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Advance Unedited Version

Committee against Torture

Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Pakistan

1. The Committee considered the second periodic report of Pakistan¹ at its 2250th and 2253rd meetings,² held on 22 and 23 April 2026, and adopted the present concluding observations at its 2261st meeting, held on 29 April 2026.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the second periodic report of the State Party, although it regrets that the report was submitted one year late. The Committee also appreciates the State Party's written replies³ to the list of issues.⁴

3. The Committee expresses appreciation for having had the opportunity to engage in a constructive dialogue with the delegation of the State Party and for the responses provided to the questions and concerns raised during the consideration of the report.

B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the ratification of or accession to the following international instruments by the State Party:

(a) The Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), of the International Labour Organization (ILO), on 14 March 2025;

(b) The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, on 4 November 2022.

5. The Committee welcomes the State Party's initiatives to revise and introduce legislation in areas of relevance to the Convention, including the adoption of:

(a) The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, which defines and criminalizes domestic violence and provides for protection orders, support mechanisms and compensation for victims, on 23 January 2026;

(b) The Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act, which criminalizes torture and custodial death by public officials, and prohibits the use of evidence obtained through torture, on 3 November 2022;

¹ [CAT/PAK/2](#).

² See CAT/C/SR.2250 and CAT/C/SR.2253.

³ [CAT/PAK/RQ/2](#).

⁴ [CAT/PAK/Q/2](#).

(c) The Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act, which establishes specialized courts and anti-rape crisis cells in every district, and mandates that cases be adjudicated within four months, on 1 December 2021;

(d) The Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Act, which creates a commission to investigate cases of intimidation and harassment against journalists and media professionals, on 20 November 2021;

(e) The Legal Aid and Justice Authority Act, which aims to institutionalize the provision of free legal aid for indigent individuals and ensure effective access to justice, on 24 March 2020;

(f) The Zainab Alert Response and Recovery Act, which creates a national alert, response, and recovery system for missing and abducted children, on 11 March 2020;

(g) The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act, which criminalizes trafficking in persons, prescribes enhanced penalties for offenders and provides comprehensive protections for victims, on 30 May 2018;

(h) The Juvenile Justice System Act, which prohibits capital punishment for those under 18 years at the time of offense, establishes a programme of diversion and guarantees free legal aid for children in conflict with the law, on 18 May 2018;

(i) The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, which recognizes the right of persons to choose their gender identity and prohibits discrimination against and harassment of transgender and intersex persons, on 8 May 2018;

(j) The Acid and Burn Crime Act, which criminalizes the misuse of corrosive substances and provides for treatment, rehabilitation, legal support and protection for victims of acid and burn attacks, in 2018.

6. The Committee also welcomes the State Party's initiatives to amend its policies and procedures in areas of relevance to the Convention and to ensure greater protection of human rights, including:

(a) The contributions to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture in 2020, 2023 and 2025;

(b) The adoption, in 2022, of the National Gender Policy Framework (2022–2027);

(c) The establishment, in 2022, of the National Coordination Committee on Trafficking in Persons;

(d) The revision, in 2020, of the National Action Plan for Human Rights;

(e) The adoption, in 2020, of the Federal Prison Reform Framework, which was developed under the Islamabad High Court's direction to align federal detention conditions with international standards;

(f) The operationalization, in 2020, of the National Commission on the Rights of the Child.

C. Principal subjects of concern and recommendations

Pending follow-up issues from the previous reporting cycle

7. In its previous concluding observations,⁵ the Committee requested the State Party to provide information on the implementation of its recommendations on allegations of widespread use of torture by the police, inadequate investigation of complaints of torture by police oversight bodies, and impunity for acts of torture by military and paramilitary forces and intelligence agencies (paras. 7 (c), 9 (c) and 11 (a), respectively). In the light of the information received from the State Party on follow-up to those concluding observations, on

⁵ CAT/C/PAK/CO/1, para. 46.

31 May 2019,⁶ the information contained in the State Party's second periodic report and the additional information provided by the delegation during the dialogue, and with reference to the letter dated 9 October 2019 from the Rapporteur for follow-up to concluding observations to the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva,⁷ the Committee is of the view that the recommendations contained in paragraph 7 (c) and 9 (c) of the previous concluding observations have not been implemented and that the State Party has not provided sufficient information on the measures taken to implement the recommendation set out in paragraph 11 (a). The recommendations contained in paragraphs 7 (c), 9 (c) and 11 (a) of the previous concluding observations are addressed in paragraphs 21, 29 and 33 of the present concluding observations.

Definition and criminalization of torture

8. While noting that article 14 (2) of the Constitution prohibits torture for the purpose of extracting information, that the offence of torture is not subject to a statute of limitations and that the definition of torture enshrined in the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act of 2022 is broadly in line with the provisions of article 1 of the Convention, the Committee is concerned that this definition does not explicitly include acts by which severe mental pain or suffering are intentionally inflicted on a person, despite domestic courts reportedly interpreting torture as encompassing psychological harm. The Committee also notes with concern that the Act does not establish specific penalties for torture, instead relying on Penal Code provisions that primarily criminalize general offences such as "grievous hurt" and related acts without recognizing torture as a distinct and grave crime, which may lead to lenient punishment for perpetrators of acts of torture that do not result in the death of the victim, running counter to the requirement set out in article 4 (2) of the Convention that torture should be made punishable by appropriate penalties that take into account its grave nature (arts. 1 and 4).⁸

9. **The State Party should amend the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act of 2022 to ensure that the definition of torture explicitly includes acts by which severe mental pain or suffering are intentionally inflicted on a person, in line with article 1 of the Convention and the jurisprudence of the State Party's domestic courts, and to establish specific penalties ensuring that all acts of torture and ill-treatment are punishable by appropriate penalties that take into account their grave nature, in accordance with article 4 (2) of the Convention.**

Absolute prohibition of torture and command responsibility

10. The Committee is concerned that there is no clear provision in the State Party's legislation to ensure that the prohibition against torture is absolute and non-derogable, in accordance with article 2 (2) of the Convention, and that an order from a superior officer or a public authority may in no case be invoked as a justification of torture, in accordance with article 2 (3) of the Convention. It is also concerned that the principle of command or superior responsibility for acts of torture or ill-treatment committed by subordinates is not explicitly recognized in domestic law (art. 2).

11. **The State Party should ensure that the principle of absolute prohibition of torture is incorporated into its legislation and that it is strictly applied, in accordance with article 2 (2) of the Convention, and that, in accordance with article 2 (3) of the Convention, an order from a superior officer or a public authority may in no case be invoked as a justification of torture. To this end, the State Party should establish mechanisms for the protection of subordinates who refuse to obey such orders and ensure that all law enforcement officers are informed of the prohibition against obeying unlawful orders and of the protective mechanisms in place. Furthermore, the State**

⁶ CAT/C/PAK/CO/1/Add.1.

⁷ See

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCAT%2FFUL%2FPAK%2F37422&Lang=en.

⁸ CCPR/C/PAK/CO/2, paras. 28 and 29.

Party should establish the criminal responsibility of those exercising superior authority for acts of torture or ill-treatment committed by subordinates, where they knew or should have known that such impermissible conduct was occurring or likely to occur, yet failed to take any reasonable and necessary preventive measures or to refer the case to the competent authorities for investigation and prosecution.

Universal jurisdiction

12. The Committee regrets the lack of information on the State Party's capacity to exercise universal jurisdiction over acts of torture. It is also concerned about the lack of clarity on whether Pakistani courts can exercise jurisdiction over alleged perpetrators of torture present in its territory when the State Party does not extradite them, regardless of where the offense was committed or the nationality of the perpetrator or victim (arts. 5, 7 and 8).

13. The State Party should take all steps necessary, including by reviewing the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act of 2022, to effectively exercise universal jurisdiction over any persons allegedly responsible for acts of torture who are present in its territory if it does not extradite them to another country, in accordance with articles 7 and 8 of the Convention.

Fundamental legal safeguards

14. While taking note of the procedural safeguards to prevent torture and ill-treatment that are enshrined in the Constitution and the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Committee is concerned about reports indicating that, in practice, persons in custody, in particular persons detained for terrorism-related offences and members of ethnic and religious minorities, are not routinely afforded all fundamental legal safeguards from the very outset of deprivation of liberty. In that respect, it has been reported that: (a) the rights of persons in custody to be informed of the reasons for their arrest, the nature of any charges against them and their rights are routinely violated; (b) access to lawyers is not guaranteed in practice, particularly during the period of investigation; (c) timely access to an independent medical examination is not a standard practice aimed at uncovering signs of torture and ill-treatment; (d) the right to notify a relative or a person of one's choice is often delayed and sometimes denied; (e) registers of persons deprived of liberty, including details about such persons, are not used systematically and consistently at all stages of detention; (f) suspects are often brought before the competent judicial authority well after the 24-hour legal limit under the Pakistani Constitution, which may leave them vulnerable to an increased risk of torture or ill-treatment; and (g) the right of the accused to challenge the legality of detention before a judge is not always respected. While noting with appreciation the ongoing implementation of the safe jails Punjab project, which aims to equip 43 jails with advanced surveillance and automation, including video or audio monitoring systems, body-worn cameras, external control rooms and panic buttons, the Committee remains concerned about reports that interrogations continue to occur in police custody and other detention facilities lacking such systems (art. 2).

15. The State Party should:

(a) Ensure that all persons deprived of their liberty are afforded, both in law and in practice, regardless of the reasons for their detention, all fundamental legal safeguards from the very outset of their detention, including notably:

- (i) Being informed both orally and in writing and in a language that they understand of the reasons for their arrest, the nature of any charges against them and their rights;**
- (ii) Being informed of and having guaranteed their right to be assisted by an independent lawyer of their choice, including during the investigation stage, to consult with their lawyer in private throughout the proceedings against them, and to have access to qualified, independent and free legal aid, if necessary;**

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- (iii) **Having the right to request and receive a medical examination by an independent medical doctor free of charge, or by a doctor of their choice, upon request, that is conducted out of hearing and sight of police officers and prison staff, unless the doctor concerned explicitly requests otherwise;**
 - (iv) **Having their medical records immediately brought to the attention of a prosecutor whenever the findings therein or allegations made may indicate torture or ill-treatment;**
 - (v) **Being able to notify a family member or any other person of their choice of their detention;**
 - (vi) **Having their detention recorded in a central register and having that register accessible to their lawyers, family members and other persons concerned by the case;**
 - (vii) **Being brought before a judge within the 24-hour legal limit prescribed by law;**
 - (viii) **Being able to challenge the legality of their detention at any stage of the proceedings;**
 - (b) **Intensify its efforts to ensure that all persons deprived of their liberty are interrogated, in all cases and in all places of custody, exclusively in interrogation rooms equipped with a video or audio surveillance system, except where doing so might give rise to violations of detainees' right to privacy or the confidentiality of their conversations with their counsel or doctor;**
 - (c) **Provide officials involved in detention-related activities with compulsory and regular training on legal safeguards, monitor compliance with legal safeguards and penalize any failure on the part of officials to comply with them.**

Counter-terrorism

16. While acknowledging the State Party's national security concerns, the Committee considers that counter-terrorism legislation, in particular the Anti-terrorism Act of 1997, contains a definition of terrorism that is vague and overly broad, despite the Supreme Court ruling in *Ghulam Hussain v. the State* (2019) to limit the scope of the definition. The Committee is also concerned that this legislation has reportedly been extensively used beyond the context of counter-terrorism to crack down on those critical of the Government. It is also concerned that persons suspected or accused of involvement in terrorist acts can be detained by security agencies and civil armed forces for up to three months without court review or the possibility of lodging a habeas petition. It is further concerned that the Act allows anti-terrorism courts to admit confessions as evidence as long as the district superintendent of police was present when the accused confessed, in contrast with civil courts where confessions are admissible in court only if they are made to a magistrate. Moreover, the Committee is concerned by the very broad powers granted to the Army under the Actions (in Aid of Civil Power) Regulation of 2011, which allows for the detention of individuals suspected of involvement in terrorist activities without warrants or judicial supervision, and for indefinite detention in military internment centres. Finally, it is concerned about allegations that persons accused of terrorism are subjected to arbitrary detention, torture, ill-treatment, enforced disappearance and extrajudicial killings and that court proceedings in terrorism cases often lack fundamental procedural safeguards to ensure fair trials (arts. 2, 11, 12, 15 and 16).⁹

17. The State Party should:

- (a) **Review and narrow the definition of terrorism in its anti-terrorism legislation, in particular the Anti-terrorism Act of 1997, to bring it into line with the Convention and other international human rights norms, as also ruled by the Supreme Court, and ensure that anti-terrorism legislation is not used to restrict the rights**

⁹ CCPR/C/PAK/CO/2, paras. 26 and 27.

enshrined in the Convention and repress human rights defenders, journalists, political opponents, members of ethnic and religious groups, and civil society activists;

(b) **Reduce the maximum length of time that a person suspected of terrorism can be held in police custody, ensure that any extension is limited to exceptional circumstances that are duly justified and provide for the judicial review of the lawfulness of the detention;**

(c) **Consider amending the Anti-terrorism Act of 1997 to align standards for the admissibility of confessions in anti-terrorism courts with those applicable in civil courts;**

(d) **Amend the Actions (in Aid of Civil Power) Regulation of 2011 to remove the power of the military to establish internment centres in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and the Provincially Administered Tribal Areas, and ensure that no one is held in secret or incommunicado detention anywhere in the territory of the State party;**

(e) **Ensure that all allegations of torture and ill-treatment committed by public officials against persons accused of involvement in terrorist acts are promptly, impartially and effectively investigated by an independent body, that those responsible are prosecuted and duly punished, and that victims obtain redress;**

(f) **Ensure that adequate and effective legal safeguards and fair trial guarantees are in place in law and in practice and that no arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance or extrajudicial killing is carried out under the guise of countering terrorism.**

Non-refoulement

18. While commending the State Party for hosting large numbers of refugees, mostly from Afghanistan, the Committee is concerned about the absence of an adequate legislative and institutional framework ensuring the right to seek asylum and protection against refoulement for all refugees and asylum-seekers in the country, and the reliance on short-term administrative measures in dealing with asylum-seekers and refugees. It is also deeply concerned about the deportation of large numbers of Afghan nationals¹⁰, including children, to that country following the adoption of the Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan on 26 September 2023, without any individual assessment of their protection needs and risks of refoulement. It is further concerned about the decision of the State Party not to further extend, beyond 30 June 2025, the validity of the Proof of Registration cards, which served as identity documents for more than 1.4 million Afghan refugees. Moreover, the Committee is seriously concerned about reports of coercion, including harassment and intimidation, threats of deportation and police abuse, extortion, raids and arbitrary detention, to return Afghans, including registered refugees, to their country of origin where they could be at risk of persecution, torture or ill-treatment (arts. 2, 3 and 16).¹¹

19. The State Party should:

(a) **Pending the adoption of a national legal and institutional framework on asylum in line with international standards, take the measures necessary to enable all**

¹⁰ According to IOM and UNHCR's public flash report update, between September 2023 and April 2026, there were 2,154,205 total returns to Afghanistan, of which 226,055 were deportations.

¹¹ [CERD/C/PAK/CO/24-26](#), paras. 31 and 32; [CCPR/C/PAK/CO/2](#), paras. 36 and 37; [CRC/C/PAK/CO/6-7](#), paras. 40 and 41. See also OHCHR, "UN experts sound alarm on looming deportations of Afghans from Pakistan", press release, 29 August 2025; OHCHR, "UN experts call on Pakistan to stop displacing Afghans", press release, 4 April 2025; OHCHR, "UN experts call for protection of Afghan nationals in Pakistan", press release, 6 December 2023; OHCHR, "UN Special Rapporteurs urge Pakistan to stop planned mass deportation of Afghans", press release, 17 October 2023; OHCHR, "Türk alarmed by reports of human rights abuses against Afghans forced to leave Pakistan", press release, 15 November 2023; OHCHR, "Afghan nationals at risk of deportation from Pakistan", press release, 27 October 2023.

individuals seeking or in need of international protection to have an individualized case assessment, irrespective of their country of origin;

(b) Uphold the principle of non-refoulement by ensuring that, in practice, no one may be expelled, returned or extradited to another State where there are substantial grounds for believing that he or she would be in danger of being subjected to torture;

(c) Ensure that procedural safeguards against refoulement are in place and that effective remedies with respect to refoulement claims in removal proceedings are available, in particular reviews of rejections by an independent judicial appeal body;

(d) Consider repealing or reviewing the Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan, which poses serious risks for non-citizens, in particular Afghan nationals, who are being forcibly returned to their country of origin;

(e) Investigate all allegations of police abuse against Afghans and other actions by public authorities undertaken for the purpose of coercing them to return to their country of origin, despite the real risk of torture they face, and discipline or criminally sanction those responsible for such abuse;

(f) Consider becoming a Party to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951, the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees of 1967, the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons of 1954 and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness of 1961.

Extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances

20. The Committee remains concerned about reports of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings, allegedly perpetrated by members of the military and paramilitary forces, police officers and intelligence agencies' personnel, targeting human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists, civil society activists, public officials, political opponents and members of ethnic and religious minorities, particularly in the Sindh and Balochistan Provinces.¹² It is also concerned about the reported lack of effective investigations and prosecutions of and accountability for those allegedly responsible for extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, including in connection with the 9 May 2023 protests and the November 2024 crackdown on protesters. It is further concerned about reports that the National Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances is not sufficiently independent and lacks the resources to carry out its mandate, that recently, it "disposed of" more than 9,000 of the over 10,000 cases of alleged enforced disappearance registered between 2010 and August 2025, and that its work to date has not resulted in any criminal convictions in cases of enforced disappearance. Moreover, the Committee is concerned that enforced disappearance is not criminalized as a distinct offence in the State Party's legislation (arts. 2, 11, 12 and 16).¹³

21. The State Party should: (a) accelerate the adoption of the Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill 2021, which proposed additions to the Penal Code to criminalize enforced disappearance, and consider bringing the definition of enforced disappearance set out in the bill in line with that contained in article 2 of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; (b) ensure that all reports of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings, as well as related acts of torture, are thoroughly, promptly and effectively investigated by an independent body, that alleged perpetrators are prosecuted and, if

¹² See OHCHR, "Pakistan: Appalled by attacks killing 20 in Balochistan", press release, 15 October 2024; OHCHR, "Pakistan: UN experts demand release of Baloch human rights defenders, and an end to crackdown on peaceful protest", press release, 26 March 2025.

¹³ CERD/C/PAK/CO/24-26, paras. 17–18 and 29–30; CCPR/C/PAK/CO/2, paras. 24 and 25; CRC/C/PAK/CO/6-7, paras. 29 and 51. See also OHCHR, "Press briefing notes on Pakistan", press release, 18 June 2021; OHCHR, "Pakistan: Victims of enforced disappearance should not be discouraged from lodging complaints", press release, 10 December 2021; OHCHR, "Khattak 'disappearance' case a test of Pakistan's human rights commitment, say UN experts", press release, 9 December 2020; OHCHR, "UN experts: Pakistan must end enforced disappearance of human rights defender", press release, 4 September 2020.

found guilty, punished with penalties commensurate with the gravity of their crimes; (c) take all necessary measures to discover the fate and whereabouts of disappeared persons and, in the event of death, identify them and return their remains, and ensure that families are regularly informed of the progress and results of investigations, that they are provided with the official administrative documents and that they receive full and adequate reparations; (d) assess the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances and the impact of its work, with a view to ensuring that is fully independent, impartial, transparent and effective in advancing access to justice, remedies and reparations for the victims and their families, and in preventing and combating impunity; and (e) consider acceding to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

Conditions of detention

22. While acknowledging the steps taken by the State Party to improve the conditions in detention facilities, including by addressing prison overcrowding through the use of non-custodial alternative measures and the construction of additional facilities, the Committee remains concerned by reports indicating severe overcrowding,¹⁴ especially in the Punjab and Sindh Provinces, which is mainly attributable to the excessive use of prolonged pre-trial detention,¹⁵ as well as by extremely poor material conditions of detention in places of deprivation of liberty, in particular insalubrity and inadequate hygiene, including feminine hygiene products, dilapidated and old infrastructure, insufficient ventilation and access to daylight, the poor quality and insufficient quantity of the food and water provided, limited recreational and educational activities to foster rehabilitation and unnecessary restrictions on family visits. It is also concerned about reports of limited access to quality healthcare, including mental healthcare, and about the lack of trained and qualified prison staff, including medical staff. Moreover, the Committee is seriously concerned that individuals imprisoned on charges of blasphemy are often placed in solitary confinement for extended periods of time far exceeding the 14 consecutive days permitted in law,¹⁶ as is reportedly the case of Junaid Hafeez, who has been held in solitary confinement since May 2014.¹⁷ Furthermore, it is concerned that pretrial detainees are often held with convicts, and that children are frequently detained together with adults (arts. 2, 11 and 16).¹⁸

23. **The State Party should intensify its efforts to bring conditions of detention into line with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), including by reviewing the Pakistan Prison Rules of 1978. It should, in particular:**

(a) **Take further measures to reduce overcrowding in prisons, including by making greater use of alternatives to detention, especially in the context of pretrial detention, in accordance with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures (the Tokyo Rules) and the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules), and continuing to implement plans to develop and renovate the infrastructure of prisons and other detention facilities;**

(b) **Guarantee that the basic needs of persons deprived of their liberty are satisfied, including the specific needs of women, in particular pregnant women and those with children, especially with regard to water, sanitation, food, feminine hygiene products, ventilation and daylight, and increase the number of trained and qualified prison staff, including medical staff, to ensure the provision of proper healthcare for prisoners, in accordance with rules 24–35 of the Nelson Mandela Rules;**

¹⁴ According to World Prison Brief, the occupancy rate in Pakistani prisons was 163 per cent in November 2024. See <https://www.prisonstudies.org/country/pakistan>.

¹⁵ Ibid: The proportion of prisoners in pretrial detention compared with the total prison population is 73.4 per cent in November 2024. See <https://www.prisonstudies.org/country/pakistan>.

¹⁶ CERD/C/PAK/CO/24-26, paras. 15 and 16.

¹⁷ See OHCHR, “Pakistan blasphemy death sentence for Junaid Hafeez is “travesty of justice”- UN experts”, press release, 27 December 2019.

¹⁸ CCPR/C/PAK/CO/2, paras. 30 and 31; CRC/C/PAK/CO/6-7, paras. 46 and 47.

(c) **Take the necessary measures to ensure, in practice, access to meaningful educational, recreational and vocational training programmes in all places of detention, and allocate adequate human, material and financial resources for their effective implementation, paying particular attention to children deprived of their liberty by providing age-appropriate education, vocational training and rehabilitation programmes adapted to their specific needs;**

(d) **Refrain from holding individuals in solitary confinement on the grounds that doing so is necessary to ensure their safety. In cases where those concerns are present, such as with respect to persons deprived of their liberty on charges of blasphemy, the State Party should consider transferring these persons to another prison or prison section and ensure that the measures taken to effectively protect such individuals from harm do not themselves amount to torture or ill-treatment;**

(e) **Ensure that pretrial detainees are held separately from convicts, and that children are held separately from adults.**

National Commission for Human Rights and monitoring of detention facilities

24. While welcoming the accreditation with A status of the National Commission for Human Rights by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions in April 2024 and noting with appreciation its constructive cooperation with the Committee and its important work in preventing and combatting torture in the State Party, the Committee remains concerned that some provisions of the National Commission for Human Rights Act of 2012 limit the ability of the Commission to undertake full inquiries into complaints of human rights violations by members of the armed forces and intelligence agencies. It is also concerned about reports that the current process of selection and appointment of the commissioners does not include the broad participation of civil society organizations, and that the human and financial resources allocated to it remain insufficient to allow it to discharge its mandate effectively. While noting the information provided by the State Party that regular announced and unannounced inspections of prison facilities and other places of deprivation of liberty are conducted by several national monitoring bodies, such as the National Commission for Human Rights, the Public Prosecutor's Office, District and Sessions Judges, High Court judges, administrative authorities, and human rights departments at the provincial level, the Committee is concerned about the lack of information on the measures taken to implement the recommendations put forward by these monitoring bodies and to establish an effective independent national system to monitor and inspect all places of deprivation of liberty, including those under the authority of the armed forces and intelligence agencies. It is also concerned about reports that these national monitoring mechanisms are not fully independent in practice from the executive branch (arts. 2, 11 and 16).¹⁹

25. **The State party should: (a) amend the National Commission for Human Rights Act of 2012 to ensure that it is able to investigate all allegations of torture or ill-treatment committed by any entity carrying out arrests and detentions in the State Party, including the armed forces and intelligence agencies; (b) continue its efforts to ensure that the National Commission fully complies with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles), including by implementing the recommendations of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions; (c) ensure that monitoring bodies with a mandate to visit places of deprivation of liberty, including those mentioned in the paragraph above, are able to carry out regular, independent and unannounced visits to all civilian and military places of deprivation of liberty and to communicate confidentially with any persons deprived of their liberty during these visits; (d) establish an effective independent national system to monitor and inspect all places of deprivation of liberty and follow up on the outcome of such systematic monitoring; and (e) consider becoming a Party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.**

¹⁹ CEDAW/C/PAK/CO/5, paras. 23 and 24; CCPR/C/PAK/CO/2, paras. 6 and 7; CERD/C/PAK/CO/24-26, paras. 9 and 10; CRC/C/PAK/CO/6-7, para. 12.

Deaths in custody

26. The Committee regrets the lack of information and statistical data for the period under review on the total number of deaths, including violent deaths, that occurred in places of detention. It is also concerned about allegations that, along with the lack of healthcare, torture and ill-treatment are frequent causes of death in custody. It regrets the lack of information on investigations undertaken in that regard, including under the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act (arts. 2, 11, 12 and 16).

27. **The State Party should:**

(a) **Ensure that all deaths in custody are promptly and impartially investigated under the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act by an independent entity, including by means of independent forensic examinations, with due regard to the Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death and, where appropriate, apply the corresponding sanctions;**

(b) **Assess the effectiveness of strategies and programmes for the prevention of inter-prisoner violence, suicide and self-harm and evaluate the existing programmes for the prevention, detection and treatment of chronic, degenerative and infectious diseases in prisons;**

(c) **Compile and provide to the Committee detailed information on violent incidents and deaths in all places of detention, their causes and the outcomes of the investigations.**

Allegations of torture or ill-treatment and the lack of accountability

28. While noting with appreciation the State Party's rejection of torture and the efforts made to develop and strengthen mechanisms to implement its obligations under the Convention, the Committee remains concerned about:

(a) Consistent reports indicating that persons in custody are subjected to torture or ill-treatment by law enforcement officers, prison guards, military personnel, paramilitary forces and staff of intelligence agencies in police stations, prisons, national security detention centres and military bases and internment centres, in particular during the arrest, interrogation and investigation phases, often as a method of coercion to extract confessions or to punish or intimidate persons accused of terrorism or real or perceived political opponents and critics of the Government;

(b) The reported lack of accountability, as reflected by the extremely low number of torture prosecutions initiated since the adoption of the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act of 2022 and the lack of prompt, effective and independent investigation of allegations of torture or ill-treatment, which contributes to a climate of impunity;

(c) Reports that existing investigation bodies, in particular the Federal Investigation Agency – in which ordinary police officers participate in investigations – lack the necessary independence and that their mandates are unclear and overlap;

(d) The possibility, under provisions of the Actions (in Aid of Civil Power) Regulation of 2011 and the 2015 amendment to the Army Act, of granting retroactive immunity for acts of torture committed by members of the military and paramilitary forces after the February 2008 events,²⁰ as well as about the 27th constitutional amendment which establishes lifetime immunity from criminal proceedings and arrest for the President, Field Marshall, Marshall of the Air Force and Admiral of the Fleet;²¹

(e) Reports that victims and witnesses of torture have been reluctant to report cases for fear of harassment and reprisals by the perpetrators and lack of protection. In this respect,

²⁰ The events of February 2008 refer to the wave of election-related violence and terrorist attacks around Pakistan's 18 February 2008 general elections, including bombings targeting political rallies and candidates, which resulted in numerous deaths and injuries.

²¹ See OHCHR, "Pakistan: Türk concerned by constitutional amendments and immunity provisions", press release, 28 November 2025.

the Committee is concerned that article 11 of the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act of 2022 criminalizes *mala fide* complaints, which may have a deterrent effect on the submission of complaints by victims of torture and ill-treatment and may be used against complainants as a method of reprisal;

(f) Reports that there is still no specific, independent, effective and confidential mechanism for the receipt of complaints of torture or ill-treatment in all places of deprivation of liberty;

(g) The lack of comprehensive information about cases that have resulted in criminal proceedings or their outcomes, including the prosecutions carried out, convictions pronounced and the penalties and disciplinary measures imposed on persons convicted for acts of torture and ill-treatment during the period under review (arts. 2, 11–13 and 16).²²

29. The State Party should:

(a) **Ensure that all complaints of torture and ill-treatment are investigated in a prompt, effective and impartial manner by an independent body and that there is no institutional or hierarchical relationship between that body's investigators and the suspected perpetrators of such acts. In particular, the independence of the Federal Investigation Agency should be strengthened, including by ensuring that ordinary police officers do not participate in investigations;**

(b) **Ensure that the authorities open an investigation *ex officio* whenever there are reasonable grounds for believing that an act of torture or ill-treatment has been committed;**

(c) **Ensure that, in cases of torture or ill-treatment, the suspected perpetrators are immediately suspended from duty for the duration of the investigation, while ensuring that the principle of presumption of innocence is observed;**

(d) **Ensure that the suspected perpetrators of acts of torture or ill-treatment and the superior officers responsible for ordering or tolerating such acts are duly tried and, if found guilty, punished in a manner that is commensurate with the gravity of those acts;**

(e) **Ensure the establishment and effective operation of police oversight bodies, in particular public safety commissions, at the district and provincial levels throughout the State Party;**

(f) **Amend the Actions (in Aid of Civil Power) Regulation and the 2015 amendment to the Army Act to eliminate potential retrospective immunity for acts of torture committed by members of the military and paramilitary forces after the February 2008 events;**

(g) **Review the 27th constitutional amendment to ensure that no person, including the President, Field Marshal, Marshal of the Air Force or Admiral of the Fleet, enjoys lifetime immunity from criminal proceedings and arrest in respect of acts of torture or ill-treatment;**

(h) **Ensure access to an independent, effective and confidential complaints mechanism in all places of detention, including police custody facilities and prisons, and protect victims, witnesses and members of their families from any risk of reprisals, including by reviewing article 11 of the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act of 2022 to decriminalize *mala fide* complaints;**

(i) **Compile and disseminate up-to-date disaggregated statistics on the complaints filed, investigations conducted, prosecutions launched and convictions handed down in cases involving allegations of torture and ill-treatment.**

²² CCPR/C/PAK/CO/2, paras. 28 and 29; CRC/C/PAK/CO/6-7, para. 29.

Inadmissibility of statements obtained through torture

30. While taking note of the guarantees set forth in the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act of 2022 regarding the inadmissibility of evidence obtained under torture or coercion, and the information provided by the State Party that it is introducing a series of reforms to promote the use of forensic science, digital evidence, and other modern, non-coercive investigative techniques, the Committee regrets the lack of information about court decisions in which confessions obtained through torture or ill-treatment have been disallowed as evidence. It is concerned about reports indicating that torture is routinely used to extract confessions and that confessions obtained through torture are invoked against defendants in court as evidence of their guilt. It is also concerned about consistent reports maintaining that the courts do not investigate complaints of this kind (arts. 2, 15 and 16).

31. The State Party should:

(a) **Ensure that confessions and other statements obtained through torture or ill-treatment are not admitted as evidence in practice, except against persons accused of committing torture, as evidence that the statement was made, and that the burden of proving that confessions were made voluntarily falls on State authorities;**

(b) **Ensure that, when it is alleged that a statement has been obtained through torture, the allegation is investigated immediately, effectively and independently, and that alleged perpetrators are prosecuted and, if found guilty, punished;**

(c) **Ensure that all police officers, national security officers and military personnel, judges and public prosecutors receive mandatory training emphasizing the link between non-coercive interrogation techniques, the prohibition against torture and ill-treatment and the obligation of the judiciary to invalidate confessions and witness statements made under torture, taking note, in that regard, of the Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information-Gathering (the Méndez Principles);**

(d) **Provide the Committee with information on criminal proceedings in which judges, either on their own initiative or at the request of parties to the case, have ruled that evidence obtained under torture is inadmissible and the measures taken in response.**

Human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers, political opponents, civil society activists and protesters

32. The Committee is concerned about reports according to which human rights defenders, civil society activists, journalists, lawyers, political opponents, protesters and other critics of the Government, as well as their family members, have been subjected to torture and ill-treatment and other forms of retaliation, such as intimidation, threats, harassment, physical attacks, excessive use of force, arbitrary arrest and detention, prosecution on trumped up and politically motivated charges, including before military courts, enforced disappearance and extrajudicial execution. It is also concerned about the State Party's inadequate efforts to provide such persons with the protection they need, to conduct prompt, effective and impartial investigations and to punish the perpetrators appropriately.²³ The Committee is particularly concerned about the situation of former Prime Minister Imran Khan²⁴ and Idris Khattak,²⁵ whose arbitrary detentions were confirmed by the

²³ [CCPR/C/PAK/CO/2](#), paras. 48–51; [CEDAW/C/PAK/CO/5](#), paras. 25 and 26; [CERD/C/PAK/CO/24-26](#), paras. 29 and 30. See also OHCHR, “Pakistan: UN experts alarmed by the conviction of Imaan Mazari-Hazir and Hadi Ali Chattha”, press release, 6 February 2026; OHCHR, “Concerns over violence against political parties and candidates ahead of Pakistan elections”, press release, 6 February 2024; OHCHR, “Press briefing notes on Pakistan”, press release, 8 September 2020.

²⁴ See OHCHR, “Pakistan: Imran Khan’s solitary confinement and inhumane detention conditions must end, UN expert says”, press release, 12 December 2025.

²⁵ See OHCHR, “Pakistan: Experts call for release of activist Idris Khattak after five years in detention”, press release, 23 December 2024; OHCHR, “UN experts condemn conviction of Pakistan human rights defender and minority activist Idris Khattak”, press release, 15 December 2021; OHCHR,

United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention,²⁶ Bushra Bibi,²⁷ Ali Wazir and Mahrang Baloch, especially with regard to their access to medical care. While noting the adoption of the Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Act of 2021 and the establishment, in 2025, of the Commission for the Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals, the Committee regrets that the Act does not extend to human rights defenders who do not work in the media, and that it did not receive information indicating whether there exists a referral mechanism by which complaints considered by the Commission and found to be justified may be transmitted for criminal investigation (arts. 2, 12, 13 and 16).

33. The State Party should:

(a) **Take, as a matter of urgency, the measures necessary to ensure that human rights defenders, civil society activists, journalists, lawyers, political opponents, protesters and other critics of the Government, as well as their family members, are adequately protected from torture and ill-treatment and other forms of reprisals, such as intimidation, threats, harassment, physical attacks, excessive use of force, arbitrary arrest and detention, undue prosecution, enforced disappearance and extrajudicial execution that they may be at risk of as a result of their activities, and that all human rights violations perpetrated against them are thoroughly investigated, that those responsible are brought to justice and that victims or their families are provided with effective remedies;**

(b) **Review the situation of all persons who have allegedly been detained and imprisoned on political grounds or in retaliation for their work, including former Prime Minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi, Idris Khattak, Ali Wazir and Mahrang Baloch, and ensure that they have access to adequate medical care while detained;**

(c) **Consider extending the scope of the Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Act of 2021 to cover human rights defenders who do not work in the media, and establishing a referral mechanism to ensure that complaints found to be well founded by the Commission for the Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals are promptly transmitted for criminal investigation.**

Military courts

34. The Committee remains concerned about the use of the Pakistan Army Act of 1952 to prosecute civilians in military courts and the fact that civilians tried in military courts do not benefit from the same due process guarantees as those provided for in the civilian judicial system.²⁸ It is also concerned about reports that indicate a very high rate of convictions handed down by military courts. While taking note of the Supreme Court ruling of October 2023 declaring the military trial of civilians unconstitutional and contrary to international human rights standards, the Committee regrets that the ruling was suspended. It is further concerned that the civilians whose cases remain in the military courts may not be released until the Supreme Court issues a final order.²⁹ Moreover, the Committee is concerned about the exclusive jurisdiction of the military justice system over military personnel accused of torture and similar offences against civilians (arts. 2, 11–13 and 16).

35. The State Party should review the Pakistan Army Act of 1952 to ensure that military courts are prevented from exercising jurisdiction over civilians. It should also take the measures necessary to ensure that military personnel are tried in civil courts for acts of torture and similar offences committed against civilians.

“Pakistan: UN experts appalled by the enforced disappearance of activist Idris Khattak”, press release, 29 June 2020.

²⁶ See [A/HRC/WGAD/2024/22](#) and [A/HRC/WGAD/2025/62](#).

²⁷ See OHCHR, “Pakistan: UN expert raises alarm over substandard detention conditions of Bushra Bibi Khan”, press release, 24 December 2025.

²⁸ [CAT/C/PAK/CO/1](#), paras. 12 and 13; [CAT/C/PAK/Q/2](#), para. 28.

²⁹ [CCPR/C/PAK/CO/2](#), paras. 42 and 43.

Gender-based violence

36. While welcoming the measures taken by the State Party to combat gender-based violence, including the recent adoption of the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act and the establishment of special courts to adjudicate cases of violence against women, the Committee is concerned about:

(a) The alleged high incidence of gender-based violence and the persistence of harmful practices that discriminate against women, such as crimes committed in the name of so-called “honour” (“karo-kari”), child marriage and forced marriage;³⁰

(b) The absence of a comprehensive law on gender-based violence and the fact that marital rape is still not criminalized as such;

(c) The reportedly low number of prosecutions and convictions for gender-based violence and the leniency of the penalties imposed;³¹

(d) The insufficient number and capacity of shelters for women and girls who are victims of gender-based violence, and the lack of legal, medical and psychosocial rehabilitation services for them (arts. 2, 13, 14 and 16).

37. **The State Party should:**

(a) **Effectively enforce the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act and consider adopting a comprehensive law on gender-based violence to criminalize all forms of violence against women;**

(b) **Ensure that all cases of gender-based violence, especially those involving actions or omissions by State authorities or other entities that engage the international responsibility of the State Party under the Convention, are thoroughly investigated, that the alleged perpetrators are prosecuted and, if convicted, punished appropriately and that the victims or their families receive redress, including adequate compensation and rehabilitation;**

(c) **Effectively enforce the anti-honour killings laws to ensure that perpetrators of so-called “honour crimes” do not receive reduced sentences and are not exempt from criminal prosecution, even in cases where a spouse is caught in the act of adultery, and criminalize marital rape as rape;**

(d) **Amend the Child Marriage Restraint Act to set the minimum age of marriage at 18 years for both sexes without exceptions throughout the State Party and continue raising awareness among all communities and at all levels about the criminal nature and harmful effects of child and forced marriage on the physical and mental health and well-being of girls;**

(e) **Provide judges, prosecutors, police officers and other law enforcement officials, as well as medical personnel, with systematic training on the strict application of criminal law provisions on gender-based violence and on the identification, prevention and investigation of such cases;**

(f) **Ensure that victims of domestic violence benefit from protection, including restraining orders, and have access to medical, psychosocial and legal services, including counselling, as well as safe and adequate government-funded shelters throughout the country.**

³⁰ CEDAW/C/PAK/CO/5, paras. 29–30 and 49–50; CCPR/C/PAK/CO/2, paras. 14 and 15; CERD/C/PAK/CO/24-26, paras. 25 and 26; CRC/C/PAK/CO/6-7, paras. 17–18, 25–26 and 28; CRPD/C/PAK/CO/1, paras. 11 and 12. See also OHCHR, “Pakistan: UN experts alarmed by lack of protection for minority girls from forced religious conversions and forced marriage”, press release, 11 April 2024.

³¹ CEDAW/C/PAK/CO/5, paras. 30 and 31; CCPR/C/PAK/CO/2, paras. 16 and 17; CRC/C/PAK/CO/6-7, paras. 25 and 26.

Training

38. While noting the efforts made by the State Party to develop and implement human rights education and training programmes for members of the police, the judiciary and prison staff, the Committee regrets the lack of information on any mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of such training programmes. It also regrets the limited information available on specific training activities on the Convention for military and intelligence agencies' personnel, immigration officials and others who may be involved in the custody, interrogation or treatment of detained persons, as well as on the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol), as revised, for judges, prosecutors, forensic doctors and medical personnel dealing with detainees to enable them to detect and document the physical and psychological sequelae of torture (art. 10).

39. **The State Party should:**

(a) **Further develop and implement mandatory initial and in-service training programmes to ensure that all public officials, in particular law enforcement officers, judicial officials, prison staff, military and intelligence agencies' personnel, immigration officials and others who may be involved in the custody, interrogation or treatment of persons subjected to any form of arrest, detention or imprisonment, are well acquainted with the provisions of the Convention, especially the absolute prohibition of torture, and that they are fully aware that violations will not be tolerated and will be investigated and that those responsible will be prosecuted and, on conviction, appropriately punished;**

(b) **Ensure that all relevant staff, including judges, prosecutors and medical personnel, are specifically trained to identify cases of torture and ill-treatment, in accordance with the Istanbul Protocol, as revised;**

(c) **Develop and apply a methodology for assessing the effectiveness of educational and training programmes in reducing the number of cases of torture and ill-treatment and in ensuring the identification, documentation and investigation of such acts, as well as the prosecution of those responsible.**

Redress

40. The Committee regrets the lack of comprehensive information on the measures of redress and compensation ordered by the courts and other State bodies and actually afforded to victims of torture and their families during the reporting period, or on the level of cooperation in this area with specialized non-governmental organizations. It regrets the lack of information on the medical and psychosocial rehabilitation provided to these victims and on whether specific rehabilitation programmes have been established for them. The Committee draws the State Party's attention to its general comment No. 3 (2012), in which it explains the content and scope of the obligations of States Parties to provide full redress to victims of torture (art. 14).

41. **The State Party should:**

(a) **Ensure, in law and in practice, that all victims of torture and ill-treatment obtain redress, including an enforceable right to fair and adequate compensation and the means for as full a rehabilitation as possible, and guarantees of non-repetition, including in cases where the civil liability of the State Party is involved;**

(b) **Compile and disseminate up-to-date statistics on the number of victims of torture and ill-treatment who have obtained redress, including medical or psychosocial rehabilitation and compensation, and on the forms of such redress and the results achieved;**

(c) **Consider renewing its contributions to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture.**

Follow-up procedure

42. The Committee requests the State Party to provide, by 1 May 2027, information on follow-up to the Committee's recommendations on non-refoulement, extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, allegations of torture or ill-treatment and the lack of accountability, and human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers, political opponents, civil society activists and protesters (see paras. 19 (d), 21 (a), 29 (a) and 33 (b) above). In that context, the State Party is invited to inform the Committee about its plans for implementing, within the coming reporting period, the remaining recommendations in the present concluding observations.

Other issues

43. The Committee encourages the State Party to consider making the declarations under articles 21 and 22 of the Convention and withdrawing its reservations to articles 8 (2), 20 and 30 (1) of the Convention.

44. The State Party is requested to widely disseminate the report submitted to the Committee and the present concluding observations, in appropriate languages, through official websites, the media and non-governmental organizations and to inform the Committee about its dissemination activities.

45. The Committee requests the State Party to submit its next periodic report, which will be its third, by 1 May 2030. For that purpose, the Committee invites the State Party to accept, by 1 May 2027, the simplified reporting procedure consisting in the transmittal, by the Committee to the State Party, of a list of issues prior to the submission of the report. The State Party's replies to that list of issues would constitute its third periodic report under article 19 of the Convention.
