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UN experts urge Pakistan to address human rights violations in Balochistan

GENEVA – UN human rights experts* today expressed serious concern over the excessive and harmful impacts of Pakistan's counter-terrorism measures in Balochistan and called for full respect for international law.

“We acknowledge the serious threat posed by armed groups in Balochistan and express our solidarity with the victims of terrorism,” the experts said. “All measures to counter terrorism must always respect international human rights and humanitarian law.”

The experts expressed alarm at the unrelenting use of enforced disappearances in Balochistan, which is a serious human rights violation and an international crime. “We urge Pakistan to establish independent and effective search and investigation mechanisms to identify the fate and whereabouts of those forcibly disappeared, criminalise enforced disappearances and hold perpetrators accountable,” they said.

They also called on Pakistan to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances and recognise the competence of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances to receive and examine complaints.

“Pakistan appears to conflate legitimate human and minority rights advocacy and public demonstrations with terrorism, threatening freedoms of expression, assembly, and association,” the experts said. “Repeated internet blackouts in Balochistan have impeded freedom of information, transparency, accountability, political participation, and civic space.”

The experts condemned reports of widespread torture, ill-treatment, extrajudicial killings and indiscriminate violence by security forces, especially against peaceful protesters, and Baloch human rights defenders. They expressed concern at the detention of Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) leaders and their supporters and actions against their family members and lawyers, which may amount to reprisals for their interaction with United Nations mechanisms.

The experts urgently called for stronger measures to prevent all rights violations, hold perpetrators accountable, and provide remedies to victims.

They noted that the vague and overbroad definition of terrorism in the Anti-Terrorism Act has enabled the abusive listing of hundreds of individuals as "proscribed persons", including activists, civil servants, students, academics, and human rights defenders. Prominent Baloch activists have also been placed on the "Exit Control List", barring them from leaving the country.

The experts also urged the Government to reconsider proposed amendments to preventive detention laws, warning of the risk of arbitrary deprivation of liberty, which is already extensively used against activists and human rights defenders, including women. “Proposed new internment centres for terrorism suspects in Balochistan could also lead to gross human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances and torture,” they said.

The experts called for a thorough review and amendment of these laws, proposals and practices to ensure full respect for international human rights law.

“Pakistan must also increase its efforts to address grievances in Balochistan that may fuel violence,” the experts said. Under the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, all States recognise that governments must address the root causes of violence to effectively combat terrorism, such as unresolved conflicts, weak rule of law, human rights violations, discrimination, political exclusion, socio-economic marginalisation, and poor governance.

The experts have formally [communicated](#) their concerns to the Government of Pakistan and stand ready to provide technical assistance.