



Common Claims

Pakistan

Country of Origin Information Services Section (COISS)

Effective from 17 November 2020

About this product

The Country of Origin Information Services Section (COISS) in the Department of Home Affairs (Home Affairs) has prepared this product to facilitate consideration of claims for protection visas in Australia. The purpose of it is to provide a compilation of country of origin information on common claims identified in the current caseload. Generally, it examines human rights and protection issues which relate to Australia's international obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention and other treaties. It does not represent an exhaustive overview of the country information or issues.

This product is based on open source documents, which have been uploaded to CISNET. The paragraphs of country information included in this product each include a leading or headline sentence that represents a summary of the COI cited in that paragraph. They are not legal or policy statements about an issue. Supporting sentences amplify and provide more detail or context about the issue and are reliant on sources that are fully documented throughout this document. The reliability and relevance of those sources needs to be assessed in relation to the information provided.

This product is current at the time of completion and the date indicated on the front page.

Should a request to access this document be made under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*, and/or by anyone who does not have access to CISNET, a decision for its release should be referred COISS via email: [s. 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#)

Table of Contents

Refugee convention	1
Race/Nationality	1
Hazaras.....	1
Turis	4
Afghans.....	7
Religion	10
Shias.....	10
Ismailis.....	11
Ahmadis.....	12
Sufi shrine attacks.....	15
Christians	15
Blasphemy, apostasy and atheism.....	17
Forced conversion.....	20
Particular social group.....	21
Women.....	21
LGBTI	22
Political opinion.....	24
Political parties and associated violence	24
Members of peace lashkars.....	28
Militant groups	28
Complementary protection	36
Social infrastructure.....	36
State protection	38
Security situation and levels of general violence.....	40
Torture and arbitrary deprivation of life	41
People trafficking	42
Kidnap for ransom.....	42
Prison conditions.....	43

This page is intentionally left blank.

Refugee convention

Race/Nationality

Hazaras

Hazaras are relatively safe in the Hazara enclaves of Hazara Town and Mariabad in Quetta, but have been vulnerable to attacks when they leave those areas.¹ Hazaras are a predominantly Shia ethnic group with distinguishable physical features; originally from Afghanistan, a significant population has lived in Pakistan for over a century, principally in Quetta.² The Hazara community and Pakistan authorities have taken measures to protect the community, including establishing walls and checkpoints and increased patrolling by security personnel around the Hazara Town and Mariabad enclaves in Quetta.³ This has isolated the community to some extent but has stopped the large-scale attacks seen between 2012 and 2016.⁴ Over 500 Hazaras have been killed in terrorist attacks in Quetta since March 2013, with targeted attacks typically occurring outside of the Hazara enclaves.⁵ In Mariabad and Hazara Town, there are a lack of economic and higher education opportunities, and limited access to employment and to consumer goods, necessitating travel outside of these areas, including into the central market district of Quetta.⁶ In April 2019, an article in *The Diplomat* reported 'plentiful' anti-Hazara graffiti on Quetta's walls and distribution of anti-Hazara leaflets across Balochistan.⁷

Hazara Town and Mariabad have been subject to heightened restrictions on movement imposed by the provincial government in response to COVID-19. In late March 2020, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) reported grave concern that the

¹ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.43, 20200312102402; 'Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2018 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 13 March 2019, p.47, 20190326095100; 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 30 April 2018, p.46, OGD95BE927478; 'World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Pakistan : Shi'a and Hazaras', Minority Rights Group International, June 2018, CXBB8A1DA35834; 'Pakistan's Hazaras seek protection from ISIS and rogue military', Asia Times, 23 May 2018, 20190620133812

² 'DFAT Country Report: Pakistan', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 February 2019, ss.3.27-3.28, 20190220093409; 'War and Migration', Alessandro Monsutti, Routledge, 2012, p.105, CIS9BE2467825

³ 'Hazaras - Fault in their faces', Dawn, 24 October 2014, CX1B9ECAB6325; 'The Malalas of Quetta', Express Tribune, 12 July 2015, CXBD6A0DE10020; 'Quetta: Where hospitality has no bounds', Express Tribune, 4 September 2016, CX6A26A6E8828; 'Measures being taken to improve security in Quetta, says FC official', Dawn, 8 May 2018, CXBB8A1DA29880; 'Elite security force put together to contain Quetta target killings', Pakistan Today, 8 May 2018, CXBB8A1DA28989

COISS has located very few photographic examples of such checkpoints. One is here: 'Inside Pakistan's 'Hazara Town' Ghetto', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 8 July 2019, 20190709130547

⁴ 'DFAT Country Information Report: Pakistan', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 February 2019, ss.3.32, 3.36, 20190220093409; 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2019 - Pakistan', United States Department of State, 10 June 2020, p.30, 20200617121515

⁵ '509 Hazaras killed in terror-related incidents during last five years in Quetta NCHR report', Dawn, 20 March 2018, CXBB8A1DA25915. For more recent examples, see: 'Two dead as Hazaras come under attack, again', Pakistan Today, 6 August 2019, 20190807085445; 'Hazara man shot dead in Quetta', Associated Press of Pakistan, 3 October 2018, CXBB8A1DA36403; 'Two more Hazara men shot dead in Quetta', The Nation, 29 April 2018, CXBB8A1DA26227

⁶ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.47, 20200312102402; 'World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Pakistan : Shi'a and Hazaras', Minority Rights Group International, June 2018, CXBB8A1DA35834

⁷ 'Hazaras Gripped by Religious Extremism in Balochistan', The Diplomat, 16 April 2019, 20190417114912

Hazara community in Quetta was being targeted by the provincial government of Balochistan in relation to COVID-19 measures.⁸ Reportedly, Hazara Town and Mariabad were 'completely sealed off' as part of a lockdown in Quetta, and social media users had 'made allusions to coronavirus as the "Shi'a virus," given fears of its spread by pilgrims returning from Iran'. USCIRF warned that such further stigmatising of the Hazara minority could limit their ability to access medical care.⁹ Local media reporting, however, suggested that such targeting was in response to concern about increased risk, with *Dawn* reporting that decisions to restrict movement and conduct testing 'on a massive level' in these areas related to the large number of people who had recently returned to these areas from Iran.¹⁰ Hazaras were nevertheless targeted with hate speech on social media sites such as Twitter following the detection of early cases of COVID-19 amongst members of the community in Balochistan.¹¹

Hazaras have been targeted outside the Quetta enclaves in recent years. A June 2020 article published by the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies reported that 'sectarian-related target killings of members of the Shia Hazara community is a regular feature of Balochistan's security landscape', notwithstanding that the activities of violent sectarian groups have become less frequent in recent years.¹² On 25 October 2020, seven people were killed by an IED explosion in the Hazarganji (or Hazarganj) area of Quetta, around the same time a major political rally was occurring in the city.¹³ (Reporting did not indicate the ethnicity of the victims, but Hazaras were targeted in a bomb attack in Hazarganji in April 2019: see below.¹⁴) In August 2019, a bomb targeting Hazaras killed two people on Mission Road, well outside the Mariabad enclave but where (according to news reports) many of the shops are Hazara-owned; one of those killed was Hazara.¹⁵ In June 2019, a roadside bomb targeted Hazaras on the road from Ziarat, in Balochistan, causing two deaths. In May 2019, a suicide attack on a Quetta imambargah was foiled when guards shot dead the assailant.¹⁶ The attack took place on McConaghey Rd (sometimes referred to as Mecongi Rd), outside the Mariabad enclave; COISS could not determine whether the intended victims were Hazara, but notes that although articles about the attack did not mention Hazaras, Hazaras have been the targets of three previous attacks on McConaghey Road.¹⁷ A bomb targeting Hazaras killed nine Hazaras (and 11 others) in a Quetta market in the Hazarganji area outside the protected Hazara enclaves in April 2019.¹⁸ It

⁸ 'USCIRF Troubled with Targeting of Hazara Shi'a in Pakistan amid Coronavirus Lockdown', US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 31 March 2020, 20200402145012

⁹ 'USCIRF Troubled with Targeting of Hazara Shi'a in Pakistan amid Coronavirus Lockdown', US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 31 March 2020, 20200402145012

¹⁰ 'Balochistan top body reviews post-lockdown situation', Saleem Shahid, *Dawn*, 26 March 2020, 20200327114634

¹¹ 'Citizens-COVID 19-Government: Pakistan's Response', Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, July 2020, p.26, 20200908114753

¹² 'Militant Landscape of Balochistan', Muhammad Amir Rana, Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, 19 June 2020, p.15, 20200623101100

¹³ 'IED attack in Quetta kills 7, injures several', *Pakistan Today*, 25 October 2020, 20201027102816

¹⁴ '20 killed, 48 injured in attack targeting Hazara community in Quetta', *Dawn*, 12 April 2019, 20190416073650

¹⁵ 'Two dead as Hazaras come under attack, again', *Pakistan Today*, 6 August 2019, 20190807085445; 'One killed, 10 injured in blast on Quetta's Mission Road', *Dawn*, 6 August 2019, 20190807090730; 'Blast hits Hazara community's shoe market in Quetta', *Express Tribune*, 6 August 2019, 20190807090404

¹⁶ 'Security forces foil terror bid outside Imambargah in Quetta', *Pakistan Today*, 30 May 2019, 20190531130549; 'Terror bid foiled' as Quetta police kills alleged suicide bomber outside Imambargah', *Dawn*, 31 May 2019, 20190531132847

¹⁷ 'McConaghey Rd - 25 January 2012', Hazara Organization for Peace and Equality, n.d., accessed 22 October 2019, 20191022094610; 'McConaghey Road (Imambargah Kalan) - July 4, 2003', Hazara Organization for Peace and Equality, n.d., accessed 22 October 2019, 20191022100616; 'McConaghey Rd - April 2, 2012', Hazara Organization for Peace and Equality, 22 October 2019, 20191022100952. In 2005, a book about Hazaras noted, 'Today, scarcely a dozen families still live in the first Hazara areas near the large imambargah on McConaghey Road, a little south of the bazaar. *War and Migration: Social Networks and Economic Strategies of the Hazaras of Afghanistan*', Alessandro Monsutti, Routledge, 2005, p.109, CIS29035

¹⁸ '20 killed, 48 injured in attack targeting Hazara community in Quetta', *Dawn*, 12 April 2019, 20190416073650

appears that Islamic State was responsible for the bombing.¹⁹ The Hazara victims had travelled to the market in protected convoy; Hazara shopkeepers purchase goods at the market, to sell at their own shops in the Hazara enclaves.²⁰ Balochistan province had the highest number of sectarian conflict fatalities in the country, with 24 Shia Hazara killed and 57 others injured in sectarian violence during 2019.²¹

Many Afghan Hazaras in Quetta have a substantial support network that has long enabled them to bypass difficulties based on lack of Pakistani citizenship. Hazara expert Alessandro Monsutti noted the presence of sizeable and complex support networks and the ease with which Hazaras can obtain work, housing, and identity documents.²² Estimates of the number of Afghans in Balochistan who have illegally obtained Pakistani documents range from 80,000 to hundreds of thousands.²³ Citing several sources, a May 2018 Danish National ID Center report noted, 'it is easy as well as almost risk-free to bribe officials at all levels of the Pakistani administration, including in relation to the issuance of documents... Pakistani ID documents ... must be regarded to have low credibility'.²⁴

The Hazara population outside of Quetta is small. It is difficult to estimate the number of Hazaras living outside Quetta.²⁵ In May 2016, an officer at the Pak Institute for Peace Studies stated that a few wealthy Hazara families live in Islamabad and 'a few families' live in Lahore among the Shia population, while an estimated 25,000 Hazaras families live in Karachi, concentrated in the Hussain Hazara Goth and Mughal Hazara Goth areas.²⁶ An April 2019 article in *The Diplomat* mentioned that 'hundreds of Hazaras across Balochistan's coastal belt' had fled to 'southern cities of Pakistan'.²⁷ The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) claims that Hazaras who live in urban centres outside of Balochistan 'tend not to live in enclaves', in order to avoid being targeted.²⁸

¹⁹ 'Hazara community urges PM Imran to visit Quetta as sit-in enters third day', Express Tribune, 13 April 2019, 20190416081227

²⁰ 'Balochistan bleeds again as bomber targets Hazaras', Pakistan Today, 13 April 2019, 20190416082031

²¹ 'CRSS Annual Security Report 2019', Mohammad Nafees, Centre for Research and Security Studies, 28 January 2020, p.31, 20200130161732

²² 'War and Migration: Social Networks and Economic Strategies of the Hazaras of Afghanistan', Alessandro Monsutti, Routledge, 2005, pp.101, 111, 120–121, CIS29035. In a 2014 email to the department, Monsutti elaborated on this point, noting, 'Access to Pakistani papers depends on personal connections more than on recognized formal rights. It means that many people who were born in Pakistan may not have Pakistani ID, while some who came from Afghanistan may find a way to get some. I know many Hazaras in Quetta who came from Afghanistan in the 1970s and never got Pakistani papers. They may own a house in Quetta, have not been to Afghanistan for more than 30 years, without being formally Pakistani citizens'. 'Email from Alessandro Monsutti: Re: DIBP Request for Information on 'Status of Hazaras in 1963'', Monsutti, A, 15 December 2014, CIS2F827D91802. See also 'Participatory Needs Assessment of Afghan Refugees in Balochistan 2014', United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, October 2015, CISEC96CF14180

²³ 'NADRA is disrupting demographics in Balochistan by issuing fake ID cards', The Nation, 7 August 2015, CXBD6A0DE19423

²⁴ 'Pakistan: The Pakistani passport and its trustworthiness', Danish National ID Centre, 30 May 2018, pp.4–5, 20190205113506

²⁵ 'Country Policy and Information Note - Pakistan: Hazaras', UK Home Office, November 2019, p.14, 20191220084848

²⁶ 'Country Policy and Information Note - Pakistan: Hazaras', UK Home Office, November 2019, pp.14-15, 20191220084848

A May 2019 opinion piece by a 24-year-old Hazara student states that she lives in Lahore on a college scholarship and 'it is safe here; safer than Quetta'. However, the opinion piece also states that she feels fear every day, though she does not specify whether that is fear for herself in Lahore or fear for her family and community in Quetta. 'A young Hazara woman: "We are used to the feeling of fear"', Geo TV, 11 May 2019, 20190515094438

²⁷ 'Hazaras Gripped by Religious Extremism in Balochistan', The Diplomat, 16 April 2019, 20190417114912

²⁸ 'DFAT Country Information Report: Pakistan', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 February 2019, s.3.28, 20190220093409

Estimates of the Hazara population in Pakistan vary widely, from 500,000 to a million.²⁹ Estimates of the number of Hazaras that have fled Pakistan also vary widely, from 600,000³⁰ to 70,000 who 'have taken a precarious migration route to countries such as Australia'.³¹

Turis

Long-standing tension between Shia and Sunni tribes in Kurram district (and surrounding areas) has occasionally descended into violence. Turi (and Bangash) Shias live primarily in Upper Kurram³², part of Kurram district, an area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that borders Afghanistan. Other communities live in neighbouring Orakzai district. Some small communities reportedly live in other locations, including Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Karachi³³ and Peshawar.³⁴ Turis live in close community with each other, 'mitigating social discrimination', according to DFAT; however, this concentration increases the vulnerability to violence.³⁵ Significant episodes of tribal and sectarian violence in Kurram occurred in 1982, 1986, 1996 and, on a large scale, between 2007 and 2011.³⁶ Conflict has been driven by the Taliban's desire to access Afghanistan through the strategic Upper Kurram Valley, and the presence of Sunni militant groups with a clear sectarian agenda.³⁷ During much of the 2007–2011 period, the road from Parachinar to Peshawar was closed to Shia travellers by Sunni militants.³⁸ This forced Turis in Upper Kurram to travel to other parts of Pakistan via Afghanistan.³⁹ In 2011, a deal was reached with militants to allow access to Afghanistan through Kurram.⁴⁰ After the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) reneged on this deal later the same year, the

²⁹ 'Country Policy and Information Note - Pakistan: Hazaras', UK Home Office, November 2019, p.14, 20191220084848; 'Pakistan's Hazaras seek protection from ISIS and rogue military', Asia Times, 23 May 2018, 20190620133812

³⁰ 'Fault in Strategy', South Asia, 31 May 2018, 20190606161109; 'Pakistan's Hazaras seek protection from ISIS and rogue military', Asia Times, 23 May 2018, 20190620133812

³¹ 'Hazaras Gripped by Religious Extremism in Balochistan', The Diplomat, 16 April 2019, 20190417114912

³² 'It's Just a Sunni-Shiite Thing': Sectarianism and Talibanism in the FATA of Pakistan', Abou Zahab, M in 'The Dynamics of Sunni-Shia Relationships: Doctrine, transnationalism, intellectuals and the media' edited by Marechel, B and Zemni, S, Hurst & Company, 2013, p.180, CIS29402

³³ 'DFAT Country Information Report: Pakistan', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 February 2019, s.3.23, 20190220093409; 'Shias of Kurram not safe even in Islamabad', The Nation, 4 January 2016, CX6A26A6E11292

³⁴ 'Not too long ago, Sunnis joined Shias in mourning Imam Hussain's martyrdom', Daily Times, 19 September 2018, 20190121144044

³⁵ 'DFAT Country Information Report: Pakistan', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 February 2019, ss.3.13 and 3.25, 20190220093409

³⁶ For a detailed examination of the role of both Turi Shia and other, Sunni communities in that violence, including events in the lead-up to the violence, see 'Can Shi'a and Sunni overcome the sectarian divide? Displacement and negotiations in Kurram, 2007-2011', Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, May 2011, CISD9559B12437 and 'Can Shi'a and Sunni overcome the sectarian divide? Displacement and negotiations in Kurram, 2007-2011 (Annex IV)', Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, May 2011, CISD9559B12437. See also 'It's Just a Sunni-Shiite Thing': Sectarianism and Talibanism in the FATA of Pakistan', Abou Zahab, M in 'The Dynamics of Sunni-Shia Relationships: Doctrine, transnationalism, intellectuals and the media' edited by Marechel, B and Zemni, S, Hurst & Company, 2013, p.182, CIS29402

³⁷ 'It's Just a Sunni-Shiite Thing': Sectarianism and Talibanism in the FATA of Pakistan', Abou Zahab, M in 'The Dynamics of Sunni-Shia Relationships: Doctrine, transnationalism, intellectuals and the media' edited by Marechel, B and Zemni, S, Hurst & Company, 2013, CIS29402; 'Sunni Deobandi-Shi'i Sectarian Violence in Pakistan: Explaining the Resurgence since 2007', Middle East Institute, December 2014, pp.63, 71-74, CIS2F827D91993; 'The Battle for Pakistan: Militancy and Conflict in Kurram', Mahsun, MK, New America Foundation, April 2010, CIS18543

³⁸ 'A report from Kurram', Let Us Build Pakistan, 1 January 2011, 20190522143241

³⁹ 'It's Just a Sunni-Shiite Thing': Sectarianism and Talibanism in the FATA of Pakistan', Abou Zahab, M in 'The Dynamics of Sunni-Shia Relationships: Doctrine, transnationalism, intellectuals and the media' edited by Marechel, B and Zemni, S, Hurst & Company, 2013, p.185, CIS29402

⁴⁰ 'Kurram groups sign accord to open key highway', Dawn, 9 October 2011, 20190821101538; 'The Kurram blockade', Dawn, 10 November 2011, CX297319. See also 'Kurram deal: Hagganis' Afghan insurance policy',

Pakistani army launched a successful operation to open the Thall–Parachinar road for all travellers.⁴¹ Turi militias have undertaken both defensive and offensive actions⁴² and militias resisted government efforts to disarm them in early 2017.⁴³

The frequency of attacks targeting Turis has declined markedly in recent years. At least 17 people were injured when an improvised explosive device (IED) exploded in Parachinar's Turi Bazaar in July 2020,⁴⁴ however, COISS is unaware of other attacks targeting Turis in 2020 or in 2019. A roadside bomb in January 2018 in Upper Kurram killed six members of a Turi family, although the motive and identity of the perpetrators is unknown.⁴⁵ There were no other terrorist attacks in Kurram in 2018.⁴⁶ A suicide attack targeting Shias in Kalaya, in the neighbouring Orakzai District, killed 35 people in November 2018.⁴⁷ The 'mastermind' of the attack and three other TTP members were subsequently killed by the military.⁴⁸ One other Shia was killed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2018; in DI Khan, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) combatants killed the caretaker of an imambargah after a Shia group shot and killed a Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP)-linked individual earlier in the day.⁴⁹ In the first half of 2017, Islamic State and affiliates targeted Turis in four attacks that killed 138 civilians; these attacks came after a period of calm.⁵⁰ In the second half of 2017, there were 16 security incidents recorded, as opposed to 36 in the first half of the year.⁵¹

Threats to Shias remain, though the government appears to be actively attempting to protect Shias. Militant groups continue to operate in the area, albeit in a much reduced capacity.⁵² Sectarian groups, such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Islamic State, have publicised an ongoing intention to target Turi/Bangash tribesmen owing to their Shia faith and the fact that some tribesmen are fighting in Iranian-backed militias in Syria.⁵³ As above, in the first half of 2017, Sunni militants carried out large-

Daw n, 18 February 2011, CXCB3E63421440; 'Kurram Agency peace deal: Tribal elders to enforce pact in Parachinar only', Express Tribune, 11 October 2011, CX302566; 'Kurram tribal region: Peace accord signed to end years of bloodshed', Express Tribune, 4 February 2011, CX317554

⁴¹ 'Limited Goals, Limited Gains: The Pakistan Army's Operation in Kurram', Critical Threats, 6 September 2011, 20190829151217

⁴² 'Sunni Deobandi-Shi'i Sectarian Violence in Pakistan: Explaining the Resurgence since 2007', Middle East Institute, December 2014, pp.63, 71–74, CIS2F827D91993; Zahab, M A, 'It's Just a Sunni-Shia Thing: Sectarianism and Talibanism in the FATA of Pakistan', in B. Maréchal & S. Zemni, 'The Dynamics of Sunni-Shia Relationships', Hurst & Company, London, 2014, pp.183-184, CIS29402; 'The Battle for Pakistan: Militancy and Conflict in Kurram', Mahsun, MK, New America Foundation, April 2010, p.6, CIS18543; 'A report from Kurram', Let Us Build Pakistan, 1 January 2011, 20190522143241

⁴³ 'Dew eaponisation drive stirs worries among Kurram people', Daw n, 2 January 2017, CXC90406630; 'The little boy killed at the market', BBC News, 26 January 2017, CXC90406620866

⁴⁴ 'At least 17 injured in IED blast in Parachinar's Turi Bazar', Javid Hussain, Daw n, 23 July 2020, 20200724103731

⁴⁵ 'Six of a family martyred in Kurram roadside blast', The News International, 31 January 2018, CXBB8A1DA25475. The Pak Institute for Peace Studies, for instance, does not ascribe a sectarian motive to the attack. 'Pakistan Security Report 2018', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 6 January 2019, p.35, 20190121110758

⁴⁶ 'Pakistan Security Report 2018', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 6 January 2019, p.54, 20190121110758

⁴⁷ 'Pakistan: Sectarian Savagery – Analysis', Eurasia Review, 29 November 2018, CXBB8A1DA40015

⁴⁸ '"Mastermind" of Orakzai suicide attack killed in Hangu', Dunya News, 17 January 2019, 20190117093805

⁴⁹ 'Pakistan Security Report 2018', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 6 January 2019, p.38, 20190121110758

⁵⁰ 'FATA Annual Security Report 2017', Fata Research Centre, 17 January 2018, pp.6-7 and 15, CIS7B8394188; 'Blast kills at least 21 in Pakistan vegetable market, says official', Reuters, 21 January 2017, CXC90406612371;

⁵¹ 'Pakistan blast: Parachinar bomb leaves at least 24 dead', BBC News, 31 March 2017, CXC90406612375;

⁵² 'Roadside bomb attack on van kills 14 in Kurram', Daw n, 26 April 2017, CXC90406612376

⁵³ 'FATA Annual Security Report 2017', Fata Research Centre, 17 January 2018, p.15, CIS7B8394188

⁵⁴ 'Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tribal Districts Annual Security Report 2019', Irfan U Din and Mansur Khan Mahsud, Fata Research Centre (FRC), 13 January 2020, pp.8-9, 20200122123739; 'Terror incidents continued to decline in 2018', Express Tribune, 1 January 2019, 20190121150833; 'FATA Annual Security Report 2016', FATA Research Centre, 24 January 2017, pp.17-18, CISED50A D120; 'FATA Annual Security Report 2017', Fata Research Centre, 17 January 2018, p.15, CIS7B8394188

⁵⁵ 'Daesh leaflets in Kurram Agency threaten a 'specific sect'', News International, 8 February 2017, CXC9040661620; 'Shias of Parachinar: victims of Takfiri terrorism, govt. apathy', Mehr News Agency, 22 April

scale attacks on Shias in public spaces, while TTP fighters attacked Turi villages from safe havens within Afghanistan.⁵⁴ Two cross-border shooting attacks targeting Pakistani security personnel on the Afghanistan–Pakistan border in Kurram took place in 2018; no cross-border attacks on Shia villages were recorded.⁵⁵ Pakistani military operations in the area in recent years have cleared it of most Taliban and anti-Shia terrorists.⁵⁶ In February 2019, DFAT reported that Turi individuals (as opposed to groups) now feel safe to travel the Thall–Parachinar road during daylight.⁵⁷ In April 2018, the army opened an Army Public School in Parachinar.⁵⁸ Though acknowledging the improved security conditions for Turis in Kurram, DFAT assessed that the group ‘still face a moderate risk of sectarian violence’.⁵⁹

Internally displaced people (IDPs) have been returning to their homes in Kurram, including to areas where they are a religious minority. The government is encouraging IDPs within Kurram to return to their homes (some have been displaced for over a decade).⁶⁰ In June 2018, it was reported that ‘scores’ of Sunni families had returned to Parachinar, and been welcomed there by Turi and Bangash Shia elders in a ‘carnival atmosphere’.⁶¹ In July 2018, six Shia families, displaced from Sadda (in Lower Kurram) for 37 years, returned to the area.⁶² The Government reportedly offered Rs300,000 (approximately AUD 3000) to those whose house was destroyed, and Rs50,000 (approximately AUD 500) to those whose house was damaged.⁶³ However, at least some IDPs are resisting, complaining that inadequate infrastructure exists in their former villages.⁶⁴ Although more recent information specifically about Kurram IDPs was not found, Pakistan announced in September 2019 that 322,921 of the 339,701 families that had been displaced from the former FATA during the recent violence there had returned to their original location. The remaining displaced families come from North Waziristan and Khyber.⁶⁵

2018, 20190110132325; ‘Coming home to roost’, Daily Times, 21 March 2018, 20190110135034; ‘One injured in IED blast in Kurram Agency’, The New s International, 13 March 2017, CXC9040664773; ‘No losses in truck blast near check-post in Kurram Agency’, The New s International, 11 February 2017, CXC9040664774

⁵⁴ ‘Timely intervention: Security men intercept suicide attacker in Kurram Agency’, Express Tribune, 15 October 2016, CX6A26A6E10964; ‘Four Missiles Fired Into Upper Kurram Agency From Afghanistan’, Tribal New s Network, 2 April 2017, CXC9040665120

⁵⁵ ‘Pakistan Security Report 2018’, Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 6 January 2019, p.63, 20190121110758; ‘Two Soldiers Martyred, Five Injured In Attack From Across Afghan Border’, Tribal New s Network, 15 April 2018, CXBB8A1DA25627; ‘FC personnel martyred in cross-border attack in Kurram: sources’, Dawn, 2 September 2018, 20190110140608

⁵⁶ ‘Sunni Deobandi–Shi’i Sectarian Violence in Pakistan: Explaining the Resurgence since 2007’, Middle East Institute, December 2014, p.64, CIS2F827D91993; ‘No organised Da’ish presence in Pakistan, says DG ISPR’, Express Tribune, 1 July 2017, CXC9040669821

⁵⁷ ‘DFAT Country Information Report: Pakistan’, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 February 2019, s.3.16, 20190220093409

⁵⁸ ‘Army Public School opens in Parachinar’, Dawn, 10 April 2018, CXBB8A1DA27676; ‘APS inaugurated in Parachinar’, New s International, 10 April 2018, CXBB8A1DA27673

⁵⁹ ‘DFAT Country Information Report: Pakistan’, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 February 2019, s.3.26, 20190220093409

⁶⁰ ‘Kurram IDPs set conditions for return’, Dawn, 27 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA30284

⁶¹ ‘Sunni tribes start returning to Parachinar 11 years after displacement’, Express Tribune, 20 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA30592; ‘As Fata merges with KP, Parachinar’s Shias tell Sunnis it is time to come home’, Samaa, 28 June 2018, 20190111113428

⁶² ‘Six Shia families repatriated to Sadda after 37 years of displacement’, Tribal New s Network, 4 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA30721; ‘Families of displaced Shia, Sunni Muslims begin return to their homes in Parachinar of Pakistan’, Ahlul Bayt New s Agency, 24 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA40019

⁶³ ‘As Fata merges with KP, Parachinar’s Shias tell Sunnis it is time to come home’, Samaa, 28 June 2018, 20190111113428

⁶⁴ ‘Kurram IDPs set conditions for return’, Dawn, 27 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA30284

⁶⁵ ‘339,701 IDPs Families Repatriated To Native Hometowns In Erstwhile Fata’, Urdu Point, 9 October 2019, 20191015111832

The government is attempting to improve infrastructure, though obstacles remain. As above, road access between Parachinar and Peshawar (and particularly between Parachinar and Thall) was closed to Shias for years as a result of the 2007–2011 violence, but has reopened.⁶⁶ It appears that, in the aftermath of the violence, the Kurram road was widened by authorities, although details as to the length and whereabouts of the widened road were not located.⁶⁷ In August 2018, a protest in Parachinar called attention to the fact that 3G mobile telecommunication services had been suspended in the area for two years. Although DSL (landline) Internet connection was available, it was of poor quality because of its capacity and the number of Internet users.⁶⁸ On 4 April 2020, an Islamabad High Court order directed the authorities to 'take appropriate measures to restore the internet 3G/4G facilities in the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas', where its lack was preventing students from accessing online classes and educational materials during the coronavirus lockdown. *Radio Free Europe* reported on 14 April 2020 that it was 'still not clear whether the court's order will be implemented or if the Pakistani authorities will come up with an explanation of why an estimated 6 million residents of former FATA are deprived of Internet connectivity'.⁶⁹ A 'Reintegration and Rehabilitation of TDP's in Fata' project, involving infrastructure and other projects, is being implemented in Kurram and four other districts in the former FATA.⁷⁰

Afghans

Pakistan has one of the world's highest refugee populations and over decades has hosted millions of Afghans, some of whom are being repatriated to Afghanistan.⁷¹ Afghans have been repatriated to Afghanistan by the Pakistan government both voluntarily, with the assistance of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and involuntarily.⁷² Afghans living in Pakistan claim that they have faced official – especially police – harassment in Pakistan,⁷³ and also faced social hostility.⁷⁴ Repatriation is paused over the winter months.⁷⁵ Over 4600 registered Afghans were voluntarily repatriated in 2019,⁷⁶ and around 17,000 undocumented Afghans voluntarily ('spontaneously') returned to Afghanistan.⁷⁷ Figures for involuntary returns were unavailable. During 2018, 44,709 Afghans repatriated, of which 14,017 were registered voluntary repatriations.⁷⁸ This is

⁶⁶ 'Election campaigns help public life return to normalcy', Daily Times, 14 July 2018, 20190111101033

⁶⁷ 'Religious harmony: Kurram's qurdwara to be restored', Express Tribune, 14 September 2018, 20190111102210,

⁶⁸ 'Poor internet service protested in Parachinar', Dawn, 6 August 2018, 20190111121042

⁶⁹ 'Pakistani Court Orders Internet Access For Pashtun Students During Coronavirus Lockdown', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Gandhara, 14 April 2020, 20200415100410

⁷⁰ 'Water supply scheme inaugurated in Kurram', News International, 3 July 2019, 20190719111213

⁷¹ For a detailed examination of issues related to Afghan refugees in Pakistan, see: 'Pakistan - Situation of Afghan refugees', European Asylum Support Office, May 2020, 20200528100254

⁷² 'Pakistan Coercion, UN Complicity: The Mass Forced Return of Afghan Refugees', Human Rights Watch, February 2017, CISED50AD247

⁷³ 'What are You Doing Here: Police Abuses against Afghans in Pakistan', Human Rights Watch, November 2015, NG5A1E6BC620; 'For Afghan Refugees, Pakistan Is a Nightmare—but Also Home', Foreign Policy, 9 May 2019, 190614160356

⁷⁴ 'What are You Doing Here: Police Abuses against Afghans in Pakistan', Human Rights Watch, pp.1, 12, November 2015, NG5A1E6BC620

⁷⁵ 'UNHCR to halt Afghan repatriation for three months due to cold weather', Dawn, 11 November 2018, CXBB8A1DA38198; 'UN to resume Afghan refugee repatriation from March 1', Express Tribune, 25 February 2019, 20190226095448

⁷⁶ '4,599 Afghan refugees repatriated in last seven months', Express Tribune, 7 October 2019, 20191008082342

⁷⁷ 'Return of Undocumented Afghans: Weekly situation report: 6-12 October 2019', International Organization for Migration, 12 October 2019, 20191022135356

⁷⁸ 'Pakistan: Afghan refugees and undocumented Afghans repatriation (25 Nov – 1 Dec 2018)', Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 6 December 2018, CIS7B8394110464

low compared to previous years: 59,020 registered Afghan refugees voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan in 2017,⁷⁹ and 381,275 repatriated in 2016.⁸⁰

In 2020, closure of border crossings in response to the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted the movement of returnees. UNHCR's facilitated voluntary repatriation operation resumed on 1 March 2020 after the winter break, however, the Chaman border was closed by the Government of Pakistan on 2 March to curb the spread of COVID-19. UNHCR facilitated the repatriation of 28 individuals via the voluntary repatriation centre Azakhel, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, before the Torkham border was closed on 16 March and voluntary repatriation suspended.⁸¹ Border crossings between Pakistan and Afghanistan have since begun to reopen.⁸² The voluntary return of registered Afghan refugees from Pakistan resumed on 10 August 2020.⁸³ A total of 547 voluntary repatriation were facilitated by UNHCR between the period 2 March to 30 September.⁸⁴

In 2007, the government issued Proof of Registration cards to registered Afghan citizens. In 2007, in consultation with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and the government of Afghanistan, the government of Pakistan provided Afghans who were residing in Pakistan at that time with the opportunity to register as refugees, and those who registered were issued with a Proof of Registration card (PoR).⁸⁵ The PoR is a form of temporary protection visa, allowing for residence for a fixed period of time, but denying rights usually extended to other visa holders and citizens, such as the right to work and the right to purchase property (Afghans who arrived in Pakistan after 2007 are not eligible).⁸⁶ In May 2020 there were around 1.4 million Afghan refugees holding a PoR card.⁸⁷ The temporary period Afghan refugees may stay in Pakistan is typically extended near or shortly after the expiry dates of the PoR. In late June 2019, the government announced that the validity of the PoR cards – due to have expired on 30 June – would be extended until the end of June 2020.⁸⁸ On 17 March 2020, the PoR Card Modification (PCM) centres were closed and mobile registration van activities suspended to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.⁸⁹ No public government announcements have been made regarding further extension to the validity of PoR cards, and UNHCR has noted that the 'current long delay in extension of PoR Cards is unprecedented'.⁹⁰

⁷⁹ 'Factsheet Pakistan December 2017', United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, December 2017, CISED50AD9224

⁸⁰ 'Pakistan: Voluntary Repatriation Weekly Update: As of 7th June 2019', United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 11 June 2019, 20190614161938

⁸¹ 'Pakistan: Protection Trends January - March 2020', United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1 April 2020, p.3, 20200511172145

⁸² 'Afghan refugees start returning home as Torkham border opens', Tribal News Network, 22 May 2020, 20200522091949; 'Thousands of Pakistanis, Afghans cross Chaman border', Dawn, 9 August 2020, 20200810113150; 'Chaman border with Afghanistan reopens', Saleem Shahid, Dawn, 23 August 2020, 20200824104647

⁸³ 'Afghan refugees' voluntary repatriation resumes', Tribal News Network, 11 August 2020, 20200813131323

⁸⁴ 'Pakistan: Protection Trends July - September 2020', United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 21 October 2020, p.2, 20201030172532

⁸⁵ 'Conditions for asylum caseloads: Afghan refugees', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 19 July 2010, CX246370

⁸⁶ 'World Refugee Survey 2009 – Pakistan', US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, 17 June 2009, CX5E56FED19048

⁸⁷ 'PAKISTAN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN FOR COVID-19 PANDEMIC 2020', United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 22 May 2020, p.4, 20200810141222

⁸⁸ 'Pakistan extends stay of Afghan refugees', Gulf News, 28 June 2019, 20190716133522

⁸⁹ 'Pakistan: Protection Trends January - March 2020', United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1 April 2020, p.1, 20200511172145

⁹⁰ 'Pakistan: Protection Trends July - September 2020', United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 21 October 2020, p.1, 20201030172532

The Pakistani government announced an intention to stop forced deportations and issue Afghans with an 'Afghan Citizen Card'. According to the UNHCR, the card will protect Afghans from arbitrary arrest, detention and deportation. The cards appear to target undocumented Afghans who do not hold a POR. However, the intention of these new cards is still to facilitate eventual repatriation,⁹¹ which might deter registrations. By March 2018, over 175,000 cards had been issued out of over 878,000 applications.⁹² By late May 2019, approximately 850,000 cards had been issued.⁹³ Card applicants have told the International Organization for Migration that they are worried about the purpose and validity of the Afghan Citizenship Card, and appear to have low levels of confidence that it will assist them to avoid arrest by authorities or deportation.⁹⁴ In May 2020, the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination for Humanitarian Affairs reported that there are around 600,000 holders of an ACC and an estimated 400,000 undocumented Afghans residing in Pakistan.⁹⁵

The future citizenship status of Afghan refugees in Pakistan remains unclear. Shortly after taking office in 2018, Prime Minister Imran Khan announced his intention for Afghans and Bengalis who have lived in Pakistan for decades to receive Computerised National Identity Cards (CNICs) and passports, effectively making them Pakistani citizens.⁹⁶ It is unclear which Afghans would qualify for citizenship under this plan, although Prime Minister Khan mentioned individuals who have lived in Pakistan for more than four decades and those who have been born and raised in Pakistan.⁹⁷ However, Prime Minister Khan quickly backed away from the policy following backlash from politicians and supporters of the military.⁹⁸ In June 2019, the relevant minister stated that a decision on granting citizenship to refugees would be taken after consulting 'all the parties',⁹⁹ no further action in relation to this has been reported. In February 2019, the government announced that registered Afghan refugees (i.e., those that hold PORs) could open bank accounts.¹⁰⁰

⁹¹ 'Afghans dream of stepping out of the shadows with Pakistan ID scheme', United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 21 July 2017, CXC90406610815

⁹² 'Documentation of Undocumented Afghans at Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) Centers', International Organisation for Migration, March 2018, CIS7B83941489. This press release from a think tank that focuses on Afghan refugee issues claimed in March 2018 that 900,000 cards had been issued: 'Pakistan Takes Afghan Refugees As A Humanitarian Issue, And Not A Political One', Tahir Khan At CRSS-ASC Youth Forum', Afghan Studies Center (Pakistan), 29 March 2018, CXBB8A1DA40056

⁹³ 'Whoever try to take law in his own hands, will be dealt strictly: Shehryar Afridi', Pakistan Tribune, 30 May 2019, 20190617115155

This number did not appear to have changed by October 2019 (see: 'Afridi warns global community against growing trend of displacement', Associated Press of Pakistan, 9 October 2019, 2019102214195) and more recent data has not been located

⁹⁴ 'Documentation of Undocumented Afghans at Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) Centers', International Organization for Migration, March 2018, CIS7B83941489

⁹⁵ 'PAKISTAN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN FOR COVID-19 PANDEMIC 2020', United Nations Office for the Co-ordination for Humanitarian Affairs, 22 May 2020, p.4, 20200810141222

⁹⁶ 'Citizenship promise', Dawn, 18 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA35577; 'Imran Khan pledges citizenship to Afghan and Bangladeshi refugees', Al Jazeera, 17 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA35656

⁹⁷ 'Citizenship promise', Dawn, 18 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA35577; 'Pakistan's Imran Khan skirts issue of Afghan refugees' citizenship', The Guardian, 19 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA35718

⁹⁸ 'Pakistan's Imran Khan skirts issue of Afghan refugees' citizenship', The Guardian, 19 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA35718; 'Parliamentary panel to decide citizenship for refugee children', Pakistan Today, 25 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA36025; 'For Afghan Refugees, Pakistan Is a Nightmare—but Also Home', Foreign Policy, 9 May 2019, 190614160356

⁹⁹ 'Pakistan, Afghanistan, UNHCR sign declaration on return of refugees', Tribal News Network, 19 June 2019, 20190624155044

¹⁰⁰ 'Pakistan's Govt Allows Afghan Refugees To Open Bank Accounts', Tolo News, 26 February 2019, 20190227074310; 'Bank accounts promise to Afghan refugees in Pakistan comes true', Dawn, 5 June 2019, 20190606103550

Religion

Shias

This section covers Shias in Pakistan generally. Please also see sections on Hazaras and Turis, above.

Shia Muslims continue to face security threats from extremist groups and social discrimination from the public.¹⁰¹ Census results from 2017 indicated that 96 per cent of the population of Pakistan is Muslim, and an estimated 15-20 per cent of the Muslim population is Shia.¹⁰² In 2020, the first confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Pakistan were largely amongst Shia pilgrims from Iran, and this gave rise to hate speech and discrimination targeting Shias; social media sites such as Twitter were inundated with messages targeting the Shia community (and Hazaras in particular).¹⁰³ In the latter half of the year, large sectarian rallies in Karachi and Islamabad and a spike in blasphemy accusations against Shias have further raised concern about increasing tensions and targeting of members of the Shia community for harm.¹⁰⁴ Khyber Pukhtunkhwa and Sindh provinces have seen incidents of sectarian violence, with four recorded fatalities amongst the Shia community and four people injured in an explosion near a mosque in Quetta during the July-September 2020 quarter.¹⁰⁵ In 2019, Shias were the group worst affected by sectarian violence, with 28 Shias (of whom 24 were Hazara) killed in violent incidents.¹⁰⁶ The non-Hazara Shia fatalities occurred in Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces.¹⁰⁷

According to the Center for Research and Security Studies, 2099 people were murdered in Pakistan because of their religion in the years from 2013 to 2018, and over half of these (1104) were Shia.¹⁰⁸ In the same six-year period, Karachi was the deadliest area for sectarian violence, recording 594 murders, followed by Quetta (298) and Kurram district (238), though it is not specified how many of these deaths were from the Shia community.¹⁰⁹

Ashura commemorations have witnessed fewer serious incidents in recent years. Ashura is the tenth day of Muharram (the first month of the Islamic calendar) and a day in which Shias traditionally march in public procession, and in recent years the federal and provincial governments have undertaken extensive security planning and implemented a security presence to protect Shias during

¹⁰¹ 'United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2018', US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 25 April 2018, p.66, CJS7B83941863; 'USCIRF 2020 Annual Report', US Commission on International Religious Freedom, April 2020, p.33, 20200429103634

¹⁰² 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2019 - Pakistan', United States Department of State, 10 June 2020, pp.3-4, 20200617121515

¹⁰³ 'Citizens-COVID 19-Government: Pakistan's Response', Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, July 2020, p.26, 20200908114753

¹⁰⁴ 'Pakistan: Hardline Sunni groups on collision course with Shiites', S. Khan, Deutsche Welle, 14 September 2020, 20200915102826; see also 'The Changing Landscape of Anti-Shia Politics in Pakistan', Jaffer A. Mirza, The Diplomat, 28 September 2020, 20200929095157

¹⁰⁵ 'Quarterly Security Report Q3, July-Sept 2020', Center for Research and Security Studies, 8 October 2020, 20201012113549

¹⁰⁶ 'CRSS Annual Security Report 2019', Mohammad Nafees, Centre for Research and Security Studies, 28 January 2020, p.30, 20200130161732

¹⁰⁷ 'CRSS Annual Security Report 2019', Mohammad Nafees, Centre for Research and Security Studies, 28 January 2020, p.31, 20200130161732

¹⁰⁸ 'CRSS Annual Security Report Special Edition 2013-2018', Center for Research and Security Studies, March 2019, pp.57-58, 20190405163832. The report indicates that 289 were 'Shia Hazaras' and 815 were 'Shias'. It does not break down the deaths of Shias by province or area.

¹⁰⁹ 'CRSS Annual Security Report Special Edition 2013-2018', Center for Research and Security Studies, March 2019, p.56, 20190405163832

this period.¹¹⁰ Media reporting indicated an increase in hostility towards the Shia community during Muharram in 2020, however, including one death in an attack in Kohat and an attack on a procession in Okara.¹¹¹ The police registered more than 40 blasphemy cases in August, most of which were against Shia Muslims and linked to speeches that were part of religious processions.¹¹² In 2019, an Ashura procession near Lahore deviated from its approved route and sparked a violent response from a Sunni group, and there were multiple injuries before Police and Ranger forces were able to quell the clash.¹¹³ A spate of anti-Shia murders occurred during Muharram in 2016, mostly in Karachi; these attacks were claimed by Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ).¹¹⁴

Some Shias with suspected links to a pro-Iran militia operating in Syria have been forcibly disappeared. In May 2018, community activists reported that 140 Pakistani Shias had 'disappeared' over the previous two years, allegedly taken by Pakistani security forces; over 25 of these people disappeared from Karachi.¹¹⁵ Community leaders reported that the men were suspected of links to the Zainabiyoun Brigade, a Shia militia fighting alongside the Assad regime in Syria.¹¹⁶

Ismailis

Ismailis currently face a low level of violence and insecurity in Pakistan. Ismailis are a minority Shia sect in Pakistan and have in the past been targeted by extremists.¹¹⁷ In May 2015, gunmen boarded a bus and killed 47 Ismailis in Sindh.¹¹⁸ Eight perpetrators of the attack, including an Islamic State leader, were subsequently sentenced to death.¹¹⁹ A terrorist plot against an Ismaili place of

¹¹⁰ 'Youm-i-Ashura observed nationwide amid tight security', Dawn (Pakistan), 31 August 2020, 20200917161348; ; '9th Muharram observed with solemn remembrance of Karbala', News International, 29 August 2020, 20200917153538; 'Entry of 37 clerics in Rawalpindi banned', Dawn, 17 August 2020, 20200817115449; 'Ashura observed peacefully amid tight security in KP', Dawn, 23 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA35781; 'Ashura being observed across Pakistan amid tight security', Dawn, 21 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA35775; 'Mobile services suspended in parts of Karachi ahead of Ashura', Dawn, 19 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA35716; 'Ashura processions culminate countrywide, majalis under way', Geo TV, 21 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA35780; 'Ashura processions culminate peacefully in different districts', Express Tribune, 3 October 2017, CXC90406614861

¹¹¹ 'Why are anti-Shia sentiments on the rise in Pakistan?', Express Tribune, 14 September 2020, 20200915102018; 'Long Live Yazeed' Slogans Chanted At Extremists' Rally In Karachi', Naya Daur, 14 September 2020, 20200915111521

¹¹² 'Pakistan: Hardline Sunni groups on collision course with Shiites', S. Khan, Deutsche Welle, 14 September 2020, 20200915102826; see also 'The Changing Landscape of Anti-Shia Politics in Pakistan', Jaffer A. Mirza, The Diplomat, 28 September 2020, 20200929095157

¹¹³ 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2019 - Pakistan', United States Department of State, 10 June 2020, p.13, 20200617121515

¹¹⁴ 'One Way War', New sline, 18 December 2016, CX6A26A6E15384; 'Man injured in sectarian attack succumbs to injuries', Dawn, 11 October 2016, CX6A26A6E10644; 'ASWJ chief to be grilled over Imambargah attack', The Nation, 19 October 2016, CX6A26A6E11565; 'Five shot dead in Karachi sectarian attack', Dawn, 30 October 2016, CX6A26A6E12298; 'More Smoke and Mirrors', Mohanty, T. R., India Blooms, 21 November 2016, CX6A26A6E13688; 'Student gunned down in Karachi sectarian attack', Express Tribune, 11 November 2016, CX6A26A6E14092; 'Takfiris killed senior Pakistani Shia journalist, injured his son in Sahiwal', Ahlul Bayt News Agency (Iran), 26 November 2016, CX6A26A6E14168

¹¹⁵ 'The story of Pakistan's 'disappeared' Shias', BBC News, 31 May 2018, CXBB8A1DA28418

¹¹⁶ 'The story of Pakistan's 'disappeared' Shias', BBC News, 31 May 2018, CXBB8A1DA28418

¹¹⁷ 'Karachi bus massacre: Who are the Ismailis?', BBC News, 13 May 2015, CXBD6A0DE19343

¹¹⁸ 'PIPS Pakistan Security Report Special Report 2016', vol. 9, no. 1, Spring 2017 (Jan – June), p.112, CISED50AD63; 'Annual Security Report January – December 2016', Center for Research and Security Studies, 21 March 2017, p.67, CISED50AD3636. See also media report with lower initial death toll '43 killed in attack on bus carrying Ismailis in Karachi', Dawn, 14 May 2015, CXBD6A0DE6290

¹¹⁹ 'Tracing a terrorist: Daesh Pakistan chief among 8 to be executed', Geo TV, 28 December 2016, CX6A26A6E15706

worship in Gilgit Baltistan was foiled by police in January 2017.¹²⁰ In the quarter ending September 2020, one Ismaili was reported to have died as a result of sectarian violence in Karachi.¹²¹

Ahmadis

Ahmadis face substantial official discrimination. Ahmadis are a minority Islamic sect founded in 19th century British India. Ahmadis believe that their founder was a later prophet of Islam, a claim which mainstream Pakistani Muslims consider to be blasphemous. There are fewer than 1 million Ahmadis in Pakistan.¹²² The Ahmadi faith is divided into 'Lahori Ahmadis' and 'Qadiani Ahmadis', which are much more numerous, although many reports about Ahmadis fail to distinguish between the two groups.¹²³ Ahmadis are the subject of legislation that denies them basic rights, including the right to be recognised as Muslims. Ahmadis may be punished for preaching or 'insulting the religious feelings of Muslims', leaving them open to official punishment for 'blasphemy'.¹²⁴ Ahmadis also report widespread societal harassment and discrimination, including physical attacks on Ahmadi individuals and their personal property.¹²⁵ In October 2019, police partially demolished an Ahmadi place of worship in Punjab,¹²⁶ and two Ahmadi places of worship were also destroyed in mob violence in 2018.¹²⁷ Three Ahmadis were sentenced to death for blasphemy in October 2017.¹²⁸ A group of Ahmadis arrested for blasphemy for running a religious publishing house in 2016 claimed that police had tortured them.¹²⁹ Ahmadis face discrimination regarding eligibility to hold government positions and to contest elections.¹³⁰ In September 2018, Prime Minister Khan announced his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party would withdraw its nomination of renowned economist Atif Mian (an Ahmadi) from the recently-established government Economic Advisory Council following protests and pressure from Islamists who objected to his faith.¹³¹ Due to their treatment in Pakistan, a large number of Ahmadis have migrated abroad.¹³²

¹²⁰ 'RAW-funded anti-CPEC plan foiled in Gilgit, claim police', Dawn, 19 January 2017, CXC90406612394

¹²¹ 'Quarterly Security Report Q3, July-Sept 2020', Center for Research and Security Studies, 8 October 2020, 20201012113549

¹²² 'Freedom of Faith in Pakistan: Contextualizing Programmatic and Policy Orientation', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, p.21, 2 August 2018, CIS7B839418866

¹²³ 'Pakistan: Situation of members of the Lahori Ahmadiyya Movement in Pakistan: whether differences exist between the treatment of Lahori Ahmadis and Qadiani Ahmadis: procedure for verification of membership in Lahori Ahmadiyya Movement (February 2006)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 1 March 2006, 20191101140354

¹²⁴ 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2019 - Pakistan', United States Department of State, 10 June 2020, p.5, 20200617121515; 'USCIRF 2020 Annual Report', US Commission on International Religious Freedom, April 2020, p.32, 20200429103634

¹²⁵ 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2019 - Pakistan', United States Department of State, 10 June 2020, p.33, 20200617121515; see also 'A Report on Persecution of Ahmadis in Pakistan - 2019', The Persecution of Ahmadis, 7 May 2020, 20200803141333

¹²⁶ 'USCIRF 2020 Annual Report', US Commission on International Religious Freedom, April 2020, p.32, 20200429103634

¹²⁷ 'United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2019', US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 29 April 2019, p.76, 20190508143726

¹²⁸ 'Blasphemy: Three Ahmadis awarded death penalty', Express Tribune, 12 October 2017, CXC90406615408

¹²⁹ 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2017 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 29 May 2018, pp.12-13, OGD95BE927601

¹³⁰ 'State of Human Rights in 2019', Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 30 April 2020, p.32, 20200603194632

¹³¹ 'Pakistan removes minority Ahmadi from economic council', Associated Press, 7 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA35031; 'Space for religious minorities in Pakistan shrinking', Dawn, 26 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA36017; 'A Blueprint for Fixing Pakistan's Economy', The Diplomat, 12 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA36021; 'Another day, another U-turn', Friday Times, 21 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA36186

¹³² 'State of Human Rights in 2017', Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 16 April 2018, p.82, CIS7B83941935

Ahmadis have been charged under anti-terror laws. Anti-terror legislation associated with the National Action Plan 2014 has been used to seize and ban Ahmadi publications on the grounds that they are 'hate material'.¹³³ In June 2017, the International Human Rights Committee reported that Ahmadis were being increasingly arrested under this law, which allows suspects to be arrested without any notice or recourse to bail and carries a mandatory five-year sentence.¹³⁴ COISS found no subsequent examples of this phenomenon.

Ahmadis remain at risk of mob violence or terrorist attacks. According to Ahmadiyya community representatives, three incidents of apparent targeted killings of Ahmadiyya community members by unknown individuals took place during 2019.¹³⁵ In August 2018, the Pak Institute for Peace Studies described Ahmadis as 'clearly amongst the most persecuted community' and noted that 'it is too dangerous for an Ahmadi to openly declare his faith'.¹³⁶ In June 2018, two men entered an Ahmadi home and killed the father of the family.¹³⁷ During 2017, at least seven Ahmadis were killed in targeted attacks, including the April 2017 lynching of Marshal Khan, who was accused of being an Ahmadi and thus of blasphemy.¹³⁸

Ahmadi places of worship have been destroyed and construction permits denied. In August 2018, a mob of Sunni Muslims set an Ahmadi mosque on fire in a village near Faisalabad, Punjab; six Ahmadis were injured during the incident.¹³⁹ In May 2018, a mob led by Sunni clerics destroyed a 100-year-old Ahmadi mosque in Sialkot, Punjab. Local authorities stated that the mosque had failed to obtain approval for renovations it had conducted, so the recently renovated section of the mosque had to be destroyed. Conversely, Ahmadi leaders stated they had obtained the required official permission.¹⁴⁰ In August 2017, an Ahmadi mosque in Muridke, Punjab was set on fire.¹⁴¹ Local authorities regularly deny permits to build new Ahmadi mosques and it remains forbidden to call them mosques.¹⁴² Since 1984, when they were barred from using Islamic terms, Ahmadis have been using

¹³³ 'Ahmadis in Pakistan Face an Existential Threat: The Growing violence, legal discrimination and social exclusion since 2015', International Human Rights Committee & Asian Human Rights Commission, p.24, 10 June 2017, CISED50AD9181; 'Pakistan's long-persecuted Ahmadi minority fear becoming election scapegoat', Reuters, 16 November 2017, CXC90406624606

¹³⁴ 'Ahmadis in Pakistan Face an Existential Threat: The Growing violence, legal discrimination and social exclusion since 2015', International Human Rights Committee & Asian Human Rights Commission, p.24, 10 June 2017, CISED50AD9181

¹³⁵ 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2019 - Pakistan', United States Department of State, 10 June 2020, p.30, 20200617121515

¹³⁶ 'Freedom of Faith in Pakistan: Contextualizing Programmatic and Policy Orientation', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, p.21, 2 August 2018, CIS7B839418866

¹³⁷ 'Martyrdom of Qazi Shaban Ahmad Khan Sahib', al-Hakam, 6 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA40206

¹³⁸ 'Pakistan Security Report Special Report 2017', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, January 2018, p.57, CIS7B83941282; 'Ahmadi law yer killed in 'LeJ attack'', Dawn, 31 March 2017, CXC9040666817; 'Elderly Ahmadi man shot dead in Rahmin Yar Khan', Dawn, 4 May 2017, CXC9040666818; 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2017 – Pakistan', US Department of State, 29 May 2018, pp.2 and 26, OGD95BE927601; 'Mardan university student lynched by mob over alleged blasphemy: police', Dawn, 15 April 2017, CXC9040666819

¹³⁹ 'Angry Pakistanis Torch Minority Ahmadi's Place of Worship', Associated Press, 24 August 2018, CXBB8A1DA34263

¹⁴⁰ 'Pakistani mob demolishes mosque belonging to minority sect', Associated Press, 24 May 2018, CXBB8A1DA27942; 'Pakistani mob destroys 100-year-old minority Ahmadi mosque', Reuters, 24 May 2018, CXBB8A1DA28015

¹⁴¹ 'State of Human Rights in 2017', Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 16 April 2018, p.85, CIS7B83941935

¹⁴² 'State of Human Rights in 2017', Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 16 April 2018, p.19, CIS7B83941935;

the term *baitul zikr* – house of prayers – for their mosques.¹⁴³ Pakistani media typically dubs them 'places of worship'.¹⁴⁴

Ahmadis claim that authorities have failed to restrict speeches and advertisements that promote violence against them. During the July 2018 election campaign, many mainstream politicians promoted anti-Ahmadi messages.¹⁴⁵ In September 2017, anti-Ahmadi rallies and conferences were held across Pakistan to commemorate the anti-Ahmadi second amendment to the Constitution.¹⁴⁶ In 2017, a change to the electoral law was mistakenly interpreted as an effort to provide Ahmadis with more rights; protests resulted, and the government removed the change.¹⁴⁷ Islamabad and parts of Punjab were effectively shut down as anti-blasphemy protesters blocked main arterial routes leading into the city. A hard-line cleric organised the three weeks of blockades and riots in November 2017. At least six people were killed and over 200 people injured in the protests when the army attempted to regain control of roads and the protests only ended when the Law Minister resigned and charges against participants in the banned protests were dropped.¹⁴⁸

Many Ahmadis live in a relatively affluent town called Rabwah (also known as Chenab Nagar) west of Lahore. The town of 70,000 is the headquarters of the Ahmadi sect and has health, education and recreational facilities.¹⁴⁹ Even in that town, anti-Ahmadi protests are known to occur, causing a lockdown of homes and businesses as protesters threaten to kill the town's Ahmadi residents.¹⁵⁰ Anti-Ahmadi laws are applicable in Rabwah.¹⁵¹ Economic opportunities in the city are limited.¹⁵² Dating back to 1999, the provincial government has taken measures against the Ahmadi community, including bringing non-Ahmadi settlers to the town and changing its name to Chenab Nagar.¹⁵³

Ahmadis are excluded from the newly established National Commission for Minorities (NCM), aimed at safeguarding minority rights. The NCM was established by cabinet on 5 May 2020.¹⁵⁴ Reportedly, the Religious Affairs Ministry had initially proposed including Ahmadis on the NCM, however, the minister of religious affairs later denied that the government was considering this and no cabinet members objected to excluding Ahmadi community members.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴³ 'State of Human Rights in 2019', Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 30 April 2020, p.32, 20200603194632

¹⁴⁴ 'Pakistan Security Report 2018', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 6 January 2019, p.61, 20190121110758; 'Angry Pakistanis Torch Minority Ahmadi's Place of Worship', Associated Press, 24 August 2018, CXBB8A1DA34263; 'Bigotry vandalises history', Friday Times, 8 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA29072

¹⁴⁵ 'Country Policy and Information Note Pakistan: Ahmadis', UK Home Office, 1 June 2018, p.66, OG9EF767927

¹⁴⁶ 'State of Human Rights in 2017', Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 16 April 2018, p.86, CIS7B83941935

¹⁴⁷ 'What drives calls for giving Ahmadis a distinct identity', Herald, 16 January 2019, 20190218095636

¹⁴⁸ 'Pakistani law minister quits after weeks of anti-blasphemy protests', The Guardian, 27 November 2017, CXC90406618955

¹⁴⁹ 'Shunned by Pakistan's Muslims, Ahmadis Find Refuge in a City of Their Own', The New York Times, 27 December 2017, CXC90406620095

¹⁵⁰ 'Shunned by Pakistan's Muslims, Ahmadis Find Refuge in a City of Their Own', The New York Times, 27 December 2017, CXC90406620095

¹⁵¹ 'Country Policy and Information Note Pakistan: Ahmadis', UK Home Office, 1 June 2018, p.65, OG9EF767927

¹⁵² 'Shunned by Pakistan's Muslims, Ahmadis Find Refuge in a City of Their Own', The New York Times, 27 December 2017, CXC90406620095

¹⁵³ 'Prosecute ruling party legislator for spreading religious hatred', Asian Human Rights Commission, 16 October 2017, CXC90406615780

¹⁵⁴ 'Pakistan: Ahmadis Kept Off Minorities Commission', Human Rights Watch, 8 May 2020, 20200511100816;

¹⁵⁵ 'Pakistan: Ahmadis Kept Off Minorities Commission', Human Rights Watch, 8 May 2020, 20200511100816;

'Pakistan excludes religious sect from minority commission', Gibran Naiyyar Peshimam, Reuters, 7 May 2020, 20200508095340; see also 'Endemic anti-Ahmadiyya discrimination - Pakistan's "Commission for Minorities" without the Ahmadis', Mohammad Luqman, Qantara, 10 July 2020, 20200713104412

Sufi shrine attacks

Sufi Shrines were bombed by militants causing mass casualties in 2016, 2017 and in 2019.

Sufism is a form of Islamic mysticism involving saint veneration and music.¹⁵⁶ No Sufis have died in sectarian violence in the first quarter of 2020, but there was one fatality in the fourth quarter of 2019.¹⁵⁷ In May 2019, ten people were killed when police protecting a Sufi shrine were targeted in a TTP suicide bombing. Five of those killed were security forces protecting the shrine.¹⁵⁸ No Sufis died in sectarian violence in 2018.¹⁵⁹ Twenty people were killed in a suicide bombing at the Jhal Magsi Sufi shrine in rural Balochistan in October 2017.¹⁶⁰ At least 76 people were killed and 250 injured in the bombing of a Sufi shrine in Sehwan, north of Hyderabad on 17 February 2017.¹⁶¹ Another 52 people were killed in a blast during a Sufi ritual in Khuzdar District, Balochistan, near the border with Sindh province, in November 2016.¹⁶² Islamic State claimed responsibility for the 2016 and 2017 attacks.

Christians

Christian communities are usually poor and vulnerable, including being vulnerable to accusations of blasphemy. Christians constitute less than 2 per cent of the population, and have been vulnerable to communal violence arising from accusations of blasphemy.¹⁶³ Christians in Pakistan have traditionally been part of an underprivileged class, partly because of employment and education discrimination, and tend to live in isolated communities.¹⁶⁴ Conflict over resources has seen Christian communities targeted for harm.¹⁶⁵ Most Christians reside in Punjab province, especially in larger towns like Lahore, Rawalpindi and Faisalabad.¹⁶⁶ Christians are often labelled as 'working for' (that is, being associated with) western countries.¹⁶⁷ Most Christians accused of blasphemy are from poor backgrounds and unable to defend themselves.¹⁶⁸ There is a growing trend of Christians leaving

¹⁵⁶ Sufism is a practice of Islamic mysticism that combines music, the veneration of saints and inward-looking mystical practices. It should not be confused with the related Barelvi movement, founded in the late 19th century, that seeks to combine various Islamic practices, sometimes in the form of sectarian conflict, with Sufism.

¹⁵⁷ 'Quarterly Security Report 2020 – 1st Quarter, 2020', Center for Research and Security Studies, 7 April 2020, p.5, 20200416144229

¹⁵⁸ 'Deadly Blast Hits Popular Pakistani Shrine', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 8 May 2019, 20190509120530; 'Terror revisits Data Darbar in holy month', Express Tribune, 8 May 2019, 20190509121637

¹⁵⁹ 'Quarterly Security Report 2019', Center for Research and Security Studies, 17 July 2019, 20190904144910

¹⁶⁰ '20 killed in suicide bombing targeting shrine in Jhal Magsi, Balochistan', Dawn, 5 October 2017, CXC90406614929

¹⁶¹ 'Bloodbath at Sehwan shrine: over 75 perish, 250 injured', Dawn, 17 February 2017, CXC9040666833

¹⁶² 'At least 52 killed and 102 injured in a blast at Khuzdar shrine', Dawn, 13 November 2016, CX6A26A6E16557

¹⁶³ 'USCIRF 2020 Annual Report', US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 28 April 2020, p.32, 20200429103634

¹⁶⁴ 'European Asylum Support Office Pakistan Conference', Cyril Almedia, Assistant Editor of Dawn, 16–17 October 2017, p.45, CIS7B83941393, 'Black hole in Rising Sun?', Friday Times, 2 June 2017, CXC9040668557; 'Freedom of Faith in Pakistan: Contextualizing Programmatic and Policy Orientation', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 2 August 2018, p.28, CIS7B839418866; 'World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples – Pakistan : Christians', Minority Rights Group International, June 2018, CXBB8A1DA35838

¹⁶⁵ 'Pakistani Christians refused Covid-19 aid because of faith', Christian Today, 13 April 2020, 20200414162704

¹⁶⁶ 'Freedom of Faith in Pakistan: Contextualizing Programmatic and Policy Orientation', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 2 August 2018, p.20, CIS7B839418866; 'Country Policy and Information Note Pakistan: Christians and Christian converts', UK Home Office, September 2018, p.40, OG9EF767941

¹⁶⁷ 'Freedom of Faith in Pakistan: Contextualizing Programmatic and Policy Orientation', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, pp.8, 20, 24, 2 August 2018, CIS7B839418866; 'World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples – Pakistan : Christians', Minority Rights Group International, June 2018, CXBB8A1DA35838

¹⁶⁸ 'Freedom of Faith in Pakistan: Contextualizing Programmatic and Policy Orientation', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, p.20, 2 August 2018, CIS7B839418866; 'The Pakistani Christian on death row, who has had his appeal delayed 70 times', Marcus Jones, Premier Christian News, 15 June 2020, 20200616115816

Pakistan¹⁶⁹ or of giving their children Muslim names.¹⁷⁰ In October 2019, a Christian college in Peshawar was nationalised against the objections of the local Christian community.¹⁷¹ Eight hundred Christians in the town of Shahdara, Punjab, were driven out by angry mobs after a teenage boy was accused of spreading blasphemous content on social media in February 2018.¹⁷² In November 2010, Aasia Bibi, a Christian, was the first woman in Pakistan's history to be sentenced to death for blasphemy, after an argument with fellow farmhands who refused to drink water she had touched.¹⁷³ In October 2018, the Supreme Court overturned her conviction.¹⁷⁴ Islamist outrage manifested in nation-wide protests¹⁷⁵ and saw Bibi kept in gaol for safety reasons.¹⁷⁶ Her lawyer fled the country.¹⁷⁷ A review petition was filed against the overturned conviction,¹⁷⁸ but was rejected by the Supreme Court in January 2019.¹⁷⁹ In January 2019, Canada offered Bibi asylum; she departed for Canada in May 2019.¹⁸⁰

Christians are targeted in sectarian attacks against churches and Christian communities. The number of incidents and casualties relating to faith-based violence declined in 2019 and 2020, but threats to the Christian community and perceptions of continued vulnerability persist.¹⁸¹ Although there are many churches in Pakistan, many of which are safe, they can be targets for extremist actions.¹⁸² In mid-September 2019, a Lahori Christian man died in custody after allegedly being tortured.¹⁸³ In June 2018, unknown assailants shot dead a Christian couple in Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.¹⁸⁴ On 15 April 2018, Islamic State claimed responsibility for an attack that killed two Christians and injured five others after they were shot while leaving a church service in Quetta's

¹⁶⁹ 'Country Policy and Information Note Pakistan: Christians and Christian converts', UK Home Office, September 2018, p.41, OG9EF767941

¹⁷⁰ 'Living in fear', News International, 24 November 2018, CXBB8A1DA39256; 'Pakistan: Christians give their children Islamic names to avoid abuse in school', Independent Catholic News, 4 October 2019, 20191008085801

¹⁷¹ 'NCJP against the nationalisation of a Christian college in Peshawar', Asia News IT, 11 October 2019, 20191015110036

¹⁷² 'FIR for blasphemy registered against Christian teenager in Shahdara', Express Tribune, 20 February 2018, CXBB8A1DA22592

¹⁷³ 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2017 – Pakistan', US Department of State, 29 May 2018, p.12, OGD95BE927601

¹⁷⁴ 'Govt reaches out to opposition, seeks cooperation over nationwide protest', Express Tribune, 1 November 2018, CXBB8A1DA37745

¹⁷⁵ 'Govt reaches out to opposition, seeks cooperation over nationwide protest', Express Tribune, 1 November 2018, CXBB8A1DA37745

¹⁷⁶ 'Asia Bibi's ordeal highlights plight of minorities in Pakistan', Daily Times, 2 November 2018, CXBB8A1DA37760

¹⁷⁷ 'UN denies forcing Aasia's lawyer to leave', Express Tribune, 7 November 2018, CXBB8A1DA37980

¹⁷⁸ 'Review petition filed against SC verdict', Express Tribune, 1 November 2018, CXBB8A1DA37746

¹⁷⁹ 'SC throws out review plea against Bibi's acquittal', Express Tribune, 29 January 2019, 20190130082517

¹⁸⁰ 'Canada offers asylum to Aasia Bibi', Pakistan Today, 29 January 2019, 20190130082154; 'Christian Woman Leaves Pakistan For Canada After Blasphemy Acquittal', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 8 May 2019, 20190509120052; 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2019 - Pakistan', United States Department of State, 10 June 2020, p.11, 20200617121515

¹⁸¹ 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2019 - Pakistan', United States Department of State, 10 June 2020, 20200617121515; 'Pakistan Security Report 2019', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 5 January 2020, pp.123-125, 20200114102703; 'Home of Pakistani Christian politician and human rights advocate shot at by gunmen', Premier, 11 May 2020, 20200512101013; 'Minister takes strict notice of damage caused to church', The Nation, 11 May 2020, 20200511101846

¹⁸² 'Country Policy and Information Note Pakistan: Christians and Christian converts', UK Home Office, September 2018, p.41, OG9EF767941; 'Pakistan: Religious freedom under attack', Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 10 December 2019, pp.21-23, 20200131114648

¹⁸³ 'Christian man dies after alleged police torture in Pakistan', Premier, 16 September 2019, 20190930101701

¹⁸⁴ 'Police Find Bullet-Riddled Bodies Of Christian Couple In Mardan', Tribal News Network, 6 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA28888

predominately-Christian neighbourhood of Esra Nagri.¹⁸⁵ In April 2018, four members of a Christian family were shot and killed whilst travelling in a rickshaw near a church in Quetta's Shah Zaman road area.¹⁸⁶ Islamic State claimed responsibility.¹⁸⁷ Nine people were killed and nearly 60 injured in a suicide bombing in a church in Quetta in the lead up to Christmas 2017.¹⁸⁸ This was the first attack on a church claimed by Islamic State in Pakistan.¹⁸⁹

Christian women and girls have been forced to convert to Islam and to marry. The non-governmental organisation Movement for Solidarity and Peace in Pakistan reported in 2014 that the incidence of forced conversion and marriage was difficult to accurately assess, but that estimates ranged from 100 to 700 'victim Christian girls' each year.¹⁹⁰ Government authorities have intervened to protect the alleged victim in some cases of alleged kidnapping and forced conversion.¹⁹¹ In 2019, it was reported that impoverished families from Pakistan's Christian community had been targeted by trafficking rings for forced marriage and trafficking to China; media reporting indicated that officials from Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency were pressured by the government to halt their work on the case, for fear that pursuing it would anger China and threaten Chinese investment.¹⁹² Tasked with framing legislation against forced conversions, a Parliamentary Committee to Protect Minorities from Forced Conversions was established in November 2019.¹⁹³ Religious minorities reportedly 'remained concerned that government action to address coerced conversions of religious minorities to Islam was inadequate'.¹⁹⁴

Blasphemy, apostasy and atheism

Pakistanis, particularly those who are not Sunni Muslims, are at risk of being accused of blasphemy. Blasphemy laws are ambiguous, making people vulnerable to false allegations.¹⁹⁵ Blasphemy accusations have been used to attack people or escalate personal or property disputes.¹⁹⁶ Critical discussion of Pakistan's blasphemy laws stands to be criticised as itself an act of 'blasphemy',

¹⁸⁵ 'At least 2 dead, 5 injured in attack on Christian community near church in Quetta', Dawn, 15 April 2018, CXBB8A1DA25582; 'Pakistani Christians Killed In Drive-By Shooting', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 16 April 2018, CXBB8A1DA26106

¹⁸⁶ '4 Christians among 7 killed in separate firing incidents in Quetta', Dawn, 2 April 2018, CXBB8A1DA24717; 'Four Christians killed in Quetta terror attack', Pakistan Today, 2 April 2018, CXBB8A1DA28997

¹⁸⁷ 'Four Christians killed in Quetta terror attack', Pakistan Today, 2 April 2018, CXBB8A1DA28997; 'Islamic State claims attack on Christian family in Pakistan', Reuters, 3 April 2018, CXBB8A1DA26517

¹⁸⁸ 'Pakistan church attack: Twin suicide bombers kill nine with explosives and guns', ABC News, 18 December 2017, CXC90406619495

¹⁸⁹ 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2017 – Pakistan', US Department of State, 29 May 2018, p.25, OGD95BE927601

¹⁹⁰ 'Forced Marriages & Forced Conversions in the Christian Community of Pakistan', Movement for Solidarity and Peace in Pakistan, April 2014, p.2, CISEFCB23F7581

¹⁹¹ 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2019 - Pakistan', United States Department of State, 10 June 2020, pp.1-2, 20200617121515

¹⁹² 'An investigation found Pakistan Christian women being trafficked to China as brides. Then officials shut it down.', Miriam Berger, The Washington Post, 6 December 2019, 20191206150403; 'Pakistani Christian girls trafficked to China as brides', Kathy Gannon and Dake Kang, Associated Press, 7 May 2019, 20200522122949; see also 'State of Human Rights in 2019', Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 30 April 2020, p.54, 20200603194632

¹⁹³ 'State of Human Rights in 2019', Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 30 April 2020, p.12, 20200603194632

¹⁹⁴ 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2019 - Pakistan', United States Department of State, 10 June 2020, p.15, 20200617121515

¹⁹⁵ 'Freedom of Faith in Pakistan: Contextualizing Programmatic and Policy Orientation', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, p.24, 2 August 2018, CIS7B839418866

¹⁹⁶ 'DFAT Country Information Report: Pakistan', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 February 2019, s.3.84, 20190220093409; 'The Freedom of Thought Report 2019. Key Countries Edition', Humanists International, 13 November 2019, pp.73-74, 20191125111248

leading to condemnation of those who suggest reform of the law.¹⁹⁷ Between 70 and 80 per cent of blasphemy cases occur in Punjab province.¹⁹⁸ A marked increase in cases has occurred since July 2020 when the Punjab provincial assembly passed a bill that imposed punishments for vilifying holy Sunni figures, a law criticised for being open to misuse.¹⁹⁹ The police registered at least 40 blasphemy cases in August 2020, most of which were against Shia Muslims and related to speeches made in conjunction with religious processions.²⁰⁰

Ahmadis and Christians, in particular, are disproportionately affected by blasphemy laws.

About a third of cases between 1987 and 2017 were against Ahmadis and about 15 per cent against Christians.²⁰¹ Christians, Ahmadis, Hindus, and Muslims have been charged with blasphemy, with individuals reportedly using the threat of blasphemy laws to intimidate vulnerable people in personal disputes, to appropriate property and to attack particular sects.²⁰² Blasphemy laws have been levelled against activists who challenge religious institutions or the Pakistani army and to suppress dissent on college campuses.²⁰³ Lawyers, judges, police and politicians have been threatened or killed due to actual or perceived defence of people accused of blasphemy or criticism of the blasphemy laws.²⁰⁴ A liberal Muslim academic arrested on blasphemy charges in 2013 was sentenced to death in December 2019 and remains in prison.²⁰⁵

The legal penalties for blasphemy are serious and include the death penalty. Pakistan is yet to execute anyone convicted of blasphemy.²⁰⁶ Nearly 80 individuals remained imprisoned for blasphemy at the end of 2019, with at least half facing a life sentence or the death penalty.²⁰⁷ In June 2017, an anti-terrorism court handed down the first death sentence for blasphemy on social media, after a Shia

¹⁹⁷ The Freedom of Thought Report 2019. Key Countries Edition, Humanists International, 13 November 2019, p.14, 20191125111248

¹⁹⁸ Freedom of Faith in Pakistan: Contextualizing Programmatic and Policy Orientation, Pak Institute for Peace Studies, p.25, 2 August 2018, CIS7B839418866; Country Policy and Information Note Pakistan: Christians and Christian converts, UK Home Office, September 2018, p.41, OG9EF767941

¹⁹⁹ Pakistan: Hardline Sunni groups on collision course with Shiites, S. Khan, Deutsche Welle, 14 September 2020, 20200915102826; see also The Changing Landscape of Anti-Shia Politics in Pakistan, Jaffer A. Mirza, The Diplomat, 28 September 2020, 20200929095157

²⁰⁰ Rights Bodies Alarmed Over Surge In Pakistan's Blasphemy Cases, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Gandhara, 08 September 2020, 20200908102454

²⁰¹ A brief history of the anti-blasphemy law's, Herald, 14 March 2018, CIS7B83941461

²⁰² State of Human Rights in 2017, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 16 April 2018, p.32, CIS7B83941935; DFAT Country Information Report: Pakistan, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 February 2019, ss.3.84-3.85, 20190220093409; United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2019, US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 29 April 2019, p.74, 20190508143726

²⁰³ United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2018, US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 25 April 2018, p.67, CIS7B83941863; United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2019, US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 29 April 2019, p.75, 20190508143726; Sajid Soomro: Another Pakistani academic falls victims to blasphemy law, S. Khan, Deutsche Welle, 16 June 2020, 20200617103953

²⁰⁴ "As Good as Dead": The impact of the blasphemy law's in Pakistan, Amnesty International, 21 December 2016, pp.9-10, 34-40, CIS38A80123222

²⁰⁵ Junaid Hafeez: Why is Pakistani scholar's blasphemy case receiving scant attention?, Deutsche Welle, 7 October 2019, 20191015110223; USCIRF 2020 Annual Report, US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 28 April 2020, p.32, 20200429103634; Pakistan blasphemy death sentence for Junaid Hafeez is "travesty of justice"- UN experts, OHCHR, 27 December 2019, 20200107163441; The troubled history of Pakistan's blasphemy law, Alia Shoaib, The Independent, 11 March 2020, 20200323123758

²⁰⁶ USCIRF 2020 Annual Report, US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 28 April 2020, p.33, 20200429103634; The troubled history of Pakistan's blasphemy law, Alia Shoaib, The Independent, 11 March 2020, 20200323123758; Blasphemy ruling could signal strength of hardliners in Pakistan, CNN, 11 October 2018, CXBB8A1DA36676

²⁰⁷ USCIRF 2020 Annual Report, US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 28 April 2020, p.32, 20200429103634

man was accused of posting derogatory content about Sunnis.²⁰⁸ In a positive development, in January 2018, the Pakistani Supreme Court ordered an individual accused of blasphemy be released due to a lack of credibility surrounding the charges.²⁰⁹ In October 2018, the Supreme Court acquitted Aasia Bibi of blasphemy; detained since charged in 2009, she was eventually released in 2019 and, after a period in protective custody, was able to leave the country in May 2019.²¹⁰

Pakistanis accused of blasphemy face mob lynching or vigilante violence. An accusation that someone has blasphemed is capable of inciting violent mobs, and accused persons are often killed extrajudicially.²¹¹ In July 2020, a man who had formerly been an Ahmadhi and who was on trial for blasphemy was shot dead in a Peshawar courtroom by a member of the public.²¹² In September 2019, hundreds of protesters attacked a school and Hindu houses, temples and businesses in Gotki, after a local Hindu school principal scolded a Muslim boy about not completing his homework and the boy subsequently accused the principal of blasphemy.²¹³ Violent protests forced 800 Christians to flee their neighbourhood in February 2018 after two teenagers were accused of posting religiously sensitive material on Facebook.²¹⁴ A spate of vigilante and mob attacks against individuals accused of blasphemy occurred in 2017, and political and media attention shifted to the issue in April 2017 after the mob murder of Marshal Khan, accused of being an Ahmadi, in an incident where police were present but took no action to stop the attack.²¹⁵

There are no specific laws against apostasy in Pakistan; however converts are vulnerable to blasphemy laws or social discrimination. A person who converts to another faith or who renounces Islam in any other way might be targeted for death by a family member under direction of a religious leader.²¹⁶ Some interpretations of Sharia state that apostasy is punishable by death, and therefore Sharia courts may apply the death penalty, however this is not reported to occur in practice.²¹⁷ A person who converts to another faith or who renounces Islam in any other way can be targeted for death by a family or community member under direction of a religious leader.²¹⁸

Pakistan is a deeply religious state and atheism is practically unheard of. Four per cent of Pakistanis do not identify as Muslim, a population divided between Christians, Hindus, Sikhs and other religious groups.²¹⁹ Non-Muslims, including atheists, are widely discriminated against and

²⁰⁸ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017 – Pakistan', US Department of State, 30 April 2018, p.25, OGD95BE927478; 'State of Human Rights in 2017', Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 16 April 2018, p.32, CIS7B83941935

²⁰⁹ 'United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2018', US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 25 April 2018, p.67, CIS7B83941863

²¹⁰ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, pp.15-16, 20200312102402; 'The Freedom of Thought Report 2019. Key Countries Edition', Humanists International, 13 November 2019, p.77, 20191125111248

²¹¹ 'The troubled history of Pakistan's blasphemy law', Alia Shoaib, The Independent, 11 March 2020, 20200323123758

²¹² 'Man on trial for blasphemy shot dead in court in Pakistan', Shah Meer Baloch and Emma Graham-Harrison, The Guardian, 30 July 2020, 20200730095844; 'Pakistan's Bloodthirsty Blasphemy Law Needs to Be Repealed', Kunwar Khuldane Shahid, The Diplomat, 31 July 2020, 20200803094725

²¹³ 'Hindus fear for their lives after Pakistan blasphemy riots', Deutsche Welle, 16 September 2019, 20190930102638

²¹⁴ 'United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2019', US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 29 April 2019, p.74, 20190508143726

²¹⁵ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017 – Pakistan', US Department of State, 30 April 2018, p.11, OGD95BE927478

²¹⁶ 'Country Policy and Information Note Pakistan: Christians and Christian converts', UK Home Office, September 2018, p.20, OG9EF767941

²¹⁷ 'Death Penalty Database – Pakistan', Cornell Law School, 28 June 2016, CIS38A80121204

²¹⁸ 'Country Policy and Information Note Pakistan: Christians and Christian converts', UK Home Office, September 2018, p.20, OG9EF767941

²¹⁹ 'USCIRF 2020 Annual Report', US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 28 April 2020, p.33, 20200429103634

vilified.²²⁰ For individual non-religious persons to speak out is uncommon.²²¹ Atheists are particularly vulnerable to accusations of blasphemy, which may attract the death penalty in Pakistan.²²² Those accused of blasphemy are often experience communal violence.²²³

Forced conversion

Christians and Hindus – particularly young women who are forced into marriages – are at risk of being forcibly converted to Islam in most areas of Pakistan, with few legal avenues available to them. Forced conversion of individuals to Islam continues and estimates indicate that around 1,000 women undergo forced conversion each year.²²⁴ Forced conversion of Hindus in Sindh province is a key issue, where an estimated 20 to 25 Hindu girls are abducted, wed to Muslims and forced to convert to Islam each month.²²⁵ Local police, particularly in Punjab and Sindh, have been accused of complicity in forced conversion cases by failing to properly investigate such cases.²²⁶ Forced conversions of the Kailash community occurs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Chitral.²²⁷

There are no legal provisions banning forced conversions. Legal remedies are generally not available to victims of forced marriage or conversion.²²⁸ In November 2016, Sindh province passed a bill banning forced conversion.²²⁹ By December 2016, thirteen MPs and a bureaucrat had sought police protection because of the bill.²³⁰ In the face of Islamist opposition, support for the bill wavered,²³¹ the Sindh government announced a review of the bill,²³² and Sindh's Governor returned

²²⁰ 'Pakistan's secret atheists', BBC News, 12 July 2017, CXC90406611457

'The Freedom of Thought Report 2019. Key Countries Edition', Humanists International, 13 November 2019, pp.71-77, 20191125111248

²²¹ 'The Freedom of Thought Report 2019. Key Countries Edition', Humanists International, 13 November 2019, p.71, 20191125111248

²²² 'Pakistan's secret atheists', BBC News, 12 July 2017, CXC90406611457

'The Freedom of Thought Report 2019. Key Countries Edition', Humanists International, 13 November 2019, p.77, 20191125111248

²²³ 'DFAT Country Information Report: Pakistan', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 February 2019, s. 3.85, 20190220093409; 'The troubled history of Pakistan's blasphemy law', Alia Shoaib, The Independent, 11 March 2020, 20200323123758

²²⁴ 'USCIRF 2020 Annual Report', US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 28 April 2020, p.32, 20200429103634; 'Mardan — a 'happy' pocket for religious minorities', Daily Times, 4 May 2019, 20190531160717; 'World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Pakistan : Christians', Minority Rights Group International, June 2018, CXBB8A1DA35838

²²⁵ 'Freedom of Faith in Pakistan: Contextualizing Programmatic and Policy Orientation', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, p.19, 2 August 2018, CIS7B839418866

²²⁶ 'USCIRF 2020 Annual Report', US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 28 April 2020, p.32, 20200429103634

²²⁷ 'Freedom of Faith in Pakistan: Contextualizing Programmatic and Policy Orientation', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, p.19, 2 August 2018, CIS7B839418866

²²⁸ 'Freedom of Faith in Pakistan: Contextualizing Programmatic and Policy Orientation', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, p.19, 2 August 2018, CIS7B839418866

²²⁹ 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2017 – Pakistan', US Department of State, 29 May 2018, p.10, OGD95BE927601; 'CLAAS welcomes law against religious conversion in Sindh', Pakistan Christian Post, 27 November 2016, CX6A26A6E14151

²³⁰ 'Sindh government orders review of the bill against forced conversions', Christians in Pakistan, 20 December 2016, CX6A26A6E15429

²³¹ 'Pakistan's forced conversion', The Nation, 20 December 2016, CX6A26A6E15380; 'Zardari calls JI Chief, assures to repeal forced conversion bill', News International, 22 December 2016, CX6A26A6E15434

²³² 'Sindh government orders review of the bill against forced conversions', Christians in Pakistan, 20 December 2016, CX6A26A6E15429

the bill to Parliament in January 2017.²³³ In October 2019, the bill seeking to criminalise forced conversion was rejected by the Sindh Government.²³⁴

Particular social group

Women

Women are excluded from many areas of daily life. Many women do not have Computerised National Identity Cards (44 per cent, compared to 56 per cent of men).²³⁵ The World Economic Forum ranks Pakistan 151 out of 153 countries in its gender gap index, especially noting low enrolment levels across primary, secondary and tertiary education, and poor performance in women's economic and political participation.²³⁶ In October 2019, the Pakistan Election Commission announced that, after targeting rural, conservative areas in an information campaign, they had successfully registered 4.5 million female voters.²³⁷ However, recent reporting indicates a continuing and sizable gap between the numbers of female and male registered voters.²³⁸

State protection of women is ineffective. Laws designed to protect women from violence, including honour killings, are rarely enforced.²³⁹ Rape is rarely prosecuted and marital rape is not a criminal offence.²⁴⁰ Authorities set up some police stations staffed by female officers, however these were reportedly underfunded and underutilised.²⁴¹ Honour crimes are underreported,²⁴² and police may be complicit in the harassment and pursuit of women by their families, especially if the family of the victim has the means to bribe them.²⁴³

Domestic violence is widespread. Although all provinces (except for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) have introduced domestic violence legislation,²⁴⁴ domestic violence remains widespread and police and courts typically return women to abusive situations and encourage them to reconcile, viewing the issue as a family matter rather than a criminal matter.²⁴⁵ The government also set up women's

²³³ 'Pakistan: Governor Sindh refuses to approve forced conversion bill', Pakistan Christian Post, 10 January 2017, CX904066248

²³⁴ 'USCIRF 2020 Annual Report', US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 28 April 2020, p.32, 20200429103634

²³⁵ 'Women losing ground in all sectors in Pakistan', Dawn, 11 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31360

²³⁶ 'Global Gender Gap Report 2020', World Economic Forum, 18 December 2019, pp.32, 277-8, 20191218105643

²³⁷ '4.5m new women voters registered in country', Express Tribune, 8 October 2019, 20191009092053

²³⁸ 'Gender gap in voters climbs to 12.72m', Iftikhar A Khan, Dawn, 19 July 2020, 20200720111312

²³⁹ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, pp.37-38, 20200312102402; 'Human Rights & Democracy: The 2017 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report', UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 16 July 2018, p.46, CIS7B839411734; 'Pakistan's Imran Khan Promises End to Discriminatory Laws', Council on Foreign Relations, 1 August 2018, CXBB8A1DA35826

²⁴⁰ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.34, 20200312102402

²⁴¹ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.36, 20200312102402

²⁴² 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, pp.37-38, 20200312102402

²⁴³ 'Safe to Return?', Siddiqui, N., Ismail, S., Allen, M., South Manchester Law Centre, Manchester Metropolitan University, January 2008, p.140, CIS956B8881418

²⁴⁴ 'Women in Imran Khan's 'New Pakistan'', The Diplomat, 3 August 2018, CXBB8A1DA33767; 'Gap Analysis of Legislation Related to Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW) – Khyber Pakhtunkhwa', UN Women, 19 August 2020, p.13, 20200925154515

²⁴⁵ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, pp.36-37, 20200312102402

shelters, however these were overcrowded and under-resourced, and in some cases those seeking shelter had their movements severely restricted, were pressured to return to their abusers, or were exploited in prostitution and sex trafficking.²⁴⁶

Women in Pakistan might be subject to 'honour crimes' and abusive marriage practices.

Women and girls in Pakistan are subject to gender based violence including honour killings and acid attacks, and traditional justice systems at times arrive at verdicts to carry out honour killings and mutilation.²⁴⁷ The *Anti-Honour Killing Act 2016* declared murders in the name of family honour a criminal offence, included harsher punishments and partially closed a loophole that allowed legal heirs to pardon perpetrators. However, it has failed to prevent such crimes.²⁴⁸ While honour killings are largely concentrated in the poorer areas of rural Pakistan, cases have also been reported in large cities including Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore.²⁴⁹ Honour killings of men have also been reported in Pakistan.²⁵⁰

LGBTI

Discrimination and violence occur against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons.

Such crimes often go unreported, and police generally take little action when they do receive reports.²⁵¹ Consensual same-sex sexual conduct is a criminal offence.²⁵² Male-to-male sex is against the law in Pakistan and is punishable by up to life in prison.²⁵³ Laws against 'obscene acts' – even words and songs – may also be used to prosecute gay men and, in particular, sex workers and are sometimes used by authorities as leverage against men to extract bribes.²⁵⁴ Some sources say that male-to-male sex is a practice that is tacitly accepted (and distinct from identifying oneself as gay).²⁵⁵ LGBTI persons rarely revealed their sexual orientation or gender identity in the public sphere.²⁵⁶

²⁴⁶ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, pp.36-37, 20200312102402

²⁴⁷ 'DFAT Country Information Report Pakistan', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 February 2019, s. 3.203, 20190220093409

²⁴⁸ See, for instance, '44 women killed in the name of 'honour' in Swat', Pakistan Today, 19 October 2019, 20190723144815; 'Ending violence against women in Pakistan', Asia and the Pacific Policy Society, 7 February 2018, CXBB8A1DA21498; 'Honour' Killings Continue in Pakistan Despite New Law', Human Rights Watch, 25 September 2017, CXC90406615059

²⁴⁹ 'Couple shot dead in suspected 'honour killing' in Lahore', Geo TV, 5 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA32052; 'Honour' killings in Karachi shock Pakistan's largest city', The Guardian, 27 December 2017, CXC90406621103; 'Two men killed for honour in Islamabad', Express Tribune, 7 March 2017, CXBB8A1DA32054

²⁵⁰ 'DFAT Country Information Report Pakistan', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 February 2019, s. 3.203, 20190220093409; 'Two men killed for honour in Islamabad', Express Tribune, 7 March 2018, CXBB8A1DA32054; 'Man kills brother over 'honour' in Karachi', Dawn, 20 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31974;

²⁵¹ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.43, 20200312102402

²⁵² 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.43, 20200312102402

²⁵³ 'DFAT Country Information Report Pakistan', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 February 2019, s. 3.217, 20190220093409

²⁵⁴ 'DFAT Country Information Report Pakistan', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 February 2019, s. 3.217, 20190220093409

²⁵⁵ 'DFAT Country Information Report Pakistan', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 February 2019, s.3.218, 20190220093409; 'European Asylum Support Office Pakistan Conference', Cyril Almedia, Assistant Editor of Dawn, 16-17 October 2017, p.45, CIS7B83941393; 'Gay Pakistan: Where sex is available and relationships are difficult', British Broadcasting Corporation, 27 August 2013, CXC28129415576

²⁵⁶ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.43, 20200312102402; 'Three Artists Tell Us What It's Like To Be Queer, Muslim and Pakistani', Vice, 27 June 2019, 20190717142501

LGBTI women report emotional, physical and sexual violence; LGBTI women's issues are underreported and poorly understood. The legal situation for LGBTI women, and whether or not laws that criminalise 'acts against the order of nature' apply to them, is not clear.²⁵⁷ DFAT is aware of reports of lesbian women living together discretely without risk, although stigma remains common.²⁵⁸ A small study of lesbian, bisexual and female-to-male transgender men found that study participants were difficult to find and engage with and that those who did engage reported domestic violence from their families, sexual assault and social ostracism.²⁵⁹

In 2018, Pakistan passed new legislation to improve the rights of transgender people. In May 2018, the *Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act* was passed,²⁶⁰ allowing citizens the right to self-identify as male, female or a blend of both genders on all official identity documents.²⁶¹ The law also prohibits discrimination against, and the unfair treatment of, transgender people in education, employment, healthcare services, public transportation and in other public and private institutions.²⁶² Discrimination of transgender people in relation to inheritance is also prohibited.²⁶³ Activists have expressed concern about the extent to which the law will be enforced or be effective, and violence against transgender people has continued to occur.²⁶⁴

Hijra (or khwaja sara) are considered a third gender in many South Asian countries and are incorporated into the definitions of 'transgender' in the Transgender Persons Act.²⁶⁵ *Hijra* should not be confused with 'trans' or 'transgender' as it is used outside of the South-Asian context, even though there are some similarities between the concepts and the terms are sometimes used interchangeably in the media.²⁶⁶ *Hijra* are legally recognised by the government in Pakistan, and counted separately in the census. Many live in indigent conditions and endure limited opportunities for earning a livelihood.²⁶⁷ Despite their 'official status', *Hijra* are subject to discrimination and violence.²⁶⁸

²⁵⁷ 'DFAT Country Information Report: Pakistan', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 February 2019, s.3.217, 20190220093409

²⁵⁸ 'DFAT Country Information Report: Pakistan', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 February 2019, s.3.217, 20190220093409

²⁵⁹ 'Violence: Through the Lens of Lesbians, Bisexual Women and Trans People in Asia – Pakistan', Outright Action International, 5 June 2014, CSEFCB23F7554

²⁶⁰ 'Transgender Persons Protection of Rights Act', Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 7 March 2018, CIS7B839411054

²⁶¹ 'Pakistan passes landmark transgender rights law', Al Jazeera, 10 May 2018, CXBB8A1DA27606; 'Pakistan's transgender rights law - a battle half won', Reuters, 22 May 2018, CXBB8A1DA27768

²⁶² 'The long road to dignity', Friday Times, 18 May 2018, CXBB8A1DA28420

²⁶³ 'Transgender Persons Protection of Rights Act', Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 7 March 2018, Chapter V, CIS7B839411054

²⁶⁴ 'Pakistan's transgender rights law - a battle half won', Reuters, 22 May 2018, CXBB8A1DA27768; 'State of Human Rights in 2019', Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 30 April 2020, pp.46-47 and 141, 20200603194632; 'A transgender dancer shot dead, two injured in Karak', Tribal News Network, 30 January 2019, 20190201125737; 'Transgender persons must be extremely careful in relationships', Naheed Jahangir, Tribal News Network, 25 February 2020, 20200302144303; 'Pakistani Transgender Woman Killed, Another Wounded In Shooting', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 9 September 2020, 20200910101716

²⁶⁵ 'The Pakistan Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2018 and Its Impact on the Law of Gender in Pakistan', Jeffrey Redding, SSRN, 22 February 2019, 20190619080658

²⁶⁶ In general, a 'trans' person is one whose gender identity is not the same as their biological gender assigned at birth. *Hijra* are an ancient religious and cultural tradition in South Asia with communities living under a guru. *Hijra* consider themselves a third gender, not a gender other than their biological birth-gender. See 'Pakistan's traditional third gender isn't happy with the trans movement', Public Radio International, 29 July 2017, CXC90406611324

²⁶⁷ 'Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2018 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 13 March 2019, p.46, 20190326095100; the terms *hijra* or *khwaja sara* do not appear in the more recent country report, although the reporting otherwise remains similar: 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, pp.43-44, 20200312102402

²⁶⁸ 'Pakistani Transgender Woman Killed, Another Wounded In Shooting', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 9 September 2020, 20200910101716; 'Two transgender persons shot injured in Kohat', Tribal News Network, 30

Political opinion

Political parties and associated violence

Political officials and activists have been targeted by terrorist groups and political rivals.²⁶⁹

Most political parties active in Pakistan have suffered casualties from terror attacks or non-terrorist violence during the past decade,²⁷⁰ and politically motivated violence has occurred across the country.²⁷¹ In September 2020, a senior PTI leader was shot and killed in Haripur by unknown assailants.²⁷² In October 2019, a PTI worker was killed in Azizabad, after having received threats against his life.²⁷³ In the same month, a local leader of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) was shot dead in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, continuing a trend in the same district of Bajaur, where a local leader of the Jamiat Ulema-e Islam (F) (JUI-F) was shot²⁷⁴ and a member of a peace Lashkar was killed in September, a few days after a local leader of the Awami National Party (ANP) was abducted.²⁷⁵ In late September 2019, a bomb in Balochistan targeted and killed a leader of the JUI-F and two others.²⁷⁶ In late August 2019, a district leader of the PTI was shot dead in Nowshera, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.²⁷⁷ In all, six politicians were killed in the third quarter of 2019, compared with 14 in the second quarter²⁷⁸ and eight in the first quarter.²⁷⁹ In 2018, clashes between supporters of political parties occurred on election day in all four provinces.²⁸⁰ Reports of gunfire and grenade attacks on polling stations were also reported in Khuzdar district, Balochistan and Larkana, Sindh province.²⁸¹

On 25 July 2018, general elections were held and a new government formed.²⁸² Imran Khan's PTI party won a majority of seats in the National Assembly, removing the incumbent PML-N party

September 2019, 20191001112621; 'Mansehra police arrest man for allegedly murdering transgender person', Tribal New s Netw ork, 27 August 2019, 20190828073114; 'Transgender person shot dead in Nowshera', Tribal New s Netw ork, 30 June 2019, 20190702111730; 'Two transgender persons shot, injured in Mardan', Express Tribune, 18 June 2019, 20190619094542; 'Charsadda Police refused to provide protection to transgender birthday Party', Tribal New s Netw ork, 12 February 2019, 20190213081329; 'A transgender dancer shot dead, two injured in Karak', Tribal New s Netw ork, 31 January 2019, 20190201125737

²⁶⁹ For the purposes of this brief, 'political violence' is considered that carried out against political figures, workers or activists by supporters of opposing political parties.

²⁷⁰ 'CRSS Annual Security Report Special Edition 2013-2018', Center for Research and Security Studies, 1 March 2019, pp.24-26, 20190405163832; 'CRSS Annual Security Report 2019', Centre for Research and Security Studies, 28 January 2020, p.20, 20200130161732

²⁷¹ 'DFAT Country Information Report: Pakistan', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 February 2019, ss.3.159-3.174, 20190220093409

²⁷² 'Senior PTI leader shot dead in Haripur', Dawn, 14 September 2020, 20201030130212

²⁷³ 'Slain PTI worker was receiving threats', Dawn, 7 October 2019, 20191008081707

²⁷⁴ 'Bajaur shooting leaves JUIF leader with serious injuries', Tribal New s Netw ork, 28 October 2019, 20191029090743

²⁷⁵ 'PPP leader shot dead in Bajaur', Tribal New s Netw ork, 17 October 2019, 20191018130437

²⁷⁶ 'JUI-F leader among three dead in Chaman blast', Pakistan Today, 28 September 2019, 20190930101132

²⁷⁷ 'PTI leader shot dead in Nowshera', Tribal New s Netw ork, 21 August 2019, 20190822110949

²⁷⁸ 'Quarterly Security Report: 3rd Quarter, 2019', Center for Research and Security Studies, 11 October 2019, p.9, 20191015091425

²⁷⁹ 'Quarterly Security Report 2019', Center for Research and Security Studies, 17 July 2019, 20190904144910

²⁸⁰ 'Clashes, violence mar polling in various constituencies; at least 2 killed', Dawn, 25 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA32455; 'Positive changes to the legal framework were overshadowed by restrictions on freedom', European Union Election Observation Mission Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 27 July 2018, p.4, CIS7B839411845

²⁸¹ 'Millions vote in Pakistan's violence-marred elections', Al Jazeera, 26 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA32592

²⁸² Please see COISS's Situational Update on the Pakistan 25 July 2018 General Elections for more detailed information on the outcome, key political parties, electoral violence and the impact of the results: 'Situational Update: Pakistan: General elections', COISS, 30 August 2018, CR239EC81146

from power.²⁸³ However, it fell short of the number of seats needed to form government, creating a hung parliament.²⁸⁴ The PTI formed a coalition government with independent candidates and smaller regional parties.²⁸⁵

Several major incidents of political violence occurred in the lead up to and during the July 2018 elections, including one of the deadliest attacks in Pakistan's history. These attacks were claimed by the TTP and Islamic State and targeted politicians and candidates, political officials, political party supporters and the voting public.²⁸⁶ The ANP was the main target of TTP attacks in the 2013 election.²⁸⁷ By-elections held on 14 October 2018, proceeded without any major security incidents.²⁸⁸

There was a crackdown on human rights defenders, activists, journalists and civil society members ahead of the July 2018 elections including arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances and limits on the freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.²⁸⁹ Media outlets that published reports deemed critical of the military, including *Dawn* and *Geo TV*, had their

²⁸³ Formed in 1996 by former Pakistan cricket captain Imran Khan, the PTI is a centre-right party that has traditionally drawn its support from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province, which it has governed since 2013. In the 2018 elections, the PTI drew significant support from Pakistan's youth and the military. Khan ran on an anti-corruption and nationalist platform, whilst also expressing his support for the powerful military establishment. He has also aligned himself with the religious right, publicly supporting negotiating with the Taliban and Pakistan's blasphemy laws. The PTI's policy platform focuses on reforms to the police, local government and criminal justice system, corruption and infrastructure development. Since its election, numerous federal and provincial opposition leaders have been arrested on corruption charges, with allegations that these arrests are politically motivated. Journalists have also increasingly complained of curbed press freedoms under PTI rule. The PTI's manifesto for the 2018 election is available on CISNET: ['The Road to Naya Pakistan: PTI Manifesto 2018'](#), Government of Pakistan, 2018, 20190717093926. See also ['Pakistan on the brink of civil dictatorship'](#), Lowy Institute, 15 July 2019, 20190717094626; ['PTI curbs press freedom under guise of democracy'](#), Asia Times, 12 July 2019, 20190717095053; ['THE PTI'S STRUGGLE TO GOVERN PAKISTAN'](#), South Asian Voices, 4 June 2019, 20190717095354; ['Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf'](#), Dawn, 2018, 20190717100207; ['Imran Khan party improves services in Pakistan's wildest province'](#), The Economist, 8 June 2017, CXC90406621246; ['Seven things Pakistan's election results reveal'](#), Al Jazeera, 28 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA32423; ['The Political Hurdles for Imran Khan's Government'](#), The Diplomat, 3 August 2018, CXBB8A1DA32856; ['Pakistan's 2018 election, explained'](#), VOX, 25 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA34425; ['With Imran Khan as New Leader, Pakistan Could Reshape Its Image'](#), The New York Times, 29 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA32428; ['Pakistan's Election May Further Fracture its Polity'](#), Atlantic Council, 24 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA32447; ['PTI-led government in Pakistan likely to be stable: infrastructure projects, energy contracts likely to be reviewed'](#), Jane's Intelligence Digest, 27 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA32438

²⁸⁴ ['Results: Pakistan elections 2018'](#), Al Jazeera, live website

²⁸⁵ ['PTI-led government in Pakistan likely to be stable: infrastructure projects, energy contracts likely to be reviewed'](#), Jane's Intelligence Digest, 27 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA32438; ['After Pakistan's Heated Election, Key Parties Lend Support to Imran Khan'](#), The New York Times, 28 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA32429

²⁸⁶ ['Suicide blast kills ANP candidate, supporters at election rally'](#), Al Jazeera, 10 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31296; ['132 die in Pakistan election violence ahead of Sharif return'](#), Associated Press, 13 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31594; ['With 149 martyred, Mastung is one of the deadliest terrorist attacks in Pakistan's history'](#), Express Tribune, 16 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31578; ['Islamic State claims Quetta polling station blast: AMAQ'](#), Reuters, 25 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA32480; ['PM condemns attack on security personnel protecting polling staff in Balochistan'](#), Pakistan Today, 25 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA32588

²⁸⁷ The ANP is a left wing, secular, Pashtun nationalist party. ['Explainer: Pakistan's main political parties'](#), Al Jazeera, 7 May 2013, CXC28129415758. ['Suicide blast kills ANP candidate, supporters at election rally'](#), Al Jazeera, 10 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31296; ['Undeterred by blast, ANP vows to contest polls'](#), Dawn, 12 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31413; ['ANP leader Haroon Bilour among 12 killed in Peshawar blast, police say'](#), Dawn, 10 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31286

²⁸⁸ ['By-polls – Elections held peacefully amid low turnout'](#), Express Tribune, 15 October 2018, CXBB8A1DA36796; ['By-polls conclude peacefully... and unremarkably'](#), Express Tribune, 15 October 2018, CXBB8A1DA36797

²⁸⁹ ['Freedoms Under 'Relentless Attack' In Pakistan Ahead Of Elections, Amnesty Warns'](#), Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 14 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA29485

circulation blocked in large parts of the country.²⁹⁰ In June 2018, Pakistani journalist and vocal critic of the military, Gul Bukhari, was briefly abducted by unidentified masked men in Lahore, before being released.²⁹¹ Also in June 2018, the military announced it was monitoring social media activity for 'anti-state, anti-Pakistan and anti-army' material.²⁹²

Leaders of the opposition PML–N party were arrested in the run up to the elections and have been the subjects of further legal actions. In July 2017, then PML–N leader Nawaz Sharif was dismissed as prime minister after the Supreme Court ruled he had lied on a parliamentary wealth declaration.²⁹³ Nawaz Sharif's brother, Shahbaz Sharif, has since headed the PML–N party.²⁹⁴ On 6 July 2018, Nawaz Sharif and his daughter Maryam Nawaz were convicted *in absentia* on corruption charges and sentenced to substantial prison terms and fines; they were taken into custody on arrival in Lahore from the United Kingdom the following week.²⁹⁵ Following the elections, the Islamabad High Court suspended their prison sentences in September 2018, while hearing their appeals.²⁹⁶ Their convictions were subsequently found to stand, but their sentences suspended.²⁹⁷ On 5 October 2018, Shahbaz Sharif was arrested on corruption charges in connection to his former role as chief minister of Punjab province.²⁹⁸ The PML–N claims the charges are political.²⁹⁹ In November 2019, Nawaz Sharif was permitted to travel to the United Kingdom to obtain medical treatment, but sedition charges have since been filed against him, his daughter Maryam Nawaz and dozens of his party leaders over comments he has made criticising the interference of the military in national politics.³⁰⁰ The PML–N and other major opposition parties formed an alliance, the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), in September 2020.³⁰¹

Members of the PML–N party were also arrested during the elections. On 17 July 2018, police opened criminal cases against nearly 17,000 PML–N members in Punjab over allegedly breaking election rules. Hundreds of PML–N members were also detained by the police in Lahore, reportedly to prevent the party from staging a welcome-home rally upon the Sharifs' return to the country.³⁰² The

²⁹⁰ 'In Pre-election Pakistan, a Military Crackdown Is the Real Issue', The New York Times, 6 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA28889; 'Pakistani activist abduction sparks fear of crackdown on dissent', Al Jazeera, 7 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA30157

²⁹¹ 'Pakistani activist abduction sparks fear of crackdown on dissent', Al Jazeera, 7 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA30157

²⁹² 'Pakistani activist abduction sparks fear of crackdown on dissent', Al Jazeera, 7 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA30157

²⁹³ 'Ex-PM Nawaz Sharif and daughter arrested on return to Pakistan', Al Jazeera, 14 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31615

²⁹⁴ 'Pakistani Ex-PM's Party Alleges 'Huge Crackdown,' Arrest Of Supporters', Radio Free Europe, 12 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31608; 'Opposition parties form alliance to oust govt', Dawn, 21 September 2020, 20200922101916

²⁹⁵ 'Ex-PM Nawaz Sharif and daughter arrested on return to Pakistan', Al Jazeera, 14 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31615; 'Nawaz, Maryam and Safdar file appeals against Avenfield verdict', Dawn, 16 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31736

²⁹⁶ 'Pakistan court releases ex-PM Nawaz Sharif and daughter', Al Jazeera, 20 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA35655; 'Sharif's release spells trouble for Pakistani PM Khan', Deutsche Welle, 19 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA35728

²⁹⁷ 'Pakistan court releases ex-PM Nawaz Sharif and daughter', Al Jazeera, 20 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA35655

²⁹⁸ 'Pakistan Arrests Nawaz Sharif's Brother for Alleged Graft', Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, 5 October 2018, CXBB8A1DA36441; 'Pakistani court allows officials to quiz opposition leader', Washington Post, 6 October 2018, CXBB8A1DA36440; 'Nawaz Sharif's brother Shahbaz sent to 10-day remand in Rs 14-bn scam', Business Standard, 6 October 2018, CXBB8A1DA36442

²⁹⁹ 'Pakistan's anti-graft body arrests opposition leader', Associated Press, 5 October 2018, CXBB8A1DA36519

³⁰⁰ 'Ex-PM Sharif, daughter face sedition charges for criticising Pakistani military', Mubasher Bukhari, Reuters, 06 October 2020, 20201006092530

³⁰¹ 'Opposition parties form alliance to oust govt', Dawn, 21 September 2020, 20200922101916

³⁰² 'Police open criminal cases against 17,000 members of Pakistan's outgoing ruling party', Reuters, 17 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31761; 'Academics censure crackdown on PML–N workers', Daily Times, 13 July 2018,

PML–N claims that 220 party members were also arrested in Rawalpindi.³⁰³ The protest in Lahore after the Sharifs returned went ahead, and violent clashes between PML–N supporters and law enforcement occurred.³⁰⁴ More than 50 PML–N officials, including party leader Shahbaz Sharif, were subsequently charged with terrorism and other charges including ‘inciting the crowd to violate the law’.³⁰⁵

In July 2019, peaceful elections were held in the former FATA for seats in the provincial parliament. As a result of its 2018 dissolution and merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the former FATA required by-elections to be held for the provincial parliament. These passed peacefully. Of the 12 contested seats, PTI (which forms government both federally and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), won six, independents won five, and the ANP won one.³⁰⁶

Karachi has long been host to political violence but the situation has improved since 2013. In particular, Karachi has seen militants associated with the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), the ANP and the PPP responsible for assassinations, riots and deadly clashes.³⁰⁷ MQM-affiliated groups were accused of racketeering, abductions, torture and murder.³⁰⁸ A crackdown on criminal and political violence in Karachi since 2013 has dramatically improved the situation, but the city continues to witness political and other violence.³⁰⁹ The Karachi operation disproportionately targeted the militant wings of secular political parties.³¹⁰ The MQM has accused authorities of extra-judicially killing 240 MQM workers and disappearing 171 others.³¹¹ There were five incidents of political violence in Karachi in 2016³¹² and one in 2017.³¹³ In 2018, there were five acts of political violence, in which five people were killed.³¹⁴ In 2019, three incidents of political violence claimed four lives in Karachi: a worker of Muttahida Qaumi Movement – Pakistan (MQM-P); two workers of the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI); and a leader of the Pak Sarzameen Party (PSP).³¹⁵

CXBB8A1DA31750; ‘Over 100 PML-N workers detained in Lahore ahead of Nawaz Sharif’s return’, Geo TV, 11 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31447

³⁰³ ‘Pakistani Ex-PM’s Party Alleges ‘Huge Crackdown’ Arrest Of Supporters’, Radio Free Europe, 12 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31608

³⁰⁴ ‘PML-N bigwigs booked under terror charges’, Express Tribune, 15 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA32065; ‘Shahbaz Abbasi among top PML-N leaders booked’, Dawn, 15 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA32066

³⁰⁵ ‘Shahbaz, Abbasi among top PML-N leaders booked’, Dawn, 15 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA32066

³⁰⁶ ‘PML-N bigwigs booked under terror charges’, Express Tribune, 15 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA32065

³⁰⁷ ‘Official results: Independents win 6, PTI gets 5 seats’, Tribal News Network, 22 July 2019, 20190723095653;

‘FAFEN declares ex-FATA election peaceful, fair’, Dunya News, 22 July 2019, 20190723111306

³⁰⁸ ‘EASO Country of Origin Information Report: Pakistan Security Situation’, European Asylum Support Office, July 2016, p.46, CIS38A80121710

³⁰⁹ ‘Why Pakistan’s army is targeting the MQM party’, Deutsche Welle, 23 August 2016, CX6A26A6E15645;

‘EASO Country of Origin Information Report: Pakistan Security Situation’, European Asylum Support Office, July 2016, p.47, CIS38A80121710

³¹⁰ ‘Analysis - Karachi operation - what next’, Dawn, 1 October 2018, CXBB8A1DA36226; ‘PIPS 2015 Pakistan Security Report’, Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 5 January 2016, p.24 CIS38A80121056; ‘Political Violence Shackles Karachi’, FATA Research Centre, 23 August 2016, CIS38A80122419; ‘Countering Militancy and Terrorism in Pakistan: The civil-military nexus’, United States Institute of Peace, 12 October 2016, p.2, CIS38A80122588; ‘Pakistan Security Report 2016’, Pak Institute for Peace Studies, January 2017, p.19, CISED50A D38; ‘Pakistan: Security situation’, European Asylum Support Office, October 2020, pp.90-91, 20201102100212

³¹¹ ‘Karachi’s Security Crackdown a Boost for Pakistan’s Islamists’, Jamestown Terrorism Monitor, 11 November 2016, CX6A26A6E13145

³¹² ‘Karachi’s Security Crackdown a Boost for Pakistan’s Islamists’ Jamestown Terrorism Monitor, 11 November 2016, CX6A26A6E13145

³¹³ ‘Pakistan Security Report 2016’, Pak Institute for Peace Studies, January 2017, p.19, CISED50A D38

³¹⁴ ‘Pakistan Security Report Special Report 2017’, Pak Institute for Peace Studies, January 2018, p.56, CIS7B83941282

³¹⁵ ‘Pakistan Security Report 2018’, Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, 6 January 2019, p.48, 20190121110758

³¹⁶ ‘Pakistan Security Report 2019’, Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, 5 January 2020, p.50, 20200114102703

Members of peace lashkars

Members of peace lashkars or peace committees³¹⁶ remain targets of anti-state groups, however they have benefited from a somewhat improved security situation across Pakistan in recent years. In February 2020, a peace committee member was killed in the Swat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in a targeted shooting for which no one claimed responsibility.³¹⁷ Reportedly, the victim was also a local leader of the opposition Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the bureau head of an Urdu-language daily newspaper, and several members of his extended family had been killed in the past due to their involvement in peace committees.³¹⁸ Two peace committee volunteers were also killed in South Waziristan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in March 2020.³¹⁹ During 2019, 11 attacks targeted pro-government tribesmen and members of peace lashkars killing 13 and injuring 47.³²⁰ Amongst those killed were four members of a peace lashkar targeted by the TTP in a bomb attack in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in August 2019.³²¹ In 2018, six attacks against peace lashkars resulted in seven deaths, down from 12 attacks causing 23 deaths in 2017,³²² and continuing a trend of decreasing attacks since 2015.³²³

Militant groups

*Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ)*³²⁴

LeJ's anti-Shia violence is down after strong state action to contain them and the deaths of key leaders. LeJ is a Sunni terrorist organisation that is descended from SSP, an anti-Shia Deobandi outfit that also begot Ahl-e-Sunnat-wal-Jamat, a political wing of the movement. In response to Pakistan military operations against it and other groups, LeJ successfully decentralised its command.³²⁵ Banned in Pakistan since 2001,³²⁶ in 2016 it had a core membership of between 500

³¹⁶ Peace lashkars may also be known as 'Peace Committees', 'Village Defence Committees' or 'Aman Committees', depending on the source.

³¹⁷ 'Member Of Anti-Militant Group Killed In Northwestern Pakistan', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 26 February 2020, 20200302144627

³¹⁸ 'Member Of Anti-Militant Group Killed In Northwestern Pakistan', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 26 February 2020, 20200302144627

³¹⁹ 'Pakistan: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) - 2020 - March', South Asia Terrorism Portal, 22 August 2020, 20200824123923

³²⁰ 'Pakistan Security Report 2019', Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, 5 January 2020, p.18, 20200114102703; for data specific to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, see pp.36-38 of that report.

³²¹ 'Bomb Blast Targets 'Peace Committee' In Northwestern Pakistan', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 18 August 2019, 20190819112705

³²² 'Pakistan Security Report 2018', Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, 6 January 2019, p.36, 20190121110758; 'Pakistan Security Report Special Report 2017', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, January 2018, p.252, CIS7B83941282

³²³ In 2016, 26 attacks caused 68 deaths; 'Security landscape of Pakistan in 2016' (Pakistan Security Report 2016), Pak Institute for Peace Studies, January 2017, pp.30-31, CISED50AD63. In 2015, there were 34 attacks 'PIPS 2015 Pakistan Security Report', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 5 January 2016, p.7, CIS38A80121056

³²⁴ Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, commonly abbreviated to 'LeJ', is a Sunni supremacist and anti-Shia extremist group and an offshoot of Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), with whom they maintain strong links. See: 'Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan', Stanford University, 15 February 2012, CX0D38E8E21013

³²⁵ 'Pakistan's LeJ Baluchistan Operations Ready for Resurgence', Terrorism Monitor, 22 July 2016, p.6, CIS38A80122210; 'Pakistan's Jihadist Heartland: Southern Punjab', International Crisis Group, 30 May 2016, p.4, CIS38A80122212; 'Quetta: Caught in the crosshairs of militancy', Center for Strategic and Contemporary Research, 14 August 2016, p.8, CIS38A80121802; 'Punjab's 'encounters' with sectarianism', Herald, 21 October 2016, CX6A26A6E11595

³²⁶ 'Pakistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism', Counter Extremism Project, n.d., p.3, CIS7B839419753

and 1000.³²⁷ In 2018, it was reported that Islamic State and the LeJ had reached an understanding in Balochistan that LeJ's foot soldiers would carry out localised attacks under the Islamic State umbrella.³²⁸ The LeJ also has links to other Pakistan-based terrorist organisations including the TTP.³²⁹

Despite its creation in Punjab and original focus on anti-Shia activities there, LeJ has been active in Balochistan in recent years. Operating in and around Quetta, the LeJ has been a major violent sectarian actor in Balochistan province.³³⁰ In July 2020, three LeJ militants were arrested in Gujranwala city in Punjab, reportedly with detonators, safety fuses and explosives in their possession; another group of LeJ militants was arrested in Karachi.³³¹ The LeJ was responsible for eight terrorist attacks in 2019, three of which were in Balochistan province and the remaining five in Karachi.³³² In April 2019, an attack claimed by LeJ and Islamic State targeted the Hazara community at a market in Quetta, killing 21 people.³³³ All anti-Hazara terrorist attacks in 2018 were claimed by LeJ (though some were also claimed by Islamic State).³³⁴ In May 2018, the LeJ's regional chief of Balochistan in Quetta was killed by the Pakistani army.³³⁵ LeJ was responsible for ten terrorist attacks in 2017, six of which were in Balochistan.³³⁶ LeJ murdered four women (three of whom were Hazaras) in Quetta in October 2016, and were responsible for six deaths in two attacks against Shias in Karachi during the same month.³³⁷ Lashkar-e-Jhangvi al-Alami (LeJ-A) its 'international faction', carried out numerous attacks against security forces in 2016 and 2017, notably an October 2016 attack, in cooperation with Islamic State, against a police training centre in Quetta, in which 61 personnel were killed.³³⁸ LeJ-A also carried out a 21 January 2017 bombing of a Shia market in Parachinar, Kurram, in which 25 people were killed.³³⁹ The group claimed the blast was in retaliation for the killing five days earlier of LeJ head Asif Chotoo in Punjab.³⁴⁰

³²⁷ 'Pakistan's Jihadist Heartland: Southern Punjab', International Crisis Group, 30 May 2016, p.4, CIS38A80122212; 'Quetta: Caught in the crosshairs of militancy', Center for Strategic and Contemporary Research, 14 August 2016, p.8, CIS38A80121802

³²⁸ 'ISIS = LeJ = terror in Quetta', Pakistan Today, 23 May 2018, CXBB8A1DA36419

³²⁹ 'Pakistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism', Counter Extremism Project, n.d., CIS7B839419753; 'Is Lashkar-e-Jhangvi Taking Advantage of Pakistan and Afghanistan's Bilateral Tensions?', The Diplomat, 27 January 2017, CXC90406624780

³³⁰ 'Militant Landscape of Balochistan', Muhammad Amir Rana, Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, 19 June 2020, p.16, 20200623101100

³³¹ 'Pakistan - Timeline (Terrorist Activities) - 2020 - July', South Asia Terrorism Portal, 22 August 2020, 20200824141343

³³² 'Pakistan Security Report 2019', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 5 January 2020, p.71, 20200114102703

³³³ 'State of Human Rights in 2019', Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 30 April 2020, p.169, 20200603194632

³³⁴ 'Pakistan Security Report 2018', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 6 January 2019, p.45, 20190121110758

³³⁵ 'Pakistan kills wanted senior rebel commander', Al Jazeera, 18 May 2018, CXBB8A1DA27603

³³⁶ 'Pakistan Security Report Special Report 2017', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, January 2018, p.20, CIS7B83941282

³³⁷ 'Footprints: Lost lives', Dawn, 9 October 2016, CX6A26A6E10403; 'Child dead, several injured in Karachi Imambargah attack', Express Tribune, 17 October 2016, CX6A26A6E11564; 'ASWJ chief to be grilled over Imambargah attack', The Nation, 19 October 2016, CX6A26A6E11565

³³⁸ '61 killed, at least 165 injured as militants storm police training centre in Quetta', Express Tribune, 24 October 2016, CX6A26A6E11668; 'Pakistani militants say they worked with Islamic State to attack police college', Reuters, 26 October 2016, CX6A26A6E11848; 'Five shot dead in Karachi 'sectarian attack'', Dawn, 30 October 2016, CX6A26A6E12298

³³⁹ 'Bomb wrecks crowd ded market in Parachinar', Express Tribune, 22 January 2017, CXC904066518; 'Markets in Parachinar remain closed as city mourns blast victims', Daily Times, 22 January 2017, CXC904066519

³⁴⁰ 'Big terror hit tatters peace', The Nation, 22 January 2017, CXC904066521

*Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)*³⁴¹

The TTP appears to be reconsolidating after a few years of disunity. The TTP was a primary target of the Pakistani military's operations in the former FATA.³⁴² In June 2018, the leader of the TTP, Mullah Fazlullah, was killed by a US drone strike in Afghanistan,³⁴³ and Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud was appointed as the group's new leader.³⁴⁴ Unlike Fazlullah, Mehsud has a strong tribal backing and he has used this advantage to reunify the TTP, which had become increasingly fragmented under Fazlullah's leadership.³⁴⁵ The group's operational capabilities have remained intact and it has extended its reach in the northern districts of Balochistan.³⁴⁶ In August 2020, the TTP announced that two splinter groups – Jamat-ul-Ahrar (JuA) and Hizb-ul-Ahrar (HuA) – had rejoined its ranks.³⁴⁷

The TTP remains a major actor of instability. The TTP leadership recently announced that it has been working to bring other militant groups into their fold to consolidate the campaign against what it condemned as an 'un-Islamic system' in Pakistan.³⁴⁸ Reportedly, the TTP 'struck an alliance in July with half a dozen small militant factions',³⁴⁹ and in August announced that the JuA and the HuA – former breakaway factions of the TTP – had returned to the fold.³⁵⁰ Since March 2020, the TTP has 'unleashed a wave of attacks on the Pakistani security forces' in what commentators have seen as a response to the risk of losing havens on the Afghan side of the border.³⁵¹ During 2019, the TTP was reportedly involved in 82 terrorist attacks, of which 69 were in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 13 in Balochistan; these attacks claimed 150 lives.³⁵² Most of the TTP's attacks in 2019 targeted security forces in North and South Waziristan and other areas of Balochistan, and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.³⁵³

³⁴¹ The Tehrik-i-Taliban (TTP) was founded in 2007 to unify different Taliban movements in the north-western tribal areas of Pakistan. They exist separately from the Taliban of Afghanistan and should not be confused with Afghan groups. For further information please see *'Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)'*, Project on Violent Conflict, University of Maryland, State University of New York, June 2015, CXBD6A0DE19344

³⁴² *'PIPS 2015 Pakistan Security Report'*, Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 5 January 2016, p.10, CIS38A80121056

³⁴³ *'Who is Taliban leader Mullah Fazlullah?'*, Deutsche Welle, 15 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA29641; *'US drone kills Pakistan Taliban chief'*, Dawn, 15 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA29483

³⁴⁴ *'Pakistani Taliban Appoint New Leader After Mullah Fazlullah's Killing'*, Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 23 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA30118; *'Pakistani Taliban appoints new chief after previous leader killed in drone strike'*, Reuters, 24 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA30116

³⁴⁵ *'TTP's Future Under the Leadership of New Emir Noor Wali Mehsud'*, Terrorism Monitor, 17 May 2019, 20190604110907; *'How Can Islamabad Further Isolate the Pakistani Taliban?'*, The Diplomat, 27 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA32059; *'Pakistan Taliban's new leader faces challenge to keep militants together'*, The National, 24 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA32060; *'Pakistani Taliban choose Noor Wali as new chief'*, The Nation, 24 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA32061

³⁴⁶ *'Pakistan Security Report 2019'*, Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 5 January 2020, p.68, 20200114102703

³⁴⁷ *'Pakistan Taliban reunite with two splinter groups as army hails battle success'*, Jibril Ahmad, Reuters, 18 August 2020, 20200818095519; see also *'Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan Reunifies with Uncertain Consequences'*, Umair Jamal, The Diplomat, 18 August 2020, 20200819095112

³⁴⁸ *'Militant Pakistan Taliban Brings Splinters Back Into Its Fold'*, Ayaz Gul, Voice of America, 18 August 2020, 20200819093515

³⁴⁹ *'Attacks surge in north west Pakistan as Afghan peace effort brings shifting sands'*, Reuters, 18 September 2020, 20200919103751

³⁵⁰ *'Pakistan Taliban reunite with two splinter groups as army hails battle success'*, Jibril Ahmad, Reuters, 18 August 2020, 20200818095519; see also *'Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan Reunifies with Uncertain Consequences'*, Umair Jamal, The Diplomat, 18 August 2020, 20200819095112

³⁵¹ *'Attacks surge in north west Pakistan as Afghan peace effort brings shifting sands'*, Reuters, 18 September 2020, 20200919103751

³⁵² *'Pakistan Security Report 2019'*, Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 5 January 2020, p.68, 20200114102703

³⁵³ See for example: *'Bomb Blast Targets 'Peace Committee' In Northwestern Pakistan'*, Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 18 August 2019, 20190819112705; *'5 dead and 34 injured in bomb attack at police van in Quetta'*, Tribal News Network, 31 July 2019, 20190731085744; *'Captain among 10 soldiers martyred in two terrorist attacks'*, Express Tribune, 27 July 2019, 20190729083857; *'One Cop, Three Militants Killed In Shooting In Pakistan'*, Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 26 June 2019, 20190628115751; *'Three bombers killed as forces*

The TTP carried out 79 attacks in 2018, more than any other group; these attacks killed 185 people.³⁵⁴ Historically, its operational focus has been the former FATA, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Karachi; however, under Pakistan military pressure in recent years, some TTP operatives relocated, primarily to Afghanistan, Punjab and Balochistan, where they built up operational capacity.³⁵⁵

The TTP mostly targets symbols of the state and largely avoids mass-casualty attacks.

Although it had engaged in mass casualty attacks in the past, in September 2018 the TTP issued a code of conduct which emphasised that it would target symbols of the state (especially security forces) and avoid mass casualty attacks or purely civilian targets such as schools, mosques or market places. That said, in July 2019, following a TTP attack at a police checkpoint in Dera Ismail Khan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a suicide bomber targeted the casualty entrance of a local hospital, causing seven more fatalities, including three civilians.³⁵⁶ News reports indicate that the TTP claimed responsibility, saying it was in retaliation to the killing of two Taliban leaders in DI Khan the previous month.³⁵⁷ The TTP killed at least three civilians in targeted attacks against polio vaccination workers in April and December of 2019.³⁵⁸ Recent media reporting typically refers to intelligence-based operations against 'remnant' militant elements, but the increasing number of attacks against military targets has led many to criticise the government's claims of restoring security in the region.³⁵⁹

Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA), a faction that broke away from the TTP in 2014, has recently reunited with the TTP.³⁶⁰ A significant consequence of the lack of authority of the TTP's Fazlullah (and his predecessor) was the breakaway of JuA and its emergence as of the strongest terrorist groups in Pakistan.³⁶¹ It reportedly reconciled with the TTP in March 2015, though reserved the right to continue carrying out attacks.³⁶² Despite disavowing any links with the local chapter of Islamic State (see

stave off terror attack', Express Tribune, 26 June 2019, 20190628120629; 'At Least Three Police Killed In Taliban Attack In Pakistan's Quetta', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 13 May 2019, 20190514105100; 'Four policemen martyred in Quetta IED attack', Express Tribune, 13 May 2019, 20190514121813; 'Four Soldiers Killed In Pakistan Attacks Claimed By Taliban', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 7 May 2019, 20190508114551; 'Nine martyred in gun-and-suicide attack on DIG office in Loralai', Express Tribune, 29 January 2019, 20190130083006

³⁵⁴ 'Pakistan Security Report 2018', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 6 January 2019, p.74, 20190121110758

³⁵⁵ 'PIPS 2015 Pakistan Security Report', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 5 January 2016, p.10, CIS38A80121056; 'Pakistan Security Report: First half 2016', FATA Research Centre, 4 August 2016, p.10, CIS38A80121730

³⁵⁶ '6 policemen among 9 die in DI Khan suicide blast, firing', Tribal News Network, 21 July 2019, 20190722101633

³⁵⁷ 'Nine dead as militants target police in DI Khan', Pakistan Today, 21 July 2019, 20190722111619

³⁵⁸ 'Pakistan Security Report 2019', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 5 January 2020, pp.39, 46 and 158, 20200114102703

³⁵⁹ 'In Waziristan, Locals Worried Over Taliban Regrouping', Abubakar Siddique, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Gandhara, 16 September 2020, 20200917094818

³⁶⁰ 'Pakistan Taliban reunite with two splinter groups as army hails battle success', Jibran Ahmad, Reuters, 18 August 2020, 20200818095519

³⁶¹ 'Indications of Divergence in TTP Attitudes Towards the Taliban', IHS Intelligence Review, 27 September 2016, CX6A26A6E10122; 'Pakistan's Jamaat-ul-Ahrar: A violent domestic threat', Roul, A, Terrorism Monitor, 16 September 2016, pp.5-6, CIS38A80122208. Tensions between Khorasani and the TTP leadership were reported as early as December 2013. 'Former TTP Spokesman Ehsanullah Ehsan Creates New ID on Facebook', Middle East Media Research Institute (Israel), 3 December 2013, CXC28129415301; 'Pakistan Security Assessment 2017', Journal for Conflict and Security Studies, Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, January 2018, p.45, CIS7B83941229

³⁶² 'Pakistan's Jamaat-ul-Ahrar: A violent domestic threat', Roul, A, Terrorism Monitor, 16 September 2016, pp.5-6, CIS38A80122208; 'Mapping Militant Organizations: Jamaat-ul-Ahrar', Center for International Security and Cooperation, July 2018, 20190604111946

below),³⁶³ JuA cooperated with Islamic State in a number of attacks.³⁶⁴ JuA was particularly active in Pakistan in 2016.³⁶⁵ One of its leaders was killed in an October 2017 drone strike.³⁶⁶ Internal fissures, the surrender of some of its commanders to security forces and the loss of others back to the TTP subsequently contributed to a weakening organisational structure.³⁶⁷ In 2019, JuA claimed an attack in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in which one person was killed,³⁶⁸ and a suicide bomb attack that killed at least ten people, including four policemen, at a heavily guarded shrine in Lahore.³⁶⁹ JuA also claimed a bomb attack on a vehicle from Pakistan's Anti-Narcotics Force in a busy market in southwestern Pakistan near the Afghan border on 10 August 2020, killing at least five people.³⁷⁰ Later the same month, the TTP announced that the JuA had reunited with it and had pledged allegiance to the TTP chief.³⁷¹

*Islamic State*³⁷²

'Islamic State Khorasan' is a chapter of the Syria-based Islamic State group. It was established in Afghanistan and Pakistan in early 2015.³⁷³ In using 'Islamic State', this report refers to the local chapter, unless otherwise stated. Islamic State is active in the borderlands between Pakistan and Afghanistan, an area that was traditionally the home of al-Qaeda and where the TTP also operates.³⁷⁴ The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) reported in July 2020 that the number of Pakistani foreign terrorist fighters in Afghanistan was 'estimated at between 6,000 and 6,500, most of them with TTP'.³⁷⁵ It noted that many former TTP members have joined Islamic State Khorasan, and that the TTP and its 'various splinter groups' were expected to 'align themselves' with Islamic State

³⁶³ 'TTP faction denies links to Islamic State after Quetta terrorist attack', Reuters, 16 August 2016, CX6A26A6E7891; 'Indications of Divergence in TTP Attitudes Towards the Taliban', IHS Intelligence Review, 27 September 2016, CX6A26A6E10122

³⁶⁴ 'Terror conglomerate: Da'ish forms nexus with other groups', Express Tribune, 14 November 2016, CX6A26A6E12810; 'Mapping Militant Organizations: Jamaat-ul-Ahrar', Center for International Security and Cooperation, July 2018, 20190604111946

³⁶⁵ See, for example: 'Suicide Blast at Mohmand Agency Mosque', FATA Research Centre, 17 September 2016, p.1, CIS38A80122358; 'Curfew in Mohmand as suicide attack death toll rises to 30', Dawn, 17 September 2016, CX6A26A6E11240; 'Suicide bomber kills 13 in attack on Mardan courthouse', Dawn, 2 September 2016, CX6A26A6E11243; 'Militant Attacks Cause Casualties in Mardan and Peshawar', FATA Research Centre, 3 September 2016, p.2, CIS38A80122359; 'Pakistan's Jamaat-ul-Ahrar: A violent domestic threat', Terrorism Monitor, 16 September 2016, p.6, CIS38A80122208

³⁶⁶ 'Jamaat-ul-Ahrar Chief Killed In Afghanistan Drone Strike', Tribal News Network, 18 October 2017, CXC90406615915

³⁶⁷ 'Pakistan Security Report 2019', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 5 January 2020, p.69, 20200114102703

³⁶⁸ 'Pakistan Security Report 2019', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 5 January 2020, p.67, 20200114102703

³⁶⁹ 'Terror revisits Data Darbar in holy month', Express Tribune (Pakistan), 8 May 2019, 20190509121637

³⁷⁰ 'Bomb Kills Five In Troubled Pakistani Border Town', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 10 August 2020, 20200811115321

³⁷¹ 'Pakistan Taliban reunite with two splinter groups as army hails battle success', Jibran Ahmad, Reuters, 18 August 2020, 20200818095519

³⁷² ISK is the Afghan chapter of Islamic State, also known as 'IS', 'ISIL' or 'Daesh'. The 'K' stands for 'Khorasan', an ancient name for a region covering part of what is now the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. ISK is sometimes called 'Wilayat Khorasan', which refers to independent administrative units used under an historical system of governance in the Middle East.

³⁷³ 'Pakistan Security Report Special Report 2017', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, January 2018, p.25, CIS7B83941282

³⁷⁴ 'Islamic State Enters Al-Qaeda's Old Hotbed: Afghanistan and Pakistan', Partnership for Peace Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes, Connections: The Quarterly Journal, Vol.16, No.1, Winter 2017, p.37fn, CISED50AD4292

³⁷⁵ 'Twenty-sixth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2368 (2017) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities', United Nations Security Council (UNSC), 23 July 2020, pp.15-16, 20200804090718

Khorasan.³⁷⁶ Islamic State is known to have operated throughout the country in both organised structures and small, ad hoc cells and through proxies such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi al-Alami and in cooperation with other terrorist groups, including the TTP and JuA (the latter two largely in secret to avoid offending the Afghan Taliban).³⁷⁷ Following reunification of the TTP and its two major splinter groups – the JuA and Hizbul Ahrar – in August 2020, the TTP's relationship with Islamic State is unclear.³⁷⁸ The organised branch of Islamic State does not operate as effectively in large cities such as Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi, where unorganised breakaways – who want to associate with the wider Islamic State movement – tend to dominate. Islamic State has recruited widely, including in Pakistani gaols,³⁷⁹ among the middle classes of big cities³⁸⁰, and among women.³⁸¹ In May 2019, an Islamic State communique claimed an attack in the name of the Pakistan – as opposed to Khorasan – province of Islamic State.³⁸² In February 2019, Pakistani authorities killed two senior Islamic State operatives.³⁸³

Islamic State targets religious minorities, state authorities and political figures, primarily through mass-casualty terrorism. Islamic State has claimed responsibility for some of the deadliest attacks in Pakistan in recent years, including several during the July 2018 elections.³⁸⁴ It claimed responsibility for two major incidents during the elections; one targeted a polling station in Quetta and the other an election rally in Mastung, Balochistan. A total of 176 people were killed and 320 others injured in the attacks.³⁸⁵ The attack in Mastung was the deadliest since the 2014 attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar.³⁸⁶ In July 2018, Islamic State militants killed six members of the paramilitary force and two policemen in Mashki district of Balochistan province.³⁸⁷ During 2017 and

³⁷⁶ Twenty-sixth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2368 (2017) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, United Nations Security Council (UNSC), 23 July 2020, pp.15-16, 20200804090718

³⁷⁷ 'Islamic State Comes for South Asia', The Diplomat, 18 June 2019, 20190620133102; 'Pakistan Security Assessment 2017', Journal for Conflict and Security Studies, Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, p.52, CIS7B83941229

³⁷⁸ 'Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan Reunifies with Uncertain Consequences', Umair Jamal, The Diplomat, 18 August 2020, 20200819095112; 'Experts: Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan Merger with Splinter Groups 'Bad News' for Pakistan', Niala Mohammad and Roshan Noorzai, Voice of America, 3 September 2020, 20200907105844; 'The Taliban sanctions', Muhammad Amir Rana, Dawn, 20 September 2020, 20200922103354

³⁷⁹ 'Reports of recruitment' of prisoners in Karachi jail by IS rejected', Dawn, 5 October 2017, CXC90406614904 See also, more recently: Twenty-sixth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2368 (2017) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, United Nations Security Council, 23 July 2020, pp.15-16, 20200804090718

³⁸⁰ 'Pakistan's Women Jihadis', The Diplomat, 6 April 2017, CXC90406615834

³⁸¹ 'Pakistan's Women Jihadis', The Diplomat, 6 April 2017, CXC90406615834

³⁸² 'Islamic State Announces 'Pakistan Province'', Voice of America, 15 May 2019, 20190516122440; 'Islamic State Comes for South Asia', The Diplomat, 18 June 2019, 20190620133102; 'An IS Caliphate in Pakistan?', New sline, 28 June 2019, 20190701112429

³⁸³ 'The Sectarian Nightmare', New sline, 20 May 2019, 20190603162350

³⁸⁴ 'A look at major attacks in Pakistan claimed by IS militants', Associated Press, 17 August 2018, CXBB8A1DA33842

³⁸⁵ '28 killed in suicide blast near Quetta polling station', News International, 25 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA32177; '31 dead in Quetta explosion targeting police van', Agence France Presse, 25 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA32178; '31 die in suicide bombing outside Quetta polling station', Dawn, 26 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA34427; 'With 149 martyred, Mastung is one of the deadliest terrorist attacks in Pakistan's history', Express Tribune, 16 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31578; 'Mastung bombing: 128 dead, over 200 injured in deadliest attack since APS, IS claims responsibility', Agence France Presse, 13 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31591; '132 die in Pakistan election violence ahead of Sharif return', Associated Press, 13 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31594

³⁸⁶ 'With 149 martyred, Mastung is one of the deadliest terrorist attacks in Pakistan's history', Express Tribune, 16 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31578; 'Mastung bombing: 128 dead, over 200 injured in deadliest attack since APS, IS claims responsibility', Agence France Presse, 13 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31591; '132 die in Pakistan election violence ahead of Sharif return', Associated Press, 13 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31594

³⁸⁷ 'A look at major attacks in Pakistan claimed by IS militants', Associated Press, 17 August 2018, CXBB8A1DA33842

2018, it also claimed responsibility for several attacks targeting Christians in Quetta (see the '[Christians](#)' section).

Islamic State cooperates with local jihadi groups and is operationally active across the country.³⁸⁸ Several groups have reportedly pledged allegiance to Islamic State, including Tehrik-e-Khilafat Pakistan and the Shahidullah Shahid Group of TTP.³⁸⁹ Some groups have used the Islamic State flag for their own purposes, despite not having official links with the organisation.³⁹⁰ Other groups have admitted to collaborating with Islamic State on specific attacks.³⁹¹ In 2019, Islamic State attacks included a suicide bombing in Quetta in which 21 people were killed, targeted-killings of Taliban commanders in Peshawar and Quetta, and one killing of a Shia scholar in Karachi.³⁹² Islamic State Khorasan was one of two groups who claimed responsibility for an attack on a mosque in Quetta in January 2020 that resulted in 15 deaths, for which the motive reportedly was 'a conflict between the Taliban and the IS Khorasan outfits'.³⁹³

Baloch Nationalists

Baloch nationalists remain active. Balochistan has for years been the location of a low-level insurgency by small separatist groups and nationalists who complain of discrimination and seek a fairer share of their province's resources and wealth.³⁹⁴ Security forces reportedly have committed extrajudicial killings in the fight against militant groups, and Baloch nationalists have also been 'disappeared' or arrested without cause or warrant.³⁹⁵ Enforced disappearances are reported in large numbers in Balochistan, where the practice is used against political activists and people considered sympathetic to separatist or nationalist movements in the province: Pakistan's Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances (COIED) has received 509 cases from Balochistan since March 2011.³⁹⁶ Voice for Baloch Missing Persons (VBMP), an organisation comprised of family members of 'missing

³⁸⁸ 'Error conglomerate: Da'ish forms nexus with other groups', Express Tribune, 14 November 2016, CX6A26A6E12810; 'Reaping the Whirlwind', Dawn, 16 November 2016, CX6A26A6E13369; 'From TTP to IS: Pakistan's terror landscape evolves', Dawn, 17 March 2015, CXBD6A0DE2949; 'Islamic State group flourishes and recruits in Pakistan', Associated Press, 13 November 2016, CX6A26A6E13680; 'Perpetuating sectarianism', Dawn, 20 November 2016, CX6A26A6E15726; 'ISIS = LeJ = terror in Quetta', Pakistan Today, 23 May 2018, CXBB8A1DA36419; 'An IS Caliphate in Pakistan?', Newsline, 28 June 2019, 20190701112429

³⁸⁹ 'Pakistan: Security situation', European Asylum Support Office, October 2020, pp.33-34, 20201102100212; 'Foreign Fighters and Sectarian Strikes: Islamic State Makes Gains in 'Af-Pak' Region', Terrorism Monitor, 15 December 2016, CX6A26A6E15218

³⁹⁰ 'EASO Country of Origin Information Report: Pakistan Security Situation', European Asylum Support Office, July 2016, p.22, CIS38A80121710

³⁹¹ 'Da'ish forms nexus with other groups', Express Tribune, 14 November 2016, CX6A26A6E12810; 'From TTP to IS: Pakistan's terror landscape evolves', Dawn, 16 November 2016, CX6A26A6E13369; 'Islamic State group flourishes and recruits in Pakistan', Associated Press, 13 November 2016, CX6A26A6E13680; 'Pakistani militants say they worked with Islamic State to attack police college', Reuters, 26 October 2016, CX6A26A6E11848; 'ISIS = LeJ = terror in Quetta', Pakistan Today, 23 May 2018, CXBB8A1DA36419

³⁹² '2019 Annual Security Assessment Report', Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, 09 January 2020, p.33, 20200122140652

³⁹³ 'Quarterly Security Report 2020 – 1st Quarter, 2020', Center for Research and Security Studies, 7 April 2020, p.5, 20200416144229; see also 'Pakistan Mosque Blast Kills 15, Including Senior Police Officer', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 10 January 2020, 20200113131831

³⁹⁴ 'Separatists claim bomb attack that killed 6 Pakistani troops', Associated Press, 10 May 2020, 20200511101330

³⁹⁵ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, pp.4 and 18, 20200312102402

³⁹⁶ 'Entrenching Impunity, Denying Redress: The Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances in Pakistan - A Briefing Paper', International Commission of Jurists, September 2020, 20200909161645

persons', has criticised the COIED for protecting the security agencies allegedly responsible for carrying out the enforced disappearances.³⁹⁷

Militants of the Balochi ethnic group of south-east Pakistan have long been involved in a violent separatist struggle. The three main militant groups – the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), the Baloch Republican Army (BRA) and the Baloch Liberation Front (BLF)³⁹⁸ – formed an alliance known as Baluch Raji Ajohi Sangar (BRAS, or 'Baluch National Freedom Movement') in June 2019.³⁹⁹ Balochistan is vast, and both journalists and Balochi nationalists claim that violence is under-reported due to a lack of media presence and restrictions on reporting.⁴⁰⁰ A 2011 ruling by the Balochistan High Court made it illegal for journalists to cover Baloch separatist or nationalist groups, although some continued to report because of pressure from those groups.⁴⁰¹ In 2017, after intelligence agencies asked journalists to stop publishing statements by Baloch separatist groups, insurgents warned newspapers and private television channels of adverse consequences for halting coverage of their activities, and launched a number of attacks against non-compliant media houses.⁴⁰² A five-year survey by the Center for Research and Security Studies reported that eight Baloch groups (including the BLA, BLF and BRA) claimed a total of 179 fatalities in terror attacks during the period from 2013–2018.⁴⁰³ In 2019, Baloch insurgent groups carried out 51 terrorist attacks across 16 districts of Balochistan.⁴⁰⁴ Incidents during 2020 – including a high-profile attack by the BLA on the Pakistan Stock Exchange in Karachi in late June – appear to indicate a resurgence of militant activity amongst Baloch secessionist groups.⁴⁰⁵

³⁹⁷ 'Entrenching Impunity, Denying Redress: The Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances in Pakistan - A Briefing Paper', International Commission of Jurists, September 2020, 20200909161645

³⁹⁸ 'The Balochistan Insurgency and the Threat to Chinese Interests in Pakistan', Jamestown Foundation, 15 February 2019, 20190227083816; 'CPEC and the Baloch Insurgency', The Diplomat, 8 February 2017, CXC90406612439; 'BLA's Suicide Squad: Majeed Fidaveen Brigade', Terrorism Monitor, 25 January 2019, 20190201123507

³⁹⁹ 'Baluch Raji Ajohi Sangar: Emergence of a New Baluch Separatist Alliance', Terrorism Monitor, vol.17, no.18, 20 September 2019, 20191001101313

⁴⁰⁰ 'European Asylum Support Office Pakistan Conference', Cyril Almedia, Assistant Editor of Dawn, 16-17 October 2017, p.20, CIS7B83941393, 'Black hole in Rising Sun?', Friday Times, 2 June 2017, CXC9040668557

⁴⁰¹ 'State of Human Rights in 2019', Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 30 April 2020, p.180, 20200603194632

⁴⁰² 'Pakistan rights group warns of shrinking press freedom in Balochistan', Express Tribune, 21 November 2017, CXC90406618030; 'Eight injured in attack on newspaper agency office in Turbat', Dawn, 27 October 2017, CXC90406616858

⁴⁰³ 'CRSS Annual Security Report Special Edition 2013-2018', Center for Research and Security Studies, March 2019, pp.35-36, 20190405163832

⁴⁰⁴ 'Militant Landscape of Balochistan', Muhammad Amir Rana, Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, 19 June 2020, p.4, 20200623101100

⁴⁰⁵ 'Pakistan Confronts Resurgent Baluch Ethno-Separatist Militancy', Animesh Roul, Terrorism Monitor - Jamestown Foundation, 28 July 2020, 20200729091447

Also see detailed data: 'Quarterly Security Report Q3, July-Sept 2020', Center for Research and Security Studies, 08 October 2020, pp.5-6, 20201012113549; 'Quarterly Security Report – Q2, April-June, 2020', Center for Research and Security Studies, 16 July 2020, pp.5-6, 20200720094602; 'Quarterly Security Report 2020 – 1st Quarter, 2020', Center for Research and Security Studies, 7 April 2020, p.5, 20200416144229

Complementary protection

Social infrastructure

Pakistan provides very limited social security benefits.⁴⁰⁶ The majority of the population is at risk of poverty, despite there being a number of social security programs including the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), and the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF).⁴⁰⁷ No statutory unemployment benefits are provided.⁴⁰⁸ Distribution of cash or rations to the most economically vulnerable people under schemes such as BISP and the Ehsaas Program has been criticised as insufficient to meet needs, limited in its implementation and susceptible to party-political favouritism.⁴⁰⁹ However, these schemes have benefited some of the most economically vulnerable people through emergency cash transfers, including those whose livelihoods have been adversely affected by lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴¹⁰

Educational opportunities are limited. Although school-based education is compulsory, it can be difficult to access in practice, especially for girls, due to a lack of schools that cater to girls or a lack of appropriate or willing chaperones to take girls to school.⁴¹¹ Only 51 per cent of girls are enrolled in school.⁴¹² Educational facilities are especially poor in the former FATA, where security considerations, lack of facilities and lack of qualified teachers have regularly disrupted education.⁴¹³ In the tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (including the former FATA), only half of all schools have access to drinking water and close to a third have no toilet.⁴¹⁴ In August 2019, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government announced an AUD 330 million fund to improve school infrastructure in the former FATA.⁴¹⁵ In response to the COVID-19 pandemic threat, all educational institutions were closed in mid

⁴⁰⁶ 'Social Security Programs Throughout the World: Asia and the Pacific, 2018', US Social Security Administration, 21 March 2019, pp.200-203, 20190403103626. See also: 'Making an impact: Analysis of Social Protection Programs in Pakistan', Hasan S. M., Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan, vol. 52, no.1, January 2015, p.204, CISEC96CF14513

⁴⁰⁷ 'BTI 2020 Country Report - Pakistan', Bertelsmann Stiftung, 29 April 2020, p.10, 20200430152048

⁴⁰⁸ 'Social Security Programs Throughout the World: Asia and the Pacific, 2018', US Social Security Administration, 21 March 2019, p.203, 20190403103626; 'Social Security Programs Throughout the World: Asia and the Pacific 2014 - Pakistan', Social Security Administration, 1 March 2015, p.177, CISEC96CF14511

⁴⁰⁹ 'Favouritism, political infighting mar Covid-19 relief operations in Sindh', Imtiaz Ali, Dawn, 20 April 2020, 20200421155839; 'PM directs for registration of formal, informal labourers', Pakistan Today, 1 May 2019, 20190501093725

⁴¹⁰ 'Immediate relief for Pakistan's pandemic-stricken poor', Amjad Zafar Khan, World Bank Group, 4 May 2020, 20200504153614; 'People appreciate extension in date for payments under Ehsaas programme', Associated Press of Pakistan, 12 October 2020, 20201013101555

⁴¹¹ 'Pakistan – Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2016', US Department of State, March 2017, p.46, OGD95BE926859. See, for example, 'No school for girls in Central Orakzai village', Tribal News Network, 19 October 2019, 20191021105150; 'Lack of facilities in North Waziristan schools hindering girls education', Tribal News Network, 8 October 2019, 20191009090901; 'Lack of high school impedes girls' education in Waii Khel village', Tribal News Network, 9 September 2019, 20190911091038

⁴¹² 'Human Rights & Democracy: The 2017 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report', UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 16 July 2018, p.46, CIS7B839411734

⁴¹³ 'Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum Fact Finding Mission Report Pakistan', Government of Austria, September 2015, p.42, CISEC96CF15310; 'Schools closure not a new phenomenon for Waziristan students', Khalida Niaz, Tribal News Network, 17 May 2020, 20200518101228

⁴¹⁴ '49% tribal districts schools have no access to drinking water: IMU report', Tribal News Network, 17 July 2019, 20190717083230; 'Absent teachers, missing facilities in schools of KP's new districts', Friday Times, 2 August 2019, 20190805100609

⁴¹⁵ 'Missing facilities to be provided at schools in tribal districts: Bangash', Tribal News Network, 15 August 2019, 20190816105935

March 2020 and reopened in September 2020.⁴¹⁶ The six-month closure of schools with minimal distance learning is likely to have exacerbated Pakistan's poor education indicators.⁴¹⁷

Health care is free for Pakistani citizens but public facilities are of a poor quality. Public spending on health is low.⁴¹⁸ Private facilities provide better care than public facilities, but are inaccessible to those without means to pay, while some charities and religious groups also provide healthcare within their own communities.⁴¹⁹ In tribal areas, the support of a clan may be necessary to access healthcare as referrals and treatment may be organised in local communities rather than by medical administrators or doctors.⁴²⁰ Family support is critical if hospitalisation is necessary because care is very basic.⁴²¹ Families were more likely to seek medical assistance for boys than for girls, despite them having equal access to government facilities.⁴²²

The quality and coverage of mental health services in Pakistan is poor. Exact statistics on mental health are not available, but community surveys indicate that about 10 per cent of urban men and a quarter of urban women in Pakistan suffer from mental health issues. Pakistan spends an average of four per cent of GDP on health, and less than half a per cent on mental health care, with one psychiatrist for every 500,000 people.⁴²³ Belief in possession by evil spirits and other stigma are major barriers to people seeking mental health services, as is the disproportionate lack of services in rural areas compared to urban areas.⁴²⁴

⁴¹⁶ 'Pakistan Seals Borders, Shuts Schools, Bans Public Events Over Coronavirus', Ayuz Gul, Voice of America, 13 March 2020, 20200317144513; 'Pakistani students back in school after more than six months', Syed Raza Hassan, Reuters, 16 September 2020, 20200917093014

⁴¹⁷ 'In the world's fifth-most-populous country, distance learning is a single television channel', Susannah George, The Washington Post, 19 May 2020, 20200522095112; 'Schools closure not a new phenomenon for Waziristan students', Khalida Niaz, Tribal News Network, 17 May 2020, 20200518101228

⁴¹⁸ 'BTI 2020 Country Report - Pakistan', Bertelsmann Stiftung, 29 April 2020, p.16, 20200430152048

⁴¹⁹ 'DFAT Country Information Report: Pakistan', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 February 2019, s.2.28, 20190220093409

⁴²⁰ 'Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum Fact Finding Mission Report Pakistan', Government of Austria, September 2015, p.42, CISEC96CF15310.

The UK Home Office's 'Country Policy and Information Note Pakistan: Medical and healthcare provisions' provides COI on specific medical conditions, including dental treatment, diabetes, eye conditions, heart disease and HIV/AIDS: 'Country Policy and Information Note - Pakistan: Medical and healthcare provisions', United Kingdom Home Office, September 2020, 20201012173511

⁴²¹ 'Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum Fact Finding Mission Report Pakistan', Government of Austria, September 2015, p.62, CISEC96CF15310

⁴²² 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.40, 20200312102402

⁴²³ 'Integration of Mental Health into Primary Healthcare: A challenge for primary care physicians', Tayyaba Rehman, Tahira Amjad, Fareed Aslam Minhas, Javeria Kamran, Noor Shah, Pakistan Armed Forces Medical Journal, vol.69 (Supplement 2), 17 May 2019, pp.S286-S287, 20190717131529

⁴²⁴ 'Pathways to care for people with mental health problems coming to a tertiary care hospital in Islamabad', Faisal Rashid Khan, Mahpara Mazhar, Maryam Ali and Faiza Bashir, ISRA Medical Journal, vol.11, January-February 2019, pp.27-28, 20190717132729; 'Integration of Mental Health into Primary Healthcare: A challenge for primary care physicians', Tayyaba Rehman, Tahira Amjad, Fareed Aslam Minhas, Javeria Kamran, Noor Shah, Pakistan Armed Forces Medical Journal, vol. 69 (Supplement 2), 17 May 2019, pp.S286-S287, 20190717131529. For more information on mental health issues in Pakistan, see 'Mental health crisis', Dawn, 6 January 2019, 20190717140152; 'Why Pakistan's poor seek mental health cure at shrine', BBC News, 29 September 2016, 20190717140418; 'The state of mental health care in Pakistan', The Lancet Psychiatry, vol.5, June 2018, p.471, 20190717141442

State protection

State protection in Pakistan has been limited by resource shortages, personal means and, in some cases, political will.⁴²⁵ Military and paramilitary operations have worked to reduce violence in the short-term by conducting military operations against terrorist groups; there has been a reliance on these operations, along with the trying of (suspected terrorist) civilians in military courts.⁴²⁶ There have also been occurrences of the military or police killing suspected terrorists in 'encounters' with them (often where police claim to have been under immediate threat), rather than presenting them to a court.⁴²⁷

Further information on state protection is available in the UK Home Office's *Country Policy and Information Note - Pakistan: Actors of protection*.⁴²⁸

Enforced disappearances occur across the country.⁴²⁹ The government-appointed Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances (COIED) received 6,372 missing persons cases between 2011 and October 2019, of which over 2,000 inquiries remained open at the end of 2019.⁴³⁰ Human rights organisations have reported that authorities disappeared or arrested Pashtun rights activists, and Sindhi and Baloch nationalists without cause or warrant.⁴³¹ The International Commission of Jurists has examined questions regarding the impartiality, competence and overall effectiveness of the COIED, and concluded in a September 2020 briefing paper that 'in its current form, the COIED has enabled and entrenched impunity for enforced disappearances instead of providing redress to victims'.⁴³² In recent years, there have been a number of 'short-term enforced disappearances' of persons seen to be critical of the state, who are interrogated and subsequently released without being charged with any offence.⁴³³ Journalists and bloggers critical of the government or military have been amongst the 'disappeared'.⁴³⁴

⁴²⁵ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, pp.11-13, 20200312102402; 'Human Rights Watch World Report 2018', Human Rights Watch, 18 January 2018, p.409, NGE0867A63

⁴²⁶ 'Judge, jury and executioner', Friday Times, 15 July 2016, CX6A26A6E6625; 'Pakistan's Military Courts: The Army's Newest Political Tool', Kahn, S., New Perspectives in Foreign Policy, 22 June 2016, CIS38A80121357; 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.15, 20200312102402

⁴²⁷ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, pp.18-19, 20200312102402; 'Punjab's 'encounters' with sectarianism', Herald, 21 October 2016 CX6A26A6E11595

⁴²⁸ 'Country Policy and Information Note - Pakistan: Actors of protection', UK Home Office, June 2020, 20200703111603

⁴²⁹ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, pp.3-5, 20200312102402

⁴³⁰ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.5, 20200312102402

⁴³¹ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.4, 20200312102402

⁴³² 'Entrenching Impunity, Denying Redress: The Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances in Pakistan - A Briefing Paper', International Commission of Jurists, September 2020, p.3, 20200909161645

⁴³³ 'Entrenching Impunity, Denying Redress: The Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances in Pakistan - A Briefing Paper', International Commission of Jurists, September 2020, p.4, 20200909161645; see also

⁴³⁴ See, for example: 'Matiullah Jan: Imran Khan's government comes under scrutiny over journalist's 'abduction'', Deutsche Welle, 22 July 2020, 20200723100558; 'No, Mr. Prime Minister, Pakistan Does Not Have a Free Press', Michael Kugelman, Foreign Policy, 23 July 2020, 20200724105523; 'PFJ condemns 'systematic war' against press', Saleem Shahid, Dawn, 28 September 2020, 20200929101705

Police

Police corruption, inefficiency and impunity can limit state protection.⁴³⁵ Arbitrary arrest, detention and 'disappearances' are prohibited, but still occur.⁴³⁶ Reports indicate that police and Rangers (see below) are underfunded, poorly trained, susceptible to corruption, and may fail to take reports or register false reports. Police and Rangers have staged armed exchanges (known as 'encounters') to justify the extra-judicial killing of suspects under pressure from local elites or higher commanders or due to a lack of evidence to convict suspect criminals.⁴³⁷

'Rangers', a paramilitary police in Sindh and Punjab provinces, capture or kill terrorists and members of criminal groups but may act arbitrarily.⁴³⁸ Rangers are different from regular police forces, however in Punjab province they can exercise similar powers targeted towards terrorism.⁴³⁹ Such powers were withdrawn from Rangers in Sindh province in April 2017.⁴⁴⁰ The equivalent forces in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan are the 'Frontier Corps'.⁴⁴¹

Judiciary

The judiciary is inefficient, has an extensive case backlog and is sometimes influenced in its decision-making by fear of extremists or protest mobs in terrorism or blasphemy cases. In September 2019, the Chief Justice reportedly 'regretted that the judiciary was often mocked about the staggering 1.9 million pending cases in its different tiers when it could not be totally held responsible for the backlog'.⁴⁴² Lower courts, where most cases are heard, have been criticised as being especially slow and corrupt.⁴⁴³ The provincial high courts and the Supreme Court are generally considered to be credible.⁴⁴⁴ According to observers, however, the judiciary may be subject to external influences such as, for example, threats of vigilante violence if an individual accused of blasphemy were exonerated.⁴⁴⁵ Pakistan's constitution and criminal code prevent double jeopardy.⁴⁴⁶

⁴³⁵ 'DFAT Country Information Report: Pakistan', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 February 2019, s.5.11, 20190220093409

⁴³⁶ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, pp.8, 10, 20200312102402

⁴³⁷ '"This Crooked System": Police abuse and reform in Pakistan', Human Rights Watch, 25 September 2016, CIS38A80122382; 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.24, 20200312102402

⁴³⁸ 'Punjab's 'encounters' with sectarianism', Herald, 21 October 2016, CX6A26A6E11595; 'Targeting Religious Minorities in Pakistan', Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, 19 October 2016, CX6A26A6E11361

⁴³⁹ 'Rangers get policing powers in Punjab', Dawn, 23 February 2017, CXC9040666883; 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.24, 20200312102402

⁴⁴⁰ 'Rangers withdrawn from deployments in Sindh following expiry of special powers', Geo TV, 16 April 2017, CXC9040666883

⁴⁴¹ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.1, 20200312102402

⁴⁴² 'State of Human Rights in 2019', Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 30 April 2020, p.207, 20200603194632

⁴⁴³ 'European Asylum Support Office Pakistan Conference', Shehryar Fazli, International Crisis Group, 16-17 October 2017, pp.36-37, CIS7B83941393

⁴⁴⁴ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.11, 20200312102402

⁴⁴⁵ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.11, 20200312102402

⁴⁴⁶ 'Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan', Islamic Republic of Pakistan, January 2015, s.13(a), CISEC96CF14604; 'Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898 as amended by Act 2 of 1997', Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 2007, s.403, CIS1ACBC92951

Security situation and levels of general violence

Pakistan has been subject to myriad security challenges. The security situation is complex and varies across the country, affected by domestic politics, ethnic conflicts, sectarian violence, and threats from insurgent, separatist and sectarian militant groups.⁴⁴⁷ Weak law enforcement institutions, poor infrastructure, stark sectarian divisions, and lack of economic opportunity contribute to a poor security environment.⁴⁴⁸ Acts of violence, and social and religious intolerance by militant organisations and other non-state actors have contributed to a culture of lawlessness.⁴⁴⁹

Military operations since 2007 have caused substantial displacement, but IDPs are returning home. Over five million people were displaced due to militant activity and government-led security operations during the period 2008-2015.⁴⁵⁰ Pakistan announced in September 2019 that over 320,000 families that had been displaced from the former FATA had returned to their original location.⁴⁵¹ During 2019, returns continued amid improved security conditions.⁴⁵² By mid-2020, approximately 16 888 families from North Waziristan and Khyber districts were yet to return to their homes.⁴⁵³ The World Food Programme states that the former FATA areas 'are among the most remote, least developed and food-insecure areas of Pakistan with insecurity compounding poor human development indicators'.⁴⁵⁴

Despite frequent violent incidents, there has been a trend of decreasing violence. There is a long-term trend of decreasing violence in Pakistan, and there was a substantial reduction in overall incidents in 2019.⁴⁵⁵ Militant attacks often target security personnel, although ordinary citizens caught up in incidents suffer the greater number of fatalities.⁴⁵⁶ The Pak Institute for Peace Studies reports that 229 terrorist attacks took place during 2019 (13 per cent fewer than during the previous year), accompanied by a 40 per cent decrease in the number of lives lost to terrorist attacks.⁴⁵⁷ The Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) reported a 31 per cent decrease in recorded fatalities related to terrorism and counter-terror activities in 2019, with 1,444 casualties of terror attacks and counter-terror operations (679 fatalities and 765 persons injured).⁴⁵⁸ In the first quarter of 2020, the

⁴⁴⁷ 'DFAT Country Report: Pakistan', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 February 2019, ss.2.66-2.29, 20190220093409; see also detailed reporting in 'Pakistan: Security situation', European Asylum Support Office, October 2020, 20201102100212

⁴⁴⁸ 'DFAT Country Report: Pakistan', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 February 2019, s.2.72, 20190220093409

⁴⁴⁹ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.2, 20200312102402

⁴⁵⁰ 'State of Human Rights in 2018', Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 15 April 2019, p.243, 20190416071739

⁴⁵¹ '339,701 TDPs Families Repatriated To Native Hometowns In Erstwhile Fata', Urdu Point, 9 October 2019, 20191015111832

⁴⁵² 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.28, 20200312102402

⁴⁵³ 'Comprehensive Food Security and Livelihood Assessment (CFSLA) 2020 – Merged Districts and Tribal Sub-Divisions, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa', World Food Programme, August 2020, p.2, 20201016132449

⁴⁵⁴ 'Comprehensive Food Security and Livelihood Assessment (CFSLA) 2020 – Merged Districts and Tribal Sub-Divisions, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa', World Food Programme, August 2020, p.2, 20201016132449

⁴⁵⁵ 'CRSS Annual Security Report Special Edition 2013-2018', Center for Research and Security Studies, March 2019, 20190405163832; '2019 Annual Security Assessment Report', Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, 9 January 2020, p.15, 20200122140652

⁴⁵⁶ 'CRSS Annual Security Report 2019', Mohammad Nafees, Centre for Research and Security Studies, 28 January 2020, pp.8-9, 20200130161732

⁴⁵⁷ 'Pakistan Security Report 2019', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 5 January 2020, p.17, 20200114102703

⁴⁵⁸ 'CRSS Annual Security Report 2019', Mohammad Nafees, Centre for Research and Security Studies, 28 January 2020, pp.5-6, 20200130161732

CRSS recorded 224 violence-related casualties (140 fatalities and 84 persons injured).⁴⁵⁹ During the second quarter, there were 185 recorded casualties of violence (139 fatalities and 46 injuries); Khyber Pukhtunkhwa had the highest number of casualties, followed by Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab, and Islamabad.⁴⁶⁰ There were 295 recorded casualties during the most recent quarter (132 fatalities and 162 persons injured), with Khyber Pukhtunkhwa and Balochistan the worst affected provinces.⁴⁶¹

Since 2014, military and judicial efforts to reduce terrorism have led to dramatically fewer attacks. The National Action Plan (NAP) was formed as a 20-point plan to combat terrorism, after a December 2014 terrorist attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar killed more than 140 people, including 130 schoolchildren.⁴⁶² The NAP's points of focus included the formation of a special anti-terrorism force and military courts, anti-terror financing measures, counter-extremism measures, rehabilitation of people displaced by military operations, disruption of militant communication networks, and prosecution of sectarian terrorism.⁴⁶³ Reporting in early 2020, the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies described Pakistan's counter terrorism efforts as 'multi-dimensional and comprehensive' and 'going in the right direction'.⁴⁶⁴ In its report on 2019, the Pak Institute for Peace Studies criticised the effectiveness of implementation of the NAP, but also observed that some counter-extremism actions taken under the NAP (and ongoing campaigns by the security forces and police counter terrorism departments) appear to have helped sustain the trend of declining numbers of terrorist attacks and related casualties.⁴⁶⁵

Torture and arbitrary deprivation of life

Torture by state authorities occurs in Pakistan. The constitution prohibits torture but the Pakistan penal code does not specifically prohibit it.⁴⁶⁶ Pakistani NGOs have alleged that torture practices are 'socio-culturally' acceptable and part of police culture, and that prisoners have been threatened with further torture if they do not repeat confessions to a magistrate.⁴⁶⁷ During 2019, reports of custodial torture emerged in all provinces.⁴⁶⁸ The government or its agents reportedly have committed arbitrary or unlawful killings, including through physical abuse of persons in custody.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁵⁹ 'Quarterly Security Report 2020 – 1st Quarter, 2020', Center for Research and Security Studies, 7 April 2020, p.1, 20200416144229

⁴⁶⁰ 'Quarterly Security Report – Q2, April-June, 2020', Center for Research and Security Studies, 16 July 2020, p.1, 20200720094602

⁴⁶¹ 'Quarterly Security Report Q3, July-Sept 2020', Center for Research and Security Studies, 8 October 2020, p.1, 20201012113549

⁴⁶² '2019 Annual Security Assessment Report', Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, 9 January 2020, p.56, 20200122140652

⁴⁶³ '2019 Annual Security Assessment Report', Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, 9 January 2020, p.56, 20200122140652

⁴⁶⁴ '2019 Annual Security Assessment Report', Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, 9 January 2020, pp.56 and 58, 20200122140652

⁴⁶⁵ 'Pakistan Security Report 2019', Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 5 January 2020, p.21, 20200114102703

⁴⁶⁶ 'DFAT Country Information Report: Pakistan', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 February 2019, s.4.17, 20190220093409; 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.5, 20200312102402; 'Pakistan: Security situation', European Asylum Support Office, October 2020, p.64, 20201102100212

⁴⁶⁷ 'Pakistan: Alternative Report to the Human Rights Committee', Justice Project Pakistan, World Organisation Against Torture, Reprieve, June 2017, p.3, CISED50AD5021

⁴⁶⁸ 'State of Human Rights in 2019', Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 30 April 2020, p.9, 20200603194632 (also see pp.24-25, 81, 124-125, 171-173)

⁴⁶⁹ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, pp.2-3 and 5-6, 20200312102402

Pakistan is a prolific user of the death penalty. A six-year moratorium on the death penalty was lifted in 2014,⁴⁷⁰ and more than 500 people have since been executed in Pakistan.⁴⁷¹ Crimes punishable by death include terrorism-related offences, murder, rape, drug trafficking, treason and blasphemy.⁴⁷² Of an estimated 5,000 people awaiting execution,⁴⁷³ 40 people were on death row on blasphemy charges at the end of 2019.⁴⁷⁴

People trafficking

Pakistan is one of the world's worst nations for people trafficking and modern slavery. There are an estimated 3 million victims of people trafficking in Pakistan, and it is ranked, globally, as the eighth worst in the world for this crime.⁴⁷⁵ Brick kilns, carpet weaving, coal mining and agriculture, as well as domestic labour (including child labour) are the worst offending industries.⁴⁷⁶ Victims of people smuggling in Pakistan may be charged with breaching domestic laws, and women smuggled for the purposes of the sex trade may be charged under religious laws, including those related to adultery.⁴⁷⁷ Conviction rates against traffickers are notoriously low.⁴⁷⁸ In 2019, Pakistan arrested numerous Chinese nationals accused of marrying Pakistani women in order to force them into sex work in China, however, media reporting indicated that officials from Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency were pressured by the government to halt their work on the case.⁴⁷⁹ In June 2020, the US Department of State reported that the Pakistan government had significantly decreased investigations and prosecutions of sex traffickers, that law enforcement efforts against labour trafficking were inadequate compared to the scale of the problem, and that official complicity in trafficking crimes remained a significant problem.⁴⁸⁰ Pakistan was downgraded to the Tier 2 Watch List, in part because of government failure to take action in response to credible reports of official complicity in trafficking and lack of adequate resources for victim care.⁴⁸¹

Kidnap for ransom

The frequency of terrorist groups kidnapping to procure ransoms has significantly reduced. Terrorism financing through kidnapping declined since government operations in FATA reduced militant activity there as part of Operation *Zarb-e-Azb* between about 2014 and 2016, however a 2017 report suggested that the end of that operation saw kidnappings re-emerge in large cities, including

⁴⁷⁰ 'Every 8th person executed in the world is Pakistani – report', Dawn, 5 October 2018, CXBB8A1DA36395; 'Pakistan to partially rescind capital punishment', Pakistan Today, 20 June 2019, 20190621100537; 'World Report 2020. Events of 2019', Human Rights Watch, 14 January 2020, p.449, 20200115082903

⁴⁷¹ 'Death Penalty Database: Pakistan', Cornell Center on the Death Penalty Worldwide, n.d., accessed 23 October 2019, 20191023162133

⁴⁷² 'Pakistan: Restore Death Penalty Moratorium', Human Rights Watch, 16 September 2014, CXC9040667043

⁴⁷³ 'Death Penalty Database: Pakistan', Cornell Center on the Death Penalty Worldwide, n.d., accessed 23 October 2019, 20191023162133

⁴⁷⁴ 'World Report 2020. Events of 2019', Human Rights Watch, 14 January 2020, p.446, 20200115082903

⁴⁷⁵ 'Five Facts About Human Trafficking in Pakistan', Borgen Project, 16 March 2019, 20190718092016

⁴⁷⁶ 'Addressing Pakistan's modern slavery problem', Dawn, 16 October 2017, CXC90406615630; 'Five Facts About Human Trafficking in Pakistan', Borgen Project, 16 March 2019, 20190718092016

⁴⁷⁷ 'Human trafficking a systemic failure of the State and its institutions of justice', Asian Human Rights Commission submission to United Nations, 6 June 2016, CX6A26A6E16561

⁴⁷⁸ 'Low conviction rate cited as reason for human smuggling', Dawn, 20 November 2017, CXC90406617849;

'Trafficking in Persons Report 2019', US Department of State, 20 June 2019, pp.365-366, 20190621103235

⁴⁷⁹ 'An investigation found Pakistan Christian women being trafficked to China as brides. Then officials shut it down.', Miriam Berger, The Washington Post, 6 December 2019, 20191206150403

⁴⁸⁰ 'Trafficking in Persons Report 2019', US Department of State, 20 June 2019, p.336, 20190621103235; 'Five Facts About Human Trafficking in Pakistan', Borgen Project, 16 March 2019, 20190718092016

⁴⁸¹ 'Trafficking in Persons Report 2020', United States Department of State, 25 June 2020, 20200703092615

Karachi, which has long been associated with this type of crime.⁴⁸² The Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies recorded five kidnappings in 2018 and two in 2019, all in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.⁴⁸³

Prison conditions

Prisons in Pakistan are under-resourced and overcrowded.⁴⁸⁴ Prison conditions were often extremely poor, with inadequate access to food, fresh water and medical care. Sanitation, lighting and ventilation were also inadequate in many facilities. Conditions for members of religious minorities may be worse and inmates accused of blasphemy might be kept in solitary confinement for extended periods, purportedly for their own protection. Authorities do not allow independent prison observers, especially in areas affected by violence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.⁴⁸⁵ Overcrowding is a serious problem, with prisons at approximately 130 per cent of capacity.⁴⁸⁶ Pre-trial detainees or remand prisoners comprise over 60 per cent the total prison population.⁴⁸⁷ Foreign prisoners may remain in detention at the end of their sentence if they cannot pay for their own deportation to their home countries.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸² 'Pakistan Security Assessment 2017', Journal for Conflict and Security Studies, Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, pp.64-65, CIS7B83941229

⁴⁸³ 'Pakistan's Annual Security Assessment 2018', Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, 19 April 2019, 20190617153632; '2019 Annual Security Assessment Report', Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, 9 January 2020, p.29, 20200122140652. Data varies somewhat between sources, with the Fata Research Centre reporting four kidnapping incidents in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tribal Districts in 2019: 'Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tribal Districts Annual Security Report 2019', Irfan U Din and Mansur Khan Mahsud, Fata Research Centre, 13 January 2020, p.13, 20200122123739

⁴⁸⁴ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.6-7, 20200312102402; 'DFAT Country Information Report: Pakistan', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 February 2019, s.4.15, 20190220093409

⁴⁸⁵ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, pp.6-7, 20200312102402

⁴⁸⁶ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.6, 20200312102402

⁴⁸⁷ 'State of Human Rights in 2019', Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 30 April 2020, p.9, 20200603194632; 'Pakistan: Poor Conditions Rife in Women's Prisons', Human Rights Watch, 7 September 2020, 20200908101113

⁴⁸⁸ 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 - Pakistan', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.9, 20200312102402