IPS that in Karachi alone the party has ‘lost over 35 office-bearers in the last six months.’ A ghastly sense of déjà-vu has accompanied their election campaign, which has largely consisted of picking up the dead, marching in funeral processions or rushing the wounded to hospitals, according to ANP Leader Asfandyar Wali Khan.” (ibid)

An Agence France Presse report states:

“Pakistanis queued up to vote in landmark elections across the country on Saturday, defying deadly Taliban attacks to take part in an historic democratic transition for the nuclear-armed state. A bomb attack claimed by the Taliban killed 11 people and wounded around 40 others in Karachi...” (Agence France Presse (11 May 2013) *Pakistan votes in landmark polls as bomb kills 11*)

A BBC News report on election day violence states:

“The Pakistani Taliban have threatened to carry out suicide attacks. About two hours after polling started, a bomb attack was reported in Karachi, apparently targeting an Awami National Party (ANP) candidate outside the party's political office. Eleven people were killed and more than 40 others were wounded, police told BBC News. Local ANP candidate Amanullah Mahsud was injured but not seriously. The attack happened in the Landhi district of Karachi, which known for Taliban activity. Another ANP candidate and his son were shot dead close to the area last week. Sporadic violence linked to the election was reported in several other areas of the country.” (BBC News (11 May 2013) *Landmark Pakistan election marred by Karachi unrest*)

An Amnesty International report on violence during the May 2013 elections states:

“But the campaigning period, from March this year when elections were announced to election day on 11 May, was marred by political violence across Pakistan. More than 150 people were victims of apparently politically motivated killings, including up to 64 people killed on election day alone. The Awami National Party (ANP), Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) faced the largest number of attacks. However, members of Pakistan’s other major political parties and some independent candidates were also attacked. While the Pakistani Taliban have claimed responsibility for more attacks than any other group, some of those believed responsible for election-related violence actually belong to some of the political parties which came under attack.” (Amnesty International (5 June 2013) *Pakistan’s new leaders must not allow Taliban peace deal to trump human rights*)

A Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty report states:

“Islamic militants left their bloody mark on the elections through numerous bombings and assassinations intended to keep secular parties from

campaigning. More than 100 people, including three election candidates, were killed in the violence credited mostly to the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan.” (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (10 May 2013) *Pakistani Campaign Rhetoric More Bark Than Bite?*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit 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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