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IRB – Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Pakistan: Individuals and institutions, including polio vaccine workers, targeted by militant groups; individuals who are considered "high profile" targets (2018–December 2020) [PAK200383.E]

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

1. Individuals and Institutions Targeted

According to the search results of the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) [1] for a search conducted on 7 December 2020 with "Pakistan" and "2018" as criteria, 480 terrorist incidents [2] were recorded in Pakistan in 2018 [3], including the following target types:

- private citizens and property (146 incidents);
- military (120 incidents);
- police (87 incidents);
- government [including government buildings and members of the government (GTD Oct. 2019, 33)] (39 incidents);
- educational institutions (30 incidents) (GTD n.d.b).

According to the security report for 2019 by the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), an Islamabad-based think tank and advocacy centre, "ordinary citizens were on the receiving end of militancy" (CRSS 28 Jan. 2020, 8, 34). The same study, based on field reports from CRSS staff and information from ten newspapers (CRSS n.d.), found that of the 670 total casualties of terror attacks in 2019, 60 percent were civilians, 35 percent were security personnel and 5 percent were "outlaws" (CRSS 28 Jan. 2020, 15, 16). The same report provides the following table:

Civilians

Victims	Fatalities	Injuries	Casualties
Citizens	270	70	340
Politicians	15	5	20
Religious persons	8	6	14
Religious party members	4	2	6
Media persons	3	2	5
Foreigners	3	1	4

Security/[G]overnment [O]fficials

Victims	Fatalities	Injuries	Casualties
Security official	174	58	232
Government officials	3	2	5

Militants/[C]riminals/[I]nsurgents

Victims	Fatalities	Injuries	Casualties
Militants	20	3	23
Insurgents	11	2	13
Criminals	8	0	8
Total	519	151	670

Table 12: Victims of [T]error [A]ttacks - 2019

(CRSS 28 Jan. 2020, 16)

The CRSS security report for 2019 adds that security personnel killed in terror attacks included 70 police officers as well as 46 individuals from the army, 30 from the Frontier Corps, 13 from the Levies [gendarmerie] and 13 from the navy (CRSS 28 Jan. 2020, 18). The same report notes that "many terror attacks targeted security forces, but civilians were caught in the crossfire" (CRSS 28 Jan. 2020, 8).

According to the security assessment report for 2019 by the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), an Islamabad-based think tank focused on studying "anti-state violence" in Pakistan, of the 305 deaths resulting from 159 "militant attacks" [4] recorded in 2019, 47 percent were security forces personnel, 42 percent were civilians and 11 percent were militants (PICSS 9 Jan. 2020, 1, 18, 20).

The *Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2020* by the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) [5], a report studying terrorism in 163 countries using data from the GTD, indicates that of the ten countries most impacted by terrorism [6] in 2019, Pakistan was ranked seventh (IEP Nov. 2020, 6, 25). The same source adds that the "three deadliest groups"—the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan [Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan, Tehrik-e-Taliban, Pakistani Taliban, Tehreek-e-Taliban] (TTP), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi [Lashkar-i-Jhangvi] (LeJ) and Hizbul Ahrar [Hizb-ul-Ahrar] (HuA)—were responsible for 38 percent of the 300 "terror-related deaths" reported in 2019; however, the majority of victims were killed in "small-scale attacks that were not attributed to any group" (IEP Nov. 2020, 25). For information on the TTP, LeJ and HuA, see Response to Information Request PAK200382 of December 2020.

1.1 Polio Vaccine Workers

The Pakistan security report for 2018 by Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) [7], based on information from the PIPS digital database of conflict and security information [8], indicates that there were two terrorist attacks [9] targeting health care and polio workers in 2018 that killed four individuals; one of the attacks occurred in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and the other occurred in Balochistan province (PIPS 6 Jan. 2019, 18, 36, 41). According to the security report for 2013 to 2018 by CRSS, four polio workers, as well as one police guard belonging to a polio team, were killed in 2018 in terror attacks (CRSS 28 Feb. 2019, 29, 30).

According to the Pakistan security report for 2019 by PIPS, eight people were killed in six attacks against polio workers in 2019, with most of the attacks taking place in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (PIPS 5 Jan. 2020, 35, 158). In a chart describing the "[n]ature" of terrorism, the CRSS security report for 2019 indicates that there were seven terror attacks on polio vaccination teams in 2019 that resulted in three injuries and five fatalities (CRSS 28 Jan. 2020, 17). In another chart on civilian fatalities resulting from terror attacks, the same report states that six polio team members were killed in 2019 (CRSS 28 Jan. 2020, 20).

Sources report that attacks against polio vaccine workers continued in 2020 before COVID-19 halted the anti-polio drives (Al Jazeera 20 July 2020; RFE/RL 19 July 2020). Al Jazeera states that three polio vaccine workers had been killed as of July 2020 (Al Jazeera 20 July 2020). Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) indicates that a police officer escorting vaccination workers was killed in a targeted bombing in northwestern Pakistan in February 2020 and two female polio workers were shot dead by "unidentified attackers" in northwestern Pakistan in January 2020 (RFE/RL 19 July 2020). Sources note that the polio vaccination program resumed in July 2020 (Al Jazeera 20 July 2020; RFE/RL 19 July 2020).

According to a report by the UN Secretary-General on children and armed conflict for January to December 2019, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) [10] "reported over 660 attacks or threats of attacks against its staff and facilities, mostly in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa [p]rovinces" (UN 9 June 2020, para. 218). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Sources reported that militant organizations do not differentiate between doctors, nurses, health care workers and support staff (Independent scholar 20 Nov. 2020; Professor 18 Nov. 2020). According to sources, attacks have occurred against both polio vaccine workers and the security services personnel assigned to protect them (*Dawn* 26 Apr. 2019; *The Guardian* 30 Apr. 2019).

Sources report that reasons for attacks against polio vaccine workers include the following:

- belief that the vaccine is [a "Western plot" (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.183; *The Globe and Mail* 24 Oct. 2019)] meant to sterilize Muslims (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.183; *The Globe and Mail* 24 Oct. 2019; Professor 18 Nov. 2020);
- belief that the vaccine is laced with pork products (Independent scholar 20 Nov. 2020; Professor 18 Nov. 2020);
- belief that children fall ill after being vaccinated, based on a [hoax (*The Guardian* 30 Apr. 2019)] video circulated in April 2019 (*The Globe and Mail* 24 Oct. 2019; *The Guardian* 30 Apr. 2019);
- belief that vaccine programs are used as a "cover for foreign interests" (*The Guardian* 30 Apr. 2019) or are a "Western conspiracy" to "collect intelligence" (RFE/RL 19 July 2020).

Sources reported that militant organizations are "more wary" of international aid organizations compared to local organizations (Independent scholar 20 Nov. 2020; Professor 18 Nov. 2020). In an interview with the Research Directorate, a professor of security studies at Georgetown University with a research focus on political and military affairs in South Asia added that NGO branding may draw attention and attacks (Professor 18 Nov. 2020).

1.2 High Profile Targets

Information on individuals who are considered "high profile" targets was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The US Department of State's *Country Reports on Terrorism 2019* provides the following examples of "some of the more destructive and high-profile attacks":

- On 8 May, a suicide bomber killed at least 10 people (including police officers and security guards) and wounded at least 24 others in an attack at Lahore's Data Darbar Sufi shrine. Hizbul Ahrar, a faction of the TTP, claimed responsibility for the attack, specifying that the target was law enforcement officers and not civilians.
- On 11 May, three militants killed five people (including a Pakistani Navy officer) and injured six in an attack on the Pearl Continental Hotel in Gwadar. The Balochistan Liberation Army claimed responsibility for the attack, stating the targets were Chinese and other foreign investors.
- On 21 July, two back-to-back attacks in Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, killed 10 people and injured 30 others. Unidentified gunmen on motorbikes opened fire on a police checkpoint, killing two police officers. A suicide bomber later detonated an explosive device at the hospital where first responders transported victims of the first attack. TTP claimed responsibility for the attack.
- On 16 August, a timed explosive at Quetta's Al-Haj mosque detonated, killing four people (including the brother of Afghan Taliban chief Mullah Haybatullah) and injuring 25 others. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack (US 24 June 2020, 166).

According to sources, the TTP published guidelines in 2018 directing its members to limit "martyrdom operations" [suicide bombings (*The National* 30 Oct. 2018)] to "extremely" (Jadoon and Mahmood Dec. 2018, 23) or "very" (*The National* 30 Oct. 2018) "important targets" (Jadoon and Mahmood Dec. 2018, 23; *The National* 30 Oct. 2018). A December 2018 article by Amira Jadoon and Sara Mahmood [11] published in the *CTC Sentinel*, a journal from the Combating Terrorism Center at the West Point US Military Academy, further states that while the 2018 TTP guidelines do not provide a definition of an "important target," it "likely refers to attacks on hardened targets such as the military or police" (Jadoon and Mahmood Dec. 2018, 23). For further information on targets of the TTP, see Response to Information Request PAK106391 of January 2020.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Notes

[1] The Global Terrorism Database (GTD) is "an open-source database" on "domestic and international terrorist attacks around the world" (GTD n.d.a). The GTD is managed by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) at the University of Maryland (GTD n.d.a).

[2] The GTD defines a "terrorist attack" as "*the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation*" (GTD Oct. 2019, 10, emphasis in original).

[3] According to its website, the GTD includes information on terrorist attacks between 1970 and 2019; however, as of November 2020, only data from 1970 to 2018 was publicly available (GTD n.d.a).

[4] The Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS) states that it "only" records information on "anti-state violence and related responses. Sectarian violence, general crimes, [and] ethnic or linguistic based violence are not recorded" (PICSS 9 Jan. 2020, 2).

[5] The Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) is an international think tank headquartered in Sydney, Australia, that develops metrics to study peace and violence (IEP Nov. 2020, 106).

[6] The *Global Terrorism Index (GTI)* uses the GTD's definition of terrorism (IEP Nov. 2020, 6). The *GTI* score "takes into account not only deaths, but also incidents, injuries, and property damage from terrorism, over a five-year period" (IED Nov. 2020, 2).

[7] Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) is a "research and advocacy think-tank" comprised of "Pakistani scholars, researchers and journalists" and focused on "political, social and religious conflicts" (PIPS n.d.).

[8] The digital database on conflict and security by PIPS records "incidents of violence and terrorism in Pakistan" (PIPS 6 Jan. 2019, ii). The database compiles information from "newspapers, magazines, journals, field sources and screening of official record"; the media information is verified by PIPS correspondents in provincial capitals (PIPS 6 Jan. 2019, 7).

[9] PIPS defines terrorist attacks as the "[i]ndiscriminate use of violence by militant outfits," including "militant, nationalist, insurgent and sectarian attacks" (PIPS 6 Jan. 2019, 9).

[10] The Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) is a "public-private partnership" aiming to eradicate polio "led by national governments with six core partners," including the World Health Organization (WHO); Rotary International; the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); UNICEF; the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (GPEI n.d.).

[11] Amira Jadoon is an assistant professor at the Combating Terrorism Center and Department of Social Sciences at West Point and Sara Mahmood is a senior analyst at the International Center for Political Violence & Terrorism Research at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore (Jadoon and Mahmood Dec. 2018, 21).

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Associate professor of justice, law and criminology at a US-based university; Australian Strategic Policy Institute; Christian Solidarity Worldwide; PhD candidate of international relations at a US-based university; PhD student of public affairs and policy at a US-based university; professor of government and international affairs at a US-based university; senior reporter at a Pakistani English-language newspaper.

Internet sites, including: ACAPS; Action on Armed Violence; Amnesty International; Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project; The Asia Foundation; Asylum Research Centre; ecoinet.net; *The Express Tribune*; Factiva; *Foreign Policy*; Geo News; Geopolitical Monitor; Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research; Human Rights Commission of Pakistan; Human Rights Watch; International Crisis Group; *The Lancet*; Nanyang Technological University – S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies; Pakistan Polio Eradication Programme; Pakistan Press Foundation; Safeguarding Health in Conflict; South Asia Terrorism Portal; *Time*; UK – Home Office; UN – Refworld.

ecoinet summary:

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