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Faces of Oppression: Human Rights Violations in Balochistan

Conference Report

March 2016

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World Report 2013: Pakistan

Events of 2012

Pakistan had a turbulent year in 2012, with the judicial ouster of Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani, attacks on civilians by militant groups, growing electricity shortages, rising food and fuel prices, and continuing political dominance of the military, which operates with almost complete impunity. Religious minorities continued to face insecurity and persecution as the government failed to provide protection to those threatened or to hold extremists accountable. Islamist militant groups continued to target and kill Shia Muslims—particularly from the Hazara community—with impunity.

In September, the southwestern province of Balochistan experienced massive flooding for the third year running, displacing some 700,000 people.

Ongoing rights concerns included the breakdown of law enforcement in the face of terror attacks, continuing abuses across Balochistan, ongoing torture and ill-treatment of criminal suspects, and unresolved enforced disappearances of terrorism suspects and opponents of the military. Abuses by Pakistani police, including extrajudicial killings, also continued to be reported throughout the country in 2012.

Relations between Pakistan and the United States —Pakistan’s most significant ally and its largest donor of development and military aid—remained tense for much of the year due to the “Salala Attack” in November 2011, in which US forces killed 24 Pakistani soldiers during a military operation near the Afghan border.

Sectarian Attacks

In 2012, at least 325 members of the Shia Muslim population were killed in targeted attacks that took place across Pakistan. In Balochistan province, over 100 were killed, most of them from the Hazara community. On August 16, gunmen ambushed four buses passing through the Babusar Top area of Mansehra district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The attackers forced all the passengers to disembark, checked their national identity cards, and summarily executed 22 travelers whom they identified as belonging to the Shia community. A spokesman for the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, the Pakistani Taliban, claimed responsibility. On August 30, gunmen shot dead Zulfiqar Naqvi, a Shia judge, in Quetta, Balochistan’s capital. In two separate attacks on September 1, 2012, gunmen attacked and killed eight Hazara Shia in Quetta.

Sunni militant groups, including those with known links to the Pakistani military, its intelligence agencies, and affiliated paramilitaries—such as the ostensibly banned Lashkar-e Jhangvi—operated with widespread impunity across Pakistan, as law enforcement officials effectively turned a blind eye to attacks.

Students and teachers were regularly attacked by militant groups. On October 9, 2012, gunmen shot Malala Yousafzai, a 15-year-old student and outspoken advocate for children’s right to education, in the head and neck leaving her in critical condition. The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan claimed responsibility for the attack in the Swat Valley. The attack on Yousafzai garnered condemnation from across the political spectrum in Pakistan. Militant Islamist groups also attacked more than 100 schools, and rebuilding is slow.

Religious Minorities and Women

Abuses under the country’s abusive blasphemy law continued as dozens were charged in 2012 and at least 16 people remained on death row for blasphemy, while another 20 served life sentences.

Aasia Bibi, a Christian from Punjab province, who in 2010 became the first woman in the country's history to be sentenced to death for blasphemy, continued to languish in prison. In July 2012, police arrested a man who appeared to suffer from a mental disability for allegedly burning the Quran. A mob organized by local clerics demanded that the man be handed to them, attacked the police station, pulled the victim out, and burned him alive.

On August 17, Islamabad police took into custody Rimsha Masih, a 14-year-old Christian girl from a poor Islamabad suburb with a "significantly lower mental age," who was accused of burning pages filled with Quranic passages. Police had to beat back a mob demanding that it be handed the girl so that it could kill her. Threats against the local Christian community forced some 400 families to flee their homes. But Islamist groups who support the blasphemy law took a significantly different position, demanding a full investigation. The accuser, local cleric Khalid Chishti, was himself arrested for fabricating evidence in order to rid the neighbourhood of Christians. On September 23, police officials stated they had found no evidence against Rimsha Masih, who was released and given state protection at an undisclosed location.

Members of the Ahmadi religious community continued to be a major target for blasphemy prosecutions and subjected to specific anti-Ahmadi laws across Pakistan. They faced increasing social discrimination as militant groups used provisions of the law to prevent Ahmadis from "posing as Muslims," forced the demolition of Ahmadi mosques in Lahore, barred Ahmadis from using their mosques in Rawalpindi, and vandalized Ahmadi graves across Punjab province. In most instances, Punjab provincial officials supported militants' demands instead of protecting Ahmadis and their mosques and graveyards.

Violence against women and girls—including rape, "honor" killings, acid attacks, domestic violence, and forced marriage—remained a serious problem. Intimidation and threats against women and girls out in public increased in major cities in 2012.

Freedom of Expression

At least eight journalists were killed in Pakistan during the year, including four in May alone. On May 9 and 10 respectively, Tariq Kamal and Aurangzeb Tunio were killed. On May 18, the bullet-riddled body of *Express News* correspondent Razzaq Gul was found dumped in a deserted area near Turbat in Balochistan province. Security agencies are suspected of involvement in his killing. On May 28, Abdul Qadir Hajizai was shot dead in Balochistan by armed men on a motorbike. The Baloch Liberation Front reportedly claimed responsibility for his killing. No one was held accountable in any of these cases.

A climate of fear impeded media coverage of the state security forces and militant groups. Journalists rarely reported on human rights abuses by the military in counterterrorism operations, and the Taliban and other armed groups regularly threatened media outlets over their coverage.

In June, gunmen shot at the building of Aaj TV, a private Urdu-language news channel, wounding two

guards. The Pakistani Taliban claimed responsibility and threatened such attacks would continue if media outlets did not reflect the Taliban's priorities and positions in coverage. However, as has been the case since the return to civilian rule in 2008, journalists vocally critical of the government experienced less interference from elected officials than in previous years.

Judicial Activism and Independence

Pakistan's judiciary continued to assert its independence from the government in 2012. In December 2011, the judiciary began controversial hearings into the so-called "Memogate" scandal investigating Husain Haqqani, Pakistan's former ambassador to the US on charges that he attempted to conspire against Pakistan's military in collusion with the US. The court notably failed to investigate allegations from the same source that the head of the country's dreaded Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) had conspired to oust the elected government.

In June, the Supreme Court controversially fired Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani for refusing to sign a letter to Switzerland asking for an investigation into corruption allegations against President Asif Zardari.

Despite the adoption of a National Judicial Policy in 2009, access to justice remained abysmal and courts remained rife with corruption and incompetence. Case backlogs remain huge at all levels. The judiciary's use of *suo motu* proceedings—acting on its own motions—was considered so excessive that the International Commission of Jurists raised concerns about it.

While the Supreme Court was active in raising the issue of government abuses in Balochistan, no high-level military officials were held accountable for them. As has been the case since Pakistan's independent judiciary was restored to office in 2009, Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry and the provincial high courts muzzled media criticism of the judiciary in 2012 through threats of contempt of court proceedings. In October, both the Lahore and Islamabad high courts effectively barred media from criticizing the judiciary or giving airtime to critics in the aftermath of a multi-million dollar corruption scandal involving Arsalan Iftikhar, the son of the Supreme Court chief justice.

Balochistan

The human rights crisis continued to worsen in the mineral-rich province of Balochistan. Human Rights Watch recorded continued enforced disappearances and killings of suspected Baloch militants and opposition activists by the military, intelligence agencies, and the paramilitary Frontier Corps. Baloch nationalists and other militant groups also stepped up attacks on non-Baloch civilians. Pakistan's military continued to publicly resist government reconciliation efforts and attempts to locate ethnic Baloch who had been subject to "disappearances." Pakistan's government appeared powerless to rein in the military's abuses. As a result, large numbers of Hazara community members sought asylum abroad.

Militant Attacks and Counterterrorism

Suicide bombings, armed attacks, and killings by the Taliban, al Qaeda, and their affiliates continued in 2012, targeting politicians, journalists, religious minorities, and government security personnel. Many of these attacks were claimed by groups such as the Haqqani network, the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, and other al Qaeda affiliates.

Security forces routinely violated basic rights in the course of counterterrorism operations. Suspects were frequently detained without charge or were convicted without a fair trial. Thousands of suspected members of al Qaeda, the Taliban, and other armed groups—who were rounded up in a nationwide crackdown that began in 2009 in Swat and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas—remained in illegal military detention; few were prosecuted or produced before the courts. The army continued to deny lawyers, relatives, independent monitors, and humanitarian agency staff access to persons detained during military operations. Terrorism suspects, particularly in the Swat Valley, reportedly died inexplicably of “natural causes.” However, lack of access to the detainees made independent verification of the cause of death impossible.

Aerial drone strikes by the US on suspected members of al Qaeda and the Taliban in northern Pakistan continued in 2012, with some 44 strikes taking place through early November. As in previous years, these strikes were often accompanied by claims from Pakistanis of large numbers of civilian casualties, although lack of access to the conflict areas largely prevented independent verification.

Human Rights Defenders

Community-based human rights activists faced increased threats. In June, Asma Jahangir, the country’s most prominent human rights defender, alleged that she had discovered that an assassination attempt was being planned against her from “the highest levels of the security establishment.” In the preceding months, Jahangir had been at odds with the Pakistani military in a series of high-profile standoffs, including over the military’s policies in Balochistan and elsewhere.

Key International Actors

The US remained the largest donor of development and military aid to Pakistan, but relations remained abysmal through much of 2012. The US rejected apologizing for the “Salala Attack,” prompting Pakistan to ban the movement of NATO supplies to Afghanistan through Pakistan. The routes were only reopened in July after the US offered a formulation of regret that Pakistan found acceptable. Major areas of bilateral tension remained, particularly Pakistan’s alleged persistent support for the Haqqani network, a militant group that US officials accused of targeting US troops in Afghanistan. In September, the US declared the Haqqani network a terrorist body.

Pakistan and China continued to deepen extensive economic and political ties. Historically tense relations between Pakistan and nuclear rival India showed marked improvement in 2012. In September, the two countries signed landmark trade and travel agreements.

The United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID) visited Pakistan in September and reported in preliminary findings that there is “acknowledgment that enforced disappearances have occurred and still occur in the country.”

Courtesy: [HRW](#)



Pakistan: Abuses, Impunity Erode Rights

Attacks on Religious Minorities Surge, Judiciary Takes Political Decisions

(Islamabad) – [Pakistan](#)’s government has failed to act against abuses by the security and intelligence agencies, which continued to allow extremist groups to attack religious minorities, Human Rights Watch said today in its [World Report 2013](#). The authorities did little to address attacks against journalists and human rights defenders, and committed serious abuses in counter-terrorism operations.

In its 665-page report, Human Rights Watch assessed progress on human rights during the past year in more than 90 countries, including an analysis of the aftermath of the Arab Spring.

“Pakistan’s human rights crisis worsened markedly in 2012 with religious minorities bearing the brunt of killings and repression,” said [Ali Dayan Hasan](#), Pakistan director at Human Rights Watch. “While the military continued to perpetrate abuses with impunity in Balochistan and beyond, Sunni extremists killed hundreds of Shia Muslims and the Taliban attacked schools, students, and teachers.”

Human Rights Watch documented a sharp escalation in persecution of religious minorities in 2012. At least eight journalists were killed in Pakistan in 2012, including four in May alone. No one was held accountable in any of these cases. Media coverage of alleged abuses by state security forces and militant groups was impeded by a climate of fear, Human Rights Watch said. Journalists rarely

reported on human rights abuses by the military in counterterrorism operations, and the Taliban and other armed groups regularly threatened media outlets over their coverage. Human Rights Watch recorded continued enforced disappearances and killings of suspected Baloch nationalists and militants by the military and affiliated agencies. Baloch nationalists and other militant groups also stepped up attacks on non-Baloch civilians.

In 2012, well over 400 members of the Shia Muslim population were killed in targeted attacks that took place across Pakistan. In Balochistan province over 125 were killed, most of them from the Hazara community.

The government was unable or unwilling to break the links between Pakistan's military and intelligence agencies with extremist groups. Sunni militant groups, including those with known links to the Pakistani military, its intelligence agencies, and affiliated paramilitaries, such as the ostensibly banned Lashkar-e Jhangvi, operated openly across Pakistan, as law enforcement officials turned a blind eye to attacks. The government took no significant action to protect those under threat or to hold extremists accountable.

Suicide bombings, armed attacks, and killings by the Taliban, al Qaeda, and their affiliates continued in 2012, targeting politicians, journalists, religious minorities, and government security personnel. Militant Islamist groups attacked more than 100 schools in 2012, including students, teachers, and human rights advocates, Human Rights Watch said. The Taliban's nearly fatal attack on Malala Yousafzai, a 15-year-old girl who had been an outspoken advocate for children's right to education, garnered condemnation from across the world and the political spectrum in Pakistan.

The deadly attacks on minority groups show no sign of letting up in 2013, Human Rights Watch said. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi claimed responsibility for a January 10, 2013 double-suicide bombing in Quetta, Balochistan that killed 92 Hazara and wounded 120 more. Federal rule was imposed in the province after a four day sit-in by protesters who refused to bury the dead until government action was taken.

"Pakistan's Shia community suffered bloody attacks in 2012, and then 2013 began with the single worst atrocity against the Hazara in Pakistan's history," Hasan said. "The government needs to show some backbone and act urgently to protect vulnerable communities such as the Hazara, or risk appearing indifferent or even complicit in the mass killing of its own citizens."

Human Rights Watch urged Pakistan's federal government and relevant provincial governments to promptly apprehend and prosecute those responsible for attacks on the Shia and others at risk. The government should direct civilian agencies and the military responsible for security to actively protect those facing attack from extremist groups, and to address the growing perception, particularly in Balochistan and Pakistan's tribal areas, that state authorities look the other way when Shia are attacked. It should increase the number of security personnel in Shia majority areas and enclaves at high risk of attack, particularly the Hazara community in Quetta. The government should also actively investigate allegations of collusion between Sunni militant groups, military

intelligence, and paramilitary forces, and hold accountable personnel found to be involved in criminal acts.

Blasphemy law convictions

Abuses under the country's blasphemy law continued as dozens were charged in 2012. At least 16 people remained on death row and 20 were serving life sentences for blasphemy. Members of the Ahmadi religious community have been major targets for blasphemy prosecutions and subjected to specific anti-Ahmadi laws. Militant groups forced the demolition or closure of Ahmadi mosques and vandalized Ahmadi graves across Punjab province.

"Pakistan's religious minorities endured another year of persecution, insecurity, and fear," Hasan said. "The government's failure to reform or repeal the blasphemy law provides extremists with legal tools to impose bigotry and perpetrate abuse."

Counterterror abuses

State security forces routinely violated basic rights in the course of counterterrorism operations. Thousands of alleged Taliban members, rounded up in a nationwide crackdown that began in 2009 in Swat and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), remained in military detention without charge or trial.

"The Pakistani military's abusive counterterrorism practices are as counterproductive as they are unlawful," Hasan said. "By committing abuses against suspected militants in Balochistan and Taliban in FATA, the military is fueling the militancy it is fighting."

Judicial Overreach

In June 2012 Pakistan's independent Supreme Court removed Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani from office for refusing to bring criminal charges against the president, an act widely dubbed a "judicial coup." The judiciary muzzled media criticism of itself in 2012 through threats of contempt of court proceedings. In October the high courts in Islamabad and Lahore issued orders to stop the broadcast of television programs critical of the judiciary. This bar on the media came in the aftermath of a multi-million dollar corruption scandal involving Arsalan Iftikhar, the son of the Supreme Court chief justice.

The Supreme Court continued to take apparently political actions in January 2013 by admitting for hearing a malicious petition filed against Sherry Rehman, Pakistan's ambassador to the United States, because of her 2010 campaign to reform the country's blasphemy law.

"Pakistan's Supreme Court exercised its new-found independence by taking transparent political decisions," Hasan said. "Its actions risk a backlash that could allow future governments to limit its independence in the name of good governance."

Relations between Pakistan and the United States remained abysmal through much of 2012 over

the 2011 “Salala attack.” The US carried out about 48 aerial drone strikes during 2012 on suspected al Qaeda and Taliban members near Pakistan’s border with Afghanistan. These strikes resulted in claims of large numbers of civilian casualties, but lack of access to the conflict areas has prevented independent verification.

“CIA drone strikes continued to generate controversy, outrage, and civilian casualties in Pakistan,” Hasan said. “So long as the US refuses public accountability for CIA drone strikes, the agency should not be conducting them at all.”

Courtesy: [HRW](#)



Statement of Ali Dayan Hasan Pakistan Director, Human Rights Watch

February 8, 2012

Click [here](#) to read the report.



“We can Torture, Kill, or Keep You

for Years”

Enforced Disappearances by Pakistan Security Forces in Balochistan.

Click [here](#) to read the report.



Pakistan: Upsurge in Killings in Balochistan

Hold Military, Paramilitary Troops Accountable for Abuse

Click [here](#) to read full report.

Courtesy: [HRW](#)



“Their Future is at Stake”

Attacks on Teachers and Schools in Pakistan’s Balochistan Province

[HRW-2010-Their Future is at Stake](#)

Courtesy: [HRW](#)



Balochistan: Giving the people a chance

Report of an HRCP fact-finding mission

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan

(June 22-25, 2013)

[HRCP-2013-Balochistan giving the people a chance](#)

Courtesy: [HRCP](#)

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



Pakistan 2016/2017

PAKISTAN 2016/2017

Armed groups continued to carry out targeted attacks against civilians, including government employees, which resulted in hundreds of casualties. Security forces, particularly paramilitary Rangers in Karachi, committed human rights violations with almost total impunity. Executions continued, often after unfair trials. State and non-state actors discriminated against religious minorities. Despite a new law in Punjab to protect women from violence, so-called “honour” crimes continued to be reported. Human rights defenders and media workers experienced threats, harassment and abuse from security forces and armed groups. Minorities continued to face discrimination across a range of economic and social rights. Access to quality health care, particularly for poor and rural women, remained limited.

Background

Operation Zarb-e-Azb, the Pakistan military’s offensive against non-state armed groups that started in June 2014, continued in North Waziristan and Khyber tribal agency. Significant levels of armed conflict and political violence continued, in particular in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Balochistan and Sindh.

The National Commission for Human Rights, set up in May 2015, continued to lack sufficient staff and other resources, despite its budget finally being approved by Parliament. Concerns remained about the Commission’s limited mandate with regard to investigation of cases of human rights violations allegedly committed by state agencies.

In late September, cross-border tension between Pakistan and India increased, with both states accusing the other of human rights violations at the UN Human Rights Council. There were repeated violations by both sides of the 2003 ceasefire, with exchange of fire across the Line of Control. India claimed to have carried out “surgical strikes” on militants in Pakistani-administered Azad Kashmir,

which Pakistan denied.

Abuses by armed groups

Armed groups continued to carry out attacks, despite a government-mandated National Action Plan to counter terrorism. The Plan was implemented in the wake of a Taliban attack on an army school in Peshawar in December 2014 that killed at least 149 people, mostly children.

On 20 January, armed attackers killed at least 30 people, mostly students and teachers, in Bacha Khan University, Charsadda, northwest Pakistan. Responsibility was claimed by a Pakistani Taliban commander who allegedly planned the 2014 army school attack in Peshawar, but this claim was contested.¹ The army subsequently claimed to have apprehended five “facilitators” of the attack.

On 16 March, a bomb attack on a bus carrying government employees in Peshawar killed at least 15 people and severely injured 25.

On 8 August, a suicide bomb attack killed at least 63 people, mostly lawyers, and wounded more than 50 others at the Civil Hospital in Quetta, south-west Pakistan. Mourners had gathered to accompany the body of Bilal Anwar Kasi, President of the Balochistan Bar Association, who had been killed by gunmen earlier that day.

Police and security forces

Security forces including the Rangers, a paramilitary force under the command of the Pakistan Army, perpetrated human rights violations such as arbitrary arrests, torture and other ill-treatment, and extrajudicial executions. Security laws and practices, and the absence of any independent mechanisms to investigate the security forces and hold them accountable, allowed government forces to commit such violations with near-total impunity. Victims included members of political parties, in particular the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), and human rights defenders.

On 1 May, plainclothes police arrested Aftab Ahmed, a senior MQM member. On 3 May, after he was moved to Rangers custody, news of his death emerged, alongside photographs apparently showing wounds sustained during torture.⁴ The Director-General of the Rangers for Sindh publicly acknowledged that Aftab Ahmed had been tortured in custody, but denied that his forces were responsible for the death. According to media reports, five Rangers soldiers were suspended after an investigation ordered by the Chief of Army Staff, but no further information was made public.

By the end of the year little progress had been made in the case of Dr Asim Hussain, a senior member of the Pakistan People’s Party and a former federal minister who was allegedly ill-treated and denied proper medical attention while in the custody of the Rangers in 2015. Asim Hussain had been arrested on charges including for “being involved in offences relating to misappropriation of funds and for enhancing, supporting terrorism activities, and other criminal links/activities by using authority punishable under the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997”.

Security forces detained several political activists without trial during the year. Some of them

continued to be at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

According to information published in August by the Pakistan Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances, 1,401 out of more than 3,000 cases of disappearance had not yet been investigated by the Commission.

Death penalty

Since the December 2014 lifting of a six-year moratorium on executions, more than 400 have been carried out. Some of those executed were juveniles at the time of the offence or had a mental disability.

Both civil and military courts imposed death sentences, in many cases after unfair trials. Contrary to international law, the 28 offences carrying the death penalty included non-lethal crimes.

Military courts

Military courts were given jurisdiction in 2015 to try all those accused of terrorism-related offences, including civilians. By January 2016, the government had constituted 11 military courts to hear such cases.

In August, the Supreme Court ruled for the first time on cases from these courts, upholding the verdicts and death sentences imposed on 16 civilians. The Court ruled that the appellants had not proved that the military violated their constitutional rights or failed to follow procedure. According to lawyers, the accused were denied access to legal counsel of their choice, and to military court records when preparing their appeals. Some of the accused were allegedly subjected to enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment, and at least two were reportedly under 18 when arrested.

Discrimination - religious minorities

State and non-state actors continued to discriminate against religious minorities, both Muslim and non-Muslim, in law and practice. Blasphemy laws remained in force and several new cases were registered, mostly in Punjab. The laws violated the rights to freedom of expression, thought, conscience and religion.

Minorities, particularly Ahmadis, Hazaras and Dalits, continued to face restricted access to employment, health care, education and other basic services.

Mumtaz Qadri, a security guard convicted of killing the Governor of Punjab in 2011 because he had criticized the blasphemy laws, was executed in February. His funeral was attended by thousands of people and was followed by protests in the capital, Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi where protesters damaged public property, attacked media stations and clashed with the police.

Asia Noreen, a Christian woman sentenced to death for blasphemy in 2010, remained imprisoned in Sheikhupura. On 13 October, the Supreme Court was scheduled to hear her case in the ultimate

stage of her appeal process but adjourned it indefinitely.

Armed groups attacked a park in Lahore on 27 March, killing at least 70 people, many of them children, and injuring many more. A faction of the Pakistani Taliban, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, claimed responsibility for the attack, saying they had targeted Christians celebrating Easter.

Violence against women and girls

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan recorded almost 3,000 cases of violence against women and girls, including murder, rape and gang rape, sodomy, domestic violence and kidnappings.

The Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act was passed by the Punjab Provincial Assembly in February, despite opposition from Islamic parties.

An amendment to the law on so-called “honour-based” killings was introduced to end impunity for such crimes, but allowed for the death penalty as a possible punishment and for perpetrators to have their sentences lessened if they secure a pardon from the victim’s family. It remained unclear how the authorities

will distinguish between an “honour killing” and other murders, or what standards of evidence would apply, or what penalties would ensue. Human rights NGOs and activists were concerned that the penalty imposed should not depend on whether or not the victim’s family had pardoned the crime. According to the Human

Rights Commission of Pakistan, around 512 women and girls, and 156 men and boys, were killed in 2016 by relatives on so-called “honour” grounds. As many cases went unreported, or were falsely described as suicides or natural deaths, the actual number was almost certainly much higher.

Qandeel Baloch, a social media celebrity, was drugged and killed by her brother in July. He confessed to murdering her for “dishonouring the Baloch name”.

Child marriage remained a concern. In January a bill to raise the legal minimum age of marriage to 18 for girls was withdrawn following pressure from the Council of Islamic Ideology, who considered it “un-Islamic and blasphemous”.

Right to health - women and girls

Access to quality health care, particularly for poor and rural women, remained limited due to information, distance and cost barriers, as well as to perceived norms concerning women’s health and wellbeing.

Freedom of expression - journalists

Media workers continued to be harassed, abducted and sometimes murdered. Those in FATA and Balochistan and those working on national security issues were particularly at risk.

According to the Pakistani Press Foundation, as of October, at least two media workers were killed, 16 were injured and one was abducted in connection with their work. The authorities generally

failed to provide adequate protection to media workers from attacks by non-state armed groups, security forces, political activists and religious groups. Of the 49 media workers murdered since 2001, only four cases had resulted in a conviction by the end of 2016. In March, a man convicted of murdering journalist Ayub Khattak in 2013 was sentenced to life imprisonment and a fine.

Zeenat Shahzadi, a journalist abducted by gunmen in August 2015 in Lahore, remained forcibly disappeared. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan believed she had been abducted by security forces. In October Cyril Almeida, assistant editor of Dawn newspaper, was placed briefly on the Exit Control List, which prohibits certain people from leaving Pakistan. The Prime Minister's Office had objected to an article he wrote on tensions between the civilian government and the military. A few weeks later the authorities held the Minister for Information responsible for leaking the information that led to Cyril Almeida's news report.

A new law on cybercrimes – the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act – was passed in August, giving the authorities broad powers to surveil citizens and censor online expression. There were fears that it posed a risk to the right to freedom of expression, as well as the right to privacy and access to information.

Human rights defenders

State and non-state actors continue to harass, threaten, detain and kill human rights defenders, especially in Balochistan, FATA and Karachi.

On 8 May, the Pakistani Taliban shot dead prominent human rights activist and website editor Khurram Zaki in Karachi. A spokesman for a faction of the Pakistani Taliban said it had killed him because of his campaign against Abdul Aziz, a cleric of the Red Mosque in Islamabad.

On 16 January, Rangers personnel arrested human rights defender Saeed Baloch, an advocate for fishing communities, in Karachi. Following national and international pressure, he was presented in court on 26 January and released on bail in August.

According to eyewitnesses, human rights defender Wahid Baloch was abducted on 26 July by masked men in plain clothes, believed to be representatives of security forces in Karachi.⁵ He was released on 5 December.

A policy was implemented from early 2016 requiring international NGOs to obtain government consent to raise funds and operate. In an increasingly hostile climate for human rights work, security forces harassed and intimidated several NGO staff.

In September, the Home Ministry shut down Taangh Wasaib, an NGO working for women's rights and against religious intolerance, stating that it was involved in "dubious activities".

Refugees and asylum-seekers

The legal status of the 1.4 million registered Afghan refugees became increasingly precarious as hostility towards them intensified and abuses, including physical attacks, escalated. The authorities estimated that an additional 1 million unregistered Afghan refugees were also living in the country.

Senior Pakistani officials threatened to expedite the forced return of all Afghan refugees. On 29 June, the authorities extended the right of registered refugees to remain in Pakistan legally, but only until March 2017.

Following the December 2014 attack on the army public school in Peshawar, police targeted Afghan settlements, demolished their homes, and subjected refugees to arbitrary detention and harassment.

Workers' rights

Despite the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act of 1992, bonded labour practices continued, particularly in the brick kiln and textile industries and among the scheduled castes (Dalits).

1. Pakistan: Armed attack on Bacha Khan University a potential war crime (News story, 20 January)
2. Pakistan: Government must deliver justice for victims of Peshawar bus bombing (News story, 16 March)
3. Pakistan: Attack on Quetta hospital abhorrent disregard for the sanctity of life (News story, 8 August)
4. Pakistan: Investigation crucial after Karachi political activist tortured and killed in custody (News story, 4 May)
5. Pakistan: Human rights defender at risk of torture (ASA 33/4580/2016)

Courtesy: [AI](#)

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



PAKISTAN: BALOCHISTAN ATROCITIES CONTINUE TO RISE

23 February 2011, 00:00 UTC

The Pakistan government must immediately provide accountability for the alarming number of killings and abductions in Balochistan attributed to government forces in recent months, Amnesty International said today.

Amnesty International also called on Baloch armed groups to avoid attacks that target or endanger civilians, in the face of escalating attacks on government workers and non-Baloch residents of the province.

In the last four months, at least 90 Baloch activists, teachers, journalists and lawyers have disappeared or been murdered, many in 'kill and dump' operations, according to information compiled by Amnesty International. Their bullet-ridden bodies, most bearing torture marks, have been recovered across Balochistan.

"Since October, every month has seen an increase in the cases of alleged disappearances and unlawful killings," said Sam Zarifi, Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific Director. "These atrocities are carried out with flagrant impunity. Credible investigations into these incidents - resulting in prosecutions - are absolutely necessary to establish some trust between the Baloch people and the Pakistan government."

The victims' relatives and Baloch groups blame the 'kill and dump' incidents on Pakistani security forces, particularly the Frontier Corps and intelligence agencies. Many of the victims were abducted by uniformed Frontier Corps soldiers, often accompanying men in plain clothes, in front of multiple witnesses.

Security forces deny the charges, claiming that the deaths were a result of rivalry between Baloch militant groups.

“The human rights crisis in Balochistan has largely been ignored, even inside Pakistan, but thousands of people are not only suffering from extreme deprivation but discrimination, insecurity and human rights abuses on a massive scale,” said Sam Zarifi. “Human rights abuses attributed to the security agencies have created a climate of fear for the families of the disappeared. They are terrified to speak out in fear that security agents will kill their loved ones or abduct other family members in reprisal.”

Armed Baloch groups have also been implicated in a surge in targeted killings of non-Baloch civilians and government employees, including teachers at government education institutions. Hundreds of teachers have fled the province as a result of these killings, bringing the education system to breaking point.

Baloch armed groups have claimed responsibility for a series of bombings on gas infrastructure causing a desperate shortage of fuel for cooking and heating throughout the province during the coldest period of the year. Sectarian targeted killings have also increased, and Balochistan’s Hazara Shi’a community claims that Taleban and Sunni extremists have murdered hundreds of their members since 2004.

“Baloch armed groups must also avoid endangering civilians,” said Sam Zarifi. “The apparent targeting of civilians, teachers and government officials by Baloch groups, has forced many of them to flee the province, which only worsens conditions for the already poorly-served Baloch people.”

In November 2009, the Pakistan Government attempted to address long-running Baloch grievances about economic and political disenfranchisement and human rights abuses with a package of laws called the Aghaz Huqooq-i-Balochistan (“the Beginning of Rights of Balochistan”). However, according to a recent report in the Dawn newspaper, only a quarter of the proposed measures have been implemented thus far.

Amnesty International calls on the Pakistan government to:

- Investigate all alleged human rights abuses, including all “disappearances” recorded by the judicial Commission of Inquiry for Missing Persons;
- Bring all perpetrators of abuses to justice, whether they belong to security forces or non-state armed groups; and
- Ensure that all individuals brought to justice receive a fair trial and are not subjected to torture or other abuse in detention.

“Pakistan’s foreign allies should ensure military assistance is not linked to human rights abuses in Balochistan,” said Sam Zarifi. “As Pakistan’s most significant international allies, Amnesty International calls on the United States and China to ensure their support for security forces in Balochistan does not assist human rights abusers.”

Background Balochistan has a long history of civil and armed unrest since the creation of Pakistan in 1947, with ethnic Baloch groups advocating greater autonomy within the state or complete

separation.

Balochistan holds the largest single source of domestic energy reserves in Pakistan, but Baloch groups argue these resources disproportionately benefit other provinces and ethnic communities.

The Baloch people remain one of the poorest communities within Pakistan with some of the lowest literacy and employment rates and life expectancies.

Notes to editors

A breakdown of victims of reported disappearances and alleged extrajudicial and unlawful killings in Balochistan is available [here](#).

Courtesy: [AI](#)