

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	781
Land:	Pakistan
Kilde:	Amnesty International
Titel:	The State of the World's Human Rights; Pakistan 2024
Udgivet:	29. april 2025
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	19. juni 2025

The State of the World's Human Rights; Pakistan 2024

Background

The general election on 8 February brought the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz to power. Election results were contested by opposition parties and the election period was marked by intense violence, particularly in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces. There were nationwide protests throughout the year, despite heavy restrictions. Attacks from armed groups such as the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan and Baloch Liberation Army increased. Inflation significantly decreased to 4.1% in December from 29.66% in December 2023. Pakistan secured a 37-month USD 7 billion loan extension from the International Monetary Fund in September. The World Bank reported that the poverty rate was expected to stay at 40%. Extreme weather events resulted in rain- and heat-related casualties and losses. In February at least 45 people, including 27 children, died due to heavy rainfall and snowfall. At least 143 people died from lightning strikes and storm-related incidents in April. More than 350 deaths were attributed to heavy rainfall and flooding in July and August.

Freedom of expression

Authorities used laws and digital technology to restrict freedom of expression. The Punjab Defamation Act 2024, applicable to the Punjab province of 127 million, passed in May despite strong opposition, further eroding free speech protections.

Significant mobile networks were shut down in Gwadar district for over 10 days during the Baloch National Gathering in July and August, and in October and November for two days and four days respectively, during protests planned by the political party Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI).

Internet speeds were slowed by up to 40% from July to October, due to upgrading of the national web monitoring system enhancing ability to block online content.¹ Social media platform X was blocked from 17 February. Short-term restrictions were placed on various social media platforms during the election period, particularly during “virtual rallies” hosted by the PTI in January.

Journalists

Journalist groups raised grave concerns regarding the authorities’ failure to protect journalists’ safety and effectively investigate attacks. At least seven journalists were killed in targeted attacks. Authorities summoned at least 32 journalists under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) for alleged “propaganda” against the judiciary. In February at least two people, including journalist Asad Toor, were arrested in relation to the allegations. Asad was released on bail after three weeks in detention. In July, 10 PTI workers, including international media coordinator Ahmed Waqas Janjua and information secretary Raoof Hassan, were arrested on allegations of “anti-state propaganda” under the PECA. They remained on bail at the end of the year. In November, journalist Mattiullah Jan was arrested on terrorism and narcotics charges for critical reporting on the government’s handling of protests.

Arbitrary arrests and detentions

Civilians were held under military custody throughout the year. Out of the 105 participants in the 9 May 2023 protests who were tried in military courts, 20 were released in March, and the remaining 85 were sentenced to between two and 10 years' imprisonment in December in secret trials. At least 1,058 protest participants remained in custody waiting for trials in civilian courts, including PTI leaders Yasmin Rashid and Shah Mehmood Qureshi.

Former Prime Minister Imran Khan remained in arbitrary detention awaiting further trials. Amnesty International found violations of his rights to liberty and fair trial.²

Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) leader and former MP, Ali Wazir, was detained in the capital, Islamabad, in August on charges of "manhandling" police officers. He was re-arrested several times before the end of the year under the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) Ordinance, despite being granted bail in earlier cases.

In June, 36 members of the Ahmadiyya community were arbitrarily detained under the MPO Ordinance before and during the Muslim religious holiday Eid ul-Azha while practising their religious rites.³ In October, over 100 members of the PTM were arrested and detained under the MPO Ordinance, prior to the Pashtun Qaumi Jirga.

Freedom of peaceful assembly

Authorities clamped down on protest and assemblies through restrictive laws, arbitrary restrictions and unlawful use of force. In September, the Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Act 2024 was enacted without any consultation, giving broad power to the authorities to restrict or ban assemblies in Islamabad. A similar law was passed in Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir in October.

Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure was used to impose discretionary blanket restrictions on public protests and gatherings, placing the onus on activists and political organizers to obtain administrative permission to protest. In October, the Punjab government empowered the district and home departments to ban gatherings in Punjab districts for up to 30 and 90 days, respectively.

In January, 44 government employees in Balochistan province were suspended for attending a sit-in against the killing of Balaach Mola Bakhsh. On 8 March, barbed wire was used to block the protest site of the annual women's day Aurat March in Islamabad. In April, dozens of farmers protesting the government's handling of the wheat crisis were arrested by police in Lahore.

Protests by the PTI were repeatedly attacked and restricted, and the party was denied permission to hold its rallies. Thousands of members and leaders of the party were arrested prior to and following various protests throughout the year.

Intimidation and harassment of protesters

In January, Baloch activists were targeted with arbitrary arrests and detentions during a month-long peaceful protest against enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings, organized and led by Baloch women.

In September, the government placed 137 people, including members of the PTM and Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC), on the Fourth Schedule under the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997 (ATA). This imposed severe restrictions on their rights to liberty, freedom of movement and expression. In October, it designated the PTM as a "proscribed organization" under the ATA, in anticipation of its major gathering, Pashtun Qaumi Jirga. Arbitrary restrictions were placed on BYC leaders Sammi Deen and Mahrang Baloch, preventing them from travelling overseas.

Excessive and unnecessary use of force

Use of lethal force against peaceful protesters resulted in several deaths. In February, two National Democratic Movement workers were killed and 15 injured, including party leader Mohsin Dawar, when police fired on protesters outside an election office in Miramshah city. In May, three people were killed and nearly 100 injured when police fired at protesters during the Kashmir Long March in Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir. In July, three people were killed by law enforcement using firearms during the Baloch National Gathering. Security officers fired on a rally for peace in Bannu city, killing one and injuring several. In November, 12 people were allegedly killed after lethal ammunition was used against protesters in Islamabad during a PTI protest.

Enforced disappearances

Enforced disappearances continued unabated, targeting journalists, activists, students, comedians, political opponents and families of political opponents. By June, the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances had already received 197 missing persons' cases. Defence of Human Rights recorded 2,332 cases of enforced disappearances throughout the year.

People were recorded as missing for days, only to return without any explanation or accountability. Kashmiri journalist and poet, Ahmad Farhad, an outspoken critic of enforced disappearances, was forcibly disappeared for two weeks in May. He faced criminal charges upon return. Comedian Aun Ali Khosa was forcibly disappeared for three days from his home in Lahore in August after his video satirizing the cost of living in Pakistan went viral. In July, 17-year-old Faizan Usman was forcibly disappeared for two months from his home in Islamabad.

In February, activist Hidayat Lohar, previously forcibly disappeared for two years in 2017, was shot dead by unknown persons in Nasirabad city. The police reluctantly filed a case to investigate the killing after court orders to do so. In October, three students were extrajudicially killed in two separate incidents. Sajan Malokani and Sarmad Bhayo were killed by police in Rahim Yar Khan, Punjab province; Vaneesh Kumar was killed in Hyderabad, Sindh province.

Freedom of religion and belief

There were several attacks on places of worship and burial sites of the Ahmadiyya community. In January, the police and district administration in Daska and Bharoke destroyed tombstones in Ahmadi graveyards. In June, 17 graves of the Ahmadiyya community were desecrated in Bahawalpur district. On Eid day, 17 June, a violent crowd attacked the Ahmadiyya place of worship in the city of Kotli. In September, police officials in Okara demolished minarets and Islamic inscriptions in an Ahmadi place of worship. In October, police in Gujranwala vandalized two Ahmadi places of worship.

The Pakistani authorities failed to protect religious minorities, curb incidents of violence related to blasphemy allegations or ensure accountability for blasphemy-related killings. The majority of the suspects involved in the 16 August 2023 Jaranwala riots against the Christian community remained at large. At least 40% of survivors had received no compensation from the state by year's end.⁴

Death penalty

At least seven people received the mandatory death penalty and five were imprisoned for life for blasphemy.

For the 2023 Jaranwala attack, while the two brothers accused of blasphemy by the rioters were acquitted, a Christian man was sentenced to death for allegedly sharing a blasphemous TikTok

video that was said to incite the riots.

Unlawful killings

There were six killings of Ahmadis in incidents of targeted faith-motivated attacks. In May, a crowd in Sargodha attacked a Christian family over allegations of burning the Quran, injuring a 70-year-old man, Nazir Masih, who later died of his injuries. In June, a local tourist was killed by a group of people in Swat district after he was taken from police custody.

Extrajudicial executions

In September, two men separately accused of blasphemy were killed by police officers in custody. On 12 September, a police officer in Quetta killed a man in custody on suspicion of blasphemy. On 19 September, a doctor accused of blasphemy was killed by police officers in a staged “encounter” in Umerkot. His body was later violently taken from the family and burnt by a crowd.

Women’s and girls’ rights

Girls’ schools were targeted by militants, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, with four attacks in May alone. These attacks impacted literacy rates among girls in Pakistan, where four million fewer girls than boys are enrolled in school. During the general election, a *fatwa* (Islamic decree) prohibiting canvassing by women candidates was issued in Kohistan district. The *fatwa* was rejected by the Election Commission.

Despite laws to address so-called “honour” killings, they remained endemic. A total of 531 honour killings were recorded from January to November, and 101 cases were reported between January and June in Sindh province. In the first half of the year, 1,630 cases of child abuse (59% of which were girls) were reported by child rights NGO Sahil. Girls from religious minorities were subject to forced conversions and marriages, particularly in Sindh and Punjab.

Right to a healthy environment

The government failed to guarantee access to adequate healthcare, food and housing in the wake of floods and heatwaves. The heatwaves in June resulted in the deaths of at least 45 people in Karachi city according to official figures, although aid organizations asserted that the figure was significantly higher. Frequent power outages, often for more than 10 hours per day, as well as suffocating high temperatures in urban and informal settlements, contributed to the high death toll.

The summer rains displaced more than 141,601 people in Sindh province. The government’s failure to provide adequate relief disproportionately affected women, persons with disabilities, children and older people.⁵

In October, the right to a clean and healthy environment was inserted into the Constitution as a fundamental right. Air pollution in major cities in Punjab province, such as Lahore and Multan, reached unprecedented levels, with concentrations of PM2.5 over 100 times the WHO’s air quality guidelines. As a result, 1.93 million cases of respiratory diseases were reported from 15 October to 14 November. UNICEF warned that air pollution had endangered the health of 11 million children in Punjab.

Refugees’ and migrants’ rights

Deportations of unregistered refugees continued as part of the “Illegal Foreigners’ Repatriation Plan”. In March, the government announced plans to deport those on registered Afghan Citizen Cards. A total of 315,100 Afghan refugees were unlawfully returned to Afghanistan. Harassment of Afghan refugees continued; at least 10,566 Afghan refugees in Pakistan were arrested and detained. While Pakistan extended the validity of UNHCR-issued Proof of Registration cards for Afghan refugees until 30 June 2025, no concrete measures were taken to provide protections.

Economic, social and cultural rights

The minimum wage increased (to USD 133 per month) but remained well below living wage levels (USD 374 per month). Informal work patterns, underpayment and lack of written contracts continued to be a challenge for many workers. Workers and trade unionists, including in the garment industry, faced “anti-union” harassment from their employers and the state. The devolution of labour law administration since 2010 continued to undermine the right to freedom of association for workers in Special Economic Zones, with employers targeting workers with reprisals for forming or joining unions.

Sanitation workers, largely belonging to Christian minorities, were denied safe working environments. Several workers died while cleaning sewers and septic tanks.
