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In the last three months, wide-ranging and serious human rights violations continued to be reported. The year ended with one of the worst terrorist attacks in Pakistan's history, which led to an announcement that the government would resume capital punishment in terrorism cases.

The Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights reported that 5,297 cases of human rights violations were registered in 2013. These ranged from acid attacks, domestic violence, rape, kidnapping, missing people and sectarian violence.

In October, chairman of the Senate Human Rights Committee, Afrasiab Khattak, expressed concerns over the slow progress in setting up the National Commission on Human Rights (NCHR). Khattak said it was imperative that the commission begin its work "so that incidents of human rights violations may be reduced".

Events in Balochistan continued to cause concern with attacks on Shia Muslims, non-Baloch and Baloch nationalists. In late October, the bodies of three missing Baloch activists were found in Karachi. In the same month, eight labourers from Punjab had been kidnapped and killed near Hub. In November, five people were killed and two injured in Quetta in an attack by the banned Baloch Liberation Army.

In December, the Joint Action Committee, which comprises 43 civil society and non-governmental organisations, expressed concerns over the rising number of missing persons and extrajudicial killings in Sindh, alleging that 112 people were missing and 27 bodies had been recovered. [Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah](#) stated that the provincial government will conduct an inquiry into the incidents.

More than 80 bonded labourers were set free in raids on three farms in Sindh following complaints of illegal confinement. The Walk Free Foundation published its second annual slavery index in November. Ten countries account for 71% of the world's slaves, Pakistan was third (after India and China), with an estimated 2.1 million slaves, or 1.13% of the total population.

In October, the government's ban on You Tube entered its third year despite hopes the ban might be lifted. The Lahore High Court heard a petition against the ban from groups pleading that its continuation was an infringement on fundamental rights to knowledge. In November, Facebook revealed that requests from the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority and IT Ministry to restrict content on the social network increased almost tenfold from January to June 2014, compared to the previous six months. There were reportedly 116 requests from the government to access data from Facebook user accounts over the same period.

In October, allegations of blasphemy were registered against the host of a private television show accused of staging a fake marriage and making derogatory remarks against religious figures. In separate incidents two journalists were killed in Hafizabad, Punjab. At the end of the same month, the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) suspended the licence of ARY News for 15 days, fined the channel Rupees 10 million (£65,000), and banned a news anchor for allegedly maligning the judiciary. In November, a journalist working for Pakistan Television went missing from Quetta.

On 16 October, after several delays and postponements, the death sentence for Asia Bibi, a Christian woman accused of blasphemy, was upheld on appeal by the Lahore High Court. The EU, supported by the UK, issued a statement of concern and hoped the sentence would be overturned on appeal. Asia Bibi's lawyers filed an appeal to the Supreme Court in November. In November, a Christian man in Chakwal was arrested on charges of blasphemy, accused of using derogatory language against the Prophet Muhammad in his internet blog.

On 4 November, a Christian couple in Punjab accused of desecrating a Quran were beaten to death by a mob and their bodies were burnt in a kiln at their workplace. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif immediately condemned this incident. Chief Minister of Punjab, Shahbaz Sharif, constituted a committee to investigate the killings and ordered police to increase security in Christian neighbourhoods. On 5 November, Minister for Human Rights Baroness Anelay issued a [tweet](#) expressing revulsion, and urged the Pakistani authorities to bring to justice those responsible. Four of the main suspects, including the owner of the brick kiln, were arrested and sent on judicial remand.

In November and December, both the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary raised UK concerns on the misuse of the blasphemy laws with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

Sectarian killings involving members of Shia and Sunni Muslim political parties were reported in Karachi, Rawalpindi, Sahiwal and Sargodha. Muslim and non-Muslim communities faced further attacks during this period. In October, six Hazaras, including a woman and a child, were killed by a suicide bomber in Hazara Town, Quetta. Jaish-ul-Islam later claimed responsibility for the attack. In the same month, eight Hazara men were killed at a market on the outskirts of Quetta. Lashkar-i-Jhangvi admitted to carrying out the second attack.

In November, Hindus in Ghotki, Sindh demanded the recovery of a 12-year-old Hindu girl they alleged had been kidnapped, forcibly converted, and married to a Muslim. The parents of the girl sought transfer of the case to Karachi after receiving threats in their hometown. In the same month a Hindu temple in Tando Mohammad Khan, Sindh was burnt. The Pakistan Hindu Council condemned the attack and demanded protection of 1,400 Hindu holy sites. An Ahmadiyya man was shot dead in December in Gujranwala five days after a Muslim leader denounced Ahmadis on a popular television talk show. Geo TV issued an apology and said it would review implementation of its code of conduct. In 2008 a talk show on the same channel hosted religious scholars who called for the Ahmadiyya to be killed. Within a day, two Ahmadis had been shot dead.

In December, Minority Rights Group International published a [report](#) on the rising marginalisation of religious minorities in Pakistan. The London-based rights group said attacks against minorities had intensified and reached critical levels: "violent attacks against religious minorities occur against a backdrop of legal and social discrimination in almost every aspect of their lives", and warned that the government's ability to tackle the issue would be a "major determinant of Pakistan's future stability".

During this period, there were reports of so-called "honour killings" of women, men and couples across the country. In October, the Aurat Foundation reported 421 incidents of violence against girls and women in Sindh between July and September. The Foundation documented 42 acid attacks in Punjab between January and September (compared to 35 for all 2013), involving 51 women and eight men as victims. Internet rights group Bytes for All reported that internet abuse of women in Pakistan triggered violent physical attacks and complained that social media companies were slow to prevent this. In Punjab alone the Federal Investigation Agency said there had been more than 170 complaints of cybercrime so far this year. Activists complained that few cases of online harassment are reported as the police rarely act.

The UK provided £4.7 million to help the most vulnerable internally displaced persons following the current military

operations in North Waziristan, providing shelter, food packages, water, sanitation and non-food items (such as cooking equipment and tarpaulin). The Department for International Development is calling for the government to allow free and unhindered access to relief agencies, and to be clear that the way for the international community to engage with the government-led response is through civilian authorities.

More death sentences were handed down in this period, including four male relatives of Farzana Parveen, murdered outside the Lahore High Court in May in a so-called "honour killing". In October, the Supreme Court agreed to hear a petition relating to prisoners on death row. The petitioner asserted that these prisoners suffered mental torture and called on the government to commute death sentences to life terms. In 2013, 226 people were sentenced to death, and about 8,526 were on death row. On 10 October, human rights groups in several cities marked the World Day Against the Death Penalty, demanding legislation to abolish capital punishment.

On 16 December, Pakistani Taliban militants attacked the Army Public School in Peshawar, claiming this attack was in revenge for military operations in the tribal areas. 141 people, including 132 children, were killed. Following the attack, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif announced the informal moratorium on the death penalty would be lifted for terrorism cases, and military courts would be established to try these cases. Seven convicted militants were executed in December, the first civilian executions since 2008.