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2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There were no significant changes in the human rights situation in Pakistan during the year.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: unlawful or arbitrary killings; disappearances; torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; transnational repression against individuals in another country; serious abuses in a conflict; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including violence against journalists, unjustified arrests and disappearances of journalists, and censorship; restrictions of religious freedom; threats of violence motivated by antisemitism; and significant or systematic restrictions on workers' freedom of association.

The government rarely took credible steps to identify and punish officials who committed human rights abuses.

Violence, abuse, and social and religious intolerance by militant organizations and other nonstate actors, both local and foreign, contributed to a culture of lawlessness. Terrorist violence and human rights abuses by nonstate actors contributed to human rights problems, with terrorist violence increasing during the year especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces. Terrorist and cross-border militant attacks against civilians, soldiers, and police caused hundreds of casualties. Military, police, and other law enforcement agencies carried out significant campaigns against militant and terrorist groups.

Section 1.

Life

a. Extrajudicial Killings

There were numerous reports the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings during the year.

According to human rights organizations, security forces continued the policy of “kill and dump” in Balochistan, where dissidents were kidnapped, tortured, and killed. There were reports members of marginalized racial and ethnic communities were overrepresented among the victims of some abuses. Security forces reportedly committed extrajudicial killings in connection with conflicts throughout the country. Government entities generally investigated whether security force killings were justifiable and whether to pursue prosecutions via an order either from the inspector general of police or through the NCHR.

Three protesters were killed in clashes with security personnel between July 28 and August 2 in the immediate period before and during a Baloch rights demonstration in Gwadar. On July 28, Asghar Baloch died in a clash with security personnel in Gwadar. On July 30, protester Naseer Ahmed Baloch died and approximately 20 were injured in clashes with security personnel at a checkpoint in the outskirts of Gwadar, which protesters characterized as an effort to prevent participants from attending the demonstration in Gwadar. On August 2, protester Hamdan Baloch was killed in

clashes with security forces in Nikshi, with Baloch rights activists accusing the Frontier Corps of opening fire on protesters.

There was an increase in attacks against police and security forces. According to the Islamabad-based independent think tank Center for Research and Security Studies, there were at least 386 reported deaths of police and military personnel in terrorist attacks and counterterrorism operations during the first three quarters of the year.

The number of attacks and casualties maintained an upward trend during the year, due largely to the continued rise in militant and terrorist attacks in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Province. Local officials reported 570 militant/terrorist attacks – most targeting police and military personnel – occurred in the province during the first six months of the year, a 10 percent increase compared with the same period in 2023, itself the most violent year in KP since the provincial government began sharing statistics in 2006.

Many of these attacks also targeted civilians, frequently along sectarian lines. On May 4, unidentified gunmen killed seven Shia Muslims, including four teachers, at a school in Upper Kurram, KP, in apparent retaliation for the nearby killing of a Sunni Muslim earlier in the day. The school was in a majority-Sunni village; the gunmen reportedly gathered the Shia victims in a separate room before shooting them. Additional Sunni-Shia sectarian violence, often rooted in historical land disputes, also broke out in Kurram throughout the year.

b. Coercion in Population Control

There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization by or on behalf of government authorities.

Section 2.

Liberty

a. Freedom of the Press

The law provided for freedom of expression, including for members of the press, but constitutional restrictions existed. In addition, threats, harassment, abductions, violence, and killings led journalists and editors to practice self-censorship and follow editorial directives from the government. Journalists suffered high levels of violence, or threats of violence, from state and nonstate actors, including political parties.

The constitution provided for the right to free speech and a free press, subject to “any reasonable restriction imposed by law in the interest of the glory of Islam” or the “integrity, security, or defense of Pakistan, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality.” The law permitted citizens to criticize the government publicly or privately, but court decisions interpreted the constitution as prohibiting criticism of the military and judiciary. Such criticism could result in legal, political, or commercial reprisal.

Blasphemy laws restricted individual rights to free speech concerning matters of religion and religious doctrine. According to the penal code, punishments for blasphemy included the death sentence for “defiling the Prophet Muhammad,” life imprisonment for “defiling, damaging, or desecrating the Quran,” and 10 years’ imprisonment for “insulting another’s religious feelings.” The courts enforced the blasphemy laws, and although authorities imposed the death penalty in some cases, no person had been executed under the law due to the appeals process. Persons accused of committing blasphemy were often subject to vigilantism and even mob lynching. The government

restricted some language and symbolic speech based on hate speech and terrorism provisions in the law.

On September 17, a police officer in Quetta, Balochistan, killed a suspect, held on accusations of blasphemy, inside a police station. The deceased, identified as Abdul Ali, was arrested on a complaint he used objectionable words against the Prophet Muhammad. According to police, the officer involved in the shooting was arrested.

Physical Attacks, Imprisonment, and Pressure

Security forces, members of political parties, militants, influential landlords, and other groups subjected media outlets, journalists, and their families to threats and harassment. Women journalists particularly faced threats of sexual violence and harassment, including via social media, where they had a particularly strong presence.

Journalists experienced physical threats, economic coercion, harassment, and violence when reporting on sensitive topics critical of the government, ruling political parties, and the military. Media personnel reported cases of journalists being drawn into legal proceedings and forced out of jobs, causing economic hardship. Journalists reported an increase in abductions and torture. Both the military, through the director general of its Inter-Services Public Relations media service, and government oversight bodies, such as the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) and Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, enforced censorship through a variety of tactics.

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) condemned the killing of four journalists in the country during the month of May, marking the highest number of journalists killed in the country in any single month since the CPJ began collecting data in 1992.

Security forces allegedly detained journalists. In a May 22 statement, Reporters Without Borders called for the immediate release of two journalists who were detained because they objected to a police raid on the press club in Dera Ghazi Khan, Punjab Province, during an opposition press conference. Media outlets that reported on topics which authorities viewed as sensitive were often targeted for retribution.

The International Federation of Journalists' *South Asia Press Freedom Report 2023-2024* identified the state and its agencies as the primary perpetrators of crimes against journalists and advocates of free speech, although some incidents also involved regional sects and nonstate actors.

Censorship by Governments, Military, Intelligence, or Police Forces, Criminal Groups, or Armed Extremist or Rebel Groups

Government authorities used laws to prevent or punish media criticism of the government and the armed forces. To publish within Pakistan-administered Kashmir, media organizations were required to obtain permission from the Kashmir Council and the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs; journalists therefore depended largely on information provided by the government and military. There were limitations on transmission of Indian media content. Journalists also protested their inability to report freely on human rights abuses, including enforced disappearances in Balochistan, the Pashtun movement's activities and protests, and the military's involvement in political affairs and business enterprises.

By law, the government could restrict information that authorities considered could be harmful to the national interest. On May 21, PEMRA banned cable news channels from broadcasting headlines, news tickers, and commentary regarding court cases until a final verdict was issued. Journalists filed three separate petitions in the Lahore High Court, Islamabad High Court, and Sindh High Court Sukkur Bench seeking withdrawal of the PEMRA notification. On May 25, the

Islamabad High Court and Sindh High Court restrained PEMRA from taking any adverse action against private television channels for court reporting.

Media organizations generally engaged in self-censorship, especially in reporting news regarding the military, religious extremism, and abuse of blasphemy laws. Journalists stated they were under pressure to follow the predetermined narrative and PEMRA's editorial directives to media outlets and were required to cover certain stories that highlighted successes by the military or diplomatic partners of Pakistan. Journalists reportedly were discouraged from reporting on economic protests. Several journalists also reported being instructed to impose a near-total ban on coverage of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) ahead of the February 8 elections.

Blasphemy and anti-Ahmadi laws (laws prohibiting Ahmadis from self-identifying as Muslims) restricted publication on these topics. Government censors reviewed foreign books before allowing reprinting. Authorities reportedly used PEMRA rules to silence broadcast media by suspending licenses, threatening to do so, or by reassigning the cable channel number of a targeted outlet without notice so that its programming would be difficult or impossible to find on most televisions. The government continued to use network access as a tool to exert control over media outlets. Media outlets reported the government used the infrastructure of the media system, as well as government advertising, which made up a large portion of media revenue, to suppress information deemed threatening. The government pressured distributors into restricting distribution or changing channels of outlets deemed problematic, incentivizing media companies to censor their content. Media houses also reportedly fired outspoken journalists deemed to be a threat to their revenues or continued ability to operate.

On January 27, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) issued notices to 47 journalists and YouTubers for allegedly spreading false information regarding the chief justice of Pakistan, Qazi Faez Isa, and state institutions. This move drew criticism from the International Federation for Journalists and the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists, which expressed concerns regarding the harassment of journalists and called on authorities to uphold press freedom. On January 27, Isa used the court's prerogative to initiate a case regarding the FIA's list of 47 journalists. On January 30, Isa directed the attorney general to refrain from action against journalists solely based on criticism, affirming that journalists and the public were free to criticize court decisions. The ruling also clarified that abusive language or incitement to violence against the judiciary would not be tolerated.

Nonstate actor violence against media workers increased, particularly in the tribal areas of KP and Balochistan, where militant and criminal groups were known to kill, abduct, assault, and intimidate journalists and their families, leading to self-censorship.

On June 18 in KP, journalist Khalil Jibran was killed by unknown militants in Landi Kotal, Khyber District. Prior to his death, Jibran received multiple threats from terrorist organizations and had survived two prior attempts on his life, reportedly as a result of his coverage of rising militancy in the province. No arrests were made in this case by year's end.

b. Worker Rights

Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining

The constitution covered a range of basic labor provisions, but most of the labor force was under the jurisdiction of provincial labor laws. The federal government did not effectively implement laws that protected the right to organize, to bargain collectively, and to strike, and the penalties were less than those for other violations involving denial of civil rights, such as discrimination. Penalties were rarely applied against violators. A 1968 ordinance addressed the relationship and contracts between employer and employee. The ordinance applied to all industrial and commercial establishments employing 20 or more workers. A 1934 law governed the conditions of industrial labor in factories, amended by the provincial governments in 2010 to include factories employing

five or more workers. A 2012 law took International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions into account but, due to the 18th amendment, it applied only to the Islamabad Capital Territory and to trade federations that operated in more than one province. Under the law, the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development was the only federal government body with any authority over labor matters; however, its role in domestic labor oversight was limited to compiling statistics to demonstrate compliance with ILO conventions.

The law provided some private-sector workers the right to form and join unions but denied this right to public servants, workers in export processing zones, agricultural workers, and workers in a broad list of essential services. At the provincial level, laws providing for collective bargaining rights excluded banking- and financial-sector workers, forestry workers, hospital workers, self-employed farmers, and persons employed in an administrative or managerial capacity. There were limits on the number of unions that could exist within an enterprise. Unions representing less than one-third of workers in an enterprise did not have standing to bargain collectively. The law did not protect workers from antiunion discrimination. On April 9, the Punjab government registered the first-ever Home-Based Workers Union.

The law stipulated the National Industrial Relations Commission could adjudicate and determine industrial disputes within the Islamabad Capital Territory to which a trade union or federation of trade unions was a party and any other industrial dispute determined by the government to be of national importance. This provision did not provide a forum specifically for interprovincial disputes but appeared to allow for the possibility the commission could resolve such a dispute. Worker organizations noted the limited capacity and funding for labor relations implementation at the provincial level.

The law prohibited state administrators, workers in state-owned enterprises and export-processing zones, and public-sector workers from striking. Authorities could prohibit strikes if they found them “prejudicial to the national interests” and refer disputes to arbitration.

Provincial industrial relations acts also addressed and limited strikes and lockouts. For example, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Act specified that, for power distribution, gas, and other essential public service providers, when a “strike or lockout lasts for more than 30 days, the government could, by order in writing, prohibit the strike or lockout” and was required to refer the dispute to a labor court.

Federal law defined illegal strikes, picketing, and other types of protests as “civil commotion,” which carried a penalty of up to life imprisonment. The law also stated gatherings of four or more persons required police authorization, which was a provision authorities could use against trade union gatherings. Unions were able to organize large-scale strikes, but police often broke up the strikes, and employers used them to justify dismissals. Enforcement of labor laws was weak, in large part due to lack of resources and political will. Most unions functioned independently of government and political party influence. Labor leaders raised concerns regarding employers sponsoring management-friendly or only-on-paper worker unions – so-called yellow unions – to prevent effective unionization. Despite restrictions on gatherings, state-owned enterprises slated for privatization faced continuous labor strikes.

The International Federation for Human Rights and the HRCP noted workers’ registration levels were low across all provinces, inhibiting the right to unionize. Union parties reportedly lacked capacity, and workers had little incentive to register because corruption in contract bidding led to the perception that unions were ineffective in obtaining better paying jobs for their members. Authorities also had broad discretion to administratively deregister, suspend, or dissolve unions without judicial review.

Labor nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) assisted workers by providing technical training and capacity-building workshops to strengthen labor unions and trade organizations. They also worked with established labor unions to organize workers in the informal sector and advocated policies and legislation to improve the rights, working conditions, and wellbeing of workers, including laborers in the informal sector. NGOs also collaborated with provincial governments to provide agricultural

workers, brick kiln workers, and other vulnerable workers with national identification so they could connect to the country's social safety net and access the benefits of citizenship (such as voting, health care, and education).

Forced or Compulsory Labor

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Acceptable Work Conditions

Wage and Hour Laws

Both the national constitution and provincial laws provided for minimum wages in some sectors. Under the law, provinces were responsible for labor and minimum wage setting, while the federal government regulated labor and wages for the federally administered Islamabad Capital Territory. According to the ILO, the minimum wage law mandated minimum wages broadly but excluded public-sector employees, agricultural workers, coal miners, workers in charitable enterprises, and workers in small enterprises (up to nine employees) in KP. The law provided for a maximum workweek of 48 hours (50 hours for seasonal factories) with rest periods during the workday and paid annual holidays. The national labor code also required the provision of time off on official government holidays, overtime pay, annual and sick leave, health care, education for workers' children, social security, old-age benefits, and a workers' welfare fund. Many workers, however, were employed as contract laborers with no benefits beyond basic wages and no long-term job security, even if they remained with the same employer for many years.

Furthermore, these national regulations did not apply to agricultural workers, workers in establishments with fewer than 10 employees, or domestic workers. Workers in these types of employment also lacked the right to access labor courts to seek redress of grievances and were extremely vulnerable to exploitation. Wage, hour, and occupational safety and health (OSH) violations were prevalent in the informal sector.

Private employers did not always comply with orders regarding the minimum wage, and authorities struggled to enforce minimum wage laws across all provinces. According to labor rights organizations, most workers in the textile sector were contracted via third parties and often did not receive legal minimum wages and were not registered or insured in the social security system.

Occupational Safety and Health

There was no independent federal legislation on OSH regulation. In 2017, Sindh enacted the Occupational Safety and Health Act, and in 2022 Balochistan adopted a similar law providing OSH standards for all workplaces. The laws had weak coverage of informal-sector implementation, affecting enforcement in multiple sectors of labor, particularly at provincial levels. Across all industries, workers could not remove themselves from dangerous working conditions without risking loss of employment. The government did not proactively identify unsafe conditions and only responded to worker OSH complaints.

IndustriALL global union reported in October workers and their unions in several cities and towns throughout the country protested in the streets against antiworker policies and practices. This joint trade union action followed a meeting of all IndustriALL's affiliates in the country, held in September in Karachi, where union leaders vowed to collectively fight to safeguard workers' rights.

Informal-sector employees, such as domestic and home-based workers, were particularly vulnerable to health and safety dangers. Factory managers were often unable to ascertain the identity of fire or

other work-related accident victims because these individuals were contract workers and generally did not appear in records.

Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement

Provincial governments had primary responsibility for enforcing wage, hour, and OSH regulations. Enforcement was ineffective due to limited resources, corruption, and inadequate regulatory structures. Minimum wage and labor law disputes were settled by internal dispute resolution mechanisms as opposed to being dealt with by national courts, further contributing to corruption. Penalties were not commensurate with similar crimes, such as fraud. Penalties were rarely applied against violators.

The industry-specific nature of many labor laws and the lack of government enforcement gave employers in many sectors relative impunity regarding working conditions, treatment of employees, work hours, and pay.

Inspectors had the authority to make unannounced inspections and initiate sanctions. The number of labor inspectors employed by the provincial governments was insufficient. Many workers, especially in the informal sector, were unaware of their rights.

The government did not act to prevent violations, particularly against vulnerable groups.

c. Disappearance and Abduction

Disappearance

There were widespread reports of enforced disappearances by or on behalf of government authorities across the country. Some officials from the intelligence agencies, police, and security forces reportedly held prisoners incommunicado and refused to disclose their location. In response to widespread protests against enforced disappearances, on August 2, Federal Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar announced a support package of five million rupees (\$17,925) per family of missing persons. The package aimed to provide legal and financial assistance to the affected families.

On February 28, caretaker Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar appeared before the Islamabad High Court in a case concerning missing Baloch students. He downplayed activists' critiques regarding the government's approach to the issue of missing persons and emphasized security threats posed by Baloch insurgents' armed resistance in Balochistan. Court proceedings established the whereabouts of 11 of the missing students had been determined, of whom nine were in the Balochistan Counter Terrorism Department's custody, while four remained missing.

In a subsequent hearing, the court imposed a fine of two million rupees (\$7,170) each on the interior secretary, the inspector general of Islamabad Police, and the superintendent of police in one of the missing person's cases. On July 31, the government notified the court of the formation of a three-member committee comprising intelligence officials to assist in the recovery of missing persons.

According to figures released in July by the government's Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances, 10,285 missing-person cases were filed with the commission since 2011. The commission considered 8,015 of these cases resolved, while 2,270 remained pending. Among those cases resolved, the commission determined 4,514 individuals had returned home, 1,002 were being held in military-operated internment centers, 671 were held in the prison system, 277 were deceased, and 1,551 were determined not to be instances of enforced disappearances. The commission separately issued January figures showing 33 percent of the total cases in 2023 pertained to persons in KP, while 27 percent were from Balochistan.

Members of the judiciary and civil society activists criticized the commission for failing to initiate timely proceedings on missing-person cases and provide adequate support to the relatives of missing persons.

Human rights organizations reported authorities arrested and caused the disappearance of Pashtun, Sindhi, and Baloch human rights activists, as well as Sindhi and Baloch nationalists, without cause or warrant. They also alleged children were detained to pressure their parents. According to the NGO The Voice for Sindhi Missing Persons, 80 Sindhi persons disappeared in Sindh Province alone between January and August. Activists said most of the victims were affiliated with Sindhi nationalist parties.

According to the NGO Voice for Baloch Missing Persons, 285 Baloch persons disappeared in the province between January and September, with an alleged 7,500 persons forcibly disappeared since 2000. The Human Rights Council of Balochistan reported 306 cases of enforced disappearances in Balochistan between January and June. Of these, 104 persons were released, four were found dead, and 198 remained missing.

State agencies routinely harassed activists working on missing-person issues, with some activists becoming victims of enforced disappearances themselves.

Prolonged Detention without Charges

The law prohibited arbitrary arrest and detention and provided for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest or detention in court, but authorities did not always observe these requirements. Corruption and impunity compounded this problem.

The military had the authority to detain civilians indefinitely without charge in internment camps, occupy property, conduct operations, and convict detainees in KP solely using the testimony of a single soldier. The military was immune from prosecution in civilian courts for its actions in the province and was not required to release the names of detainees to their families. The families were therefore unable to challenge detainees' detentions in a civilian court. The military retained control of its detention centers in KP's southern districts, although the transition to civilian law enforcement continued.

d. Violations in Religious Freedom

See the Department of State's annual *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

e. Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Section 3.

Security of the Person

a. Torture and Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

Although the constitution and law prohibited torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, the penal code had no specific provision against torture. The penal code prohibited criminal use of force and assault against those who were detained; however, there were reports security forces, including the intelligence services, tortured and abused individuals in custody. The law criminalized torture, custodial death, and rape against persons in the custody of public officials. The law authorized the NCHR and the FIA to refer cases for possible prosecution based on complaints. On June 1, the Lahore High Court issued guidelines that all future cases of custodial torture, death, or rape would be investigated by the FIA, under the supervision of the NCHR.

Custodial deaths were charged under section 302 of the penal code, which carried the death penalty.

Physical abuse of criminal suspects in custody allegedly caused the injury or death of individuals. Lengthy delays throughout the trial process and failure to effectively investigate, discipline, and prosecute those responsible for killings contributed to a culture of impunity. Human rights organizations claimed that torture was perpetrated by police, military, and intelligence agency members, that they frequently operated with impunity, and that the government did not make serious efforts to curb the abuse. On August 19, the HRC reported 20 persons died in police custody due to torture from January to June. Media and civil society organizations reported cases of individuals dying in police custody allegedly due to torture.

There were reports police personnel employed cruel and degrading treatment and punishment. On September 12, in Quetta, Balochistan, a man held in police custody on blasphemy allegations was shot and killed by a police officer. The officer was subsequently arrested and charged with murder; however, family members of the man killed told media they had forgiven the officer and would not file a murder case against him, reportedly under pressure from local tribal leaders.

Police abuse was often underreported. Impunity was a significant problem in the security forces due to politicization, corruption, and a lack of effective mechanisms to report and investigate abuses. On June 7, the deputy inspector general for operations in Lahore suspended a police official in the Islampura area and ordered an inquiry against him on charges of taking a bribe, falsifying a case, and torture.

b. Protection of Children

Child Labor

See the Department of Labor's *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/findings/>.

Child Marriage

Despite legal prohibitions, child marriages occurred; laws on child marriage were not well enforced. Federal law set the legal age of marriage at 18 for men and 16 for girls, and a law in Sindh set 18 as the legal age of marriage for both boys and girls. According to UNICEF, 18 percent of girls were married by age 18. Nearly 19 million were child brides; one in six young women were married in childhood. Penalties for child marriage ranged from no less than five years to no more than 10 years of imprisonment and fines. At times, men evaded Sindh's child marriage law by traveling to a different province for marriage.

The Council of Islamic Ideology declared child marriage laws to be un-Islamic, noting they were "unfair and there cannot be any legal age for marriage." The council stated Islam did not prohibit underage marriage since it allowed the consummation of marriage after both partners reach puberty. Decisions of the council were nonbinding. Judges routinely cited Islamic law to justify child marriages, forcing families to find and appeal cases to judges who would apply the law.

In rural areas, poor parents sometimes sold their daughters into marriage, in some cases to settle debts or disputes. Although forced marriage was a criminal offense, many filed cases were not prosecuted. On August 15, the Lahore High Court allowed three Christian girls – ages nine, 13, and 16 – to retract their forced statements regarding conversion to Islam and returned them to their parents in district Kasur.

In July, President Asif Ali Zardari signed into law the Christian Marriage Act (Amendment) 2024, raising the federal minimum marriageable age for Christians to 18 from the previous minimums of 13 (girls) and 16 (boys), a law that applied to Christians in the Islamabad Capital Territory.

The Punjab provincial government approved the Sikh Marriage Act 2024 in June, enabling couples of 18 years and older to register their marriages. Media reported Sikhs from other provinces and countries could travel to Punjab to register their marriages.

c. Protection to Refugees

The country was not a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (or the 1967 Protocol) and had not enacted national legislation for the protection of refugees or established procedures to determine the refugee status of persons who were seeking international protection within its territory. The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations to provide protection and assistance to approximately 2.35 million refugees, asylum seekers, as well as other persons of concern.

Provision of First Asylum

The law did not provide for granting asylum or refugee status, and the government did not have a system for providing protection for refugees. The law also did not exclude asylum seekers and refugees from provisions regarding illegal entry or presence in the country. Through the years the government provided temporary legal status to Afghans living in the country. The government issued proof of registration cards to more than 1.3 million Afghan refugees who registered in 2006 as well as to their children. The country also hosted approximately 803,000 Afghans with Afghan Citizen Cards but did not grant them refugee status.

In 2022, authorities instructed UNHCR to suspend issuing documentation to asylum seekers and refer all asylum applications to the government.

d. Acts of Antisemitism and Antisemitic Incitement

Most of the historic Jewish community had emigrated from the country, with likely fewer than 200 remaining. Antisemitic sentiments were widespread in the vernacular press. Hate speech used by some politicians and broadcast in some print media and through social media used derogatory terms such as “Jewish agent” to attack individuals and groups or referred to “Zionist conspiracies.” On February 6, during an election campaign rally in Dera Ismail Khan, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Chief Moulana Fazal ur Rehman called PTI chief and former Prime Minister Imran Khan a Jewish agent who received funds from Jewish and Indian agencies. On July 16, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar alleged the PTI was a foreign-funded party that received funds from Jewish and Christian donors.

e. Instances of Transnational Repression

The government allegedly engaged in transnational repression to intimidate or extract reprisal against individuals outside its borders, including civil society activists, human rights defenders, and journalists.

Extraterritorial Killing, Kidnapping, or Violence or Threats of Violence

Some activists alleged the government killed and kidnapped persons in other countries for politically motivated reprisal. On January 18, Pakistan conducted military strikes in Iran's Sistan and Balochistan Province, killing nine Baloch individuals of Pakistani origin. According to Inter-Services Public Relations, the Pakistani military targeted hideouts of Baloch insurgent groups in Iran. Baloch rights groups alleged the victims included innocent women and children.

Threats, Harassment, Surveillance, or Coercion

In May, Baloch human rights activist Mahrang Baloch reported harassment and surveillance by Pakistani state officials while participating in a human rights symposium in Norway. Independent international media also alleged she was followed by state-sponsored individuals.