

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	598
Land:	Pakistan
Kilde:	Freedom House
Titel:	Freedom in the World – Pakistan
Udgivet:	28. februar 2022
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	28. april 2022

Document #2071945

Freedom House

Freedom in the World 2022 - Pakistan

Partly Free

37

/ 100

[Political Rights](#) 15 / 40[Civil Liberties](#) 22 / 60

Last Year's Score & Status

37 / 100 Partly Free

Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale. [See the methodology.](#)

Overview

Pakistan holds regular elections under a competitive multiparty political system. However, the military exerts enormous influence over security and other policy issues, intimidates the media, and enjoys impunity for indiscriminate or extralegal use of force. The authorities impose selective restrictions on civil liberties, and Islamist militants carry out attacks on religious minorities and other perceived opponents.

Key Developments in 2021

- In the Senate elections held in March, the ruling Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party won 18 out of 48 seats contested, leaving it with 26 seats in total and without a majority in the upper house. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP), with 20 seats, became the largest opposition party in the Senate.
- Authorities continued to disrupt the political activities of the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM), which campaigns against ethnic violence in ethnic Pashtun areas. In November police in Quetta charged PTM leader Manzoor Pashteen and others for holding a rally without permission. Further, an Anti-Terrorism Court indicted Ali Wazir and 10 other PTM members for sedition on the basis of their role in a December 2020 rally in Karachi.
- In December, President Alvi signed a law that ostensibly “protects” journalists but includes vague provisions prohibiting incitement and the publication of allegedly false information. The government also has plans to establish a powerful media regulator, the Pakistan Media Development Authority (PMDA), which would have tribunal powers to punish journalists for infringements.

Political Rights

A Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? **1 / 4**

A prime minister responsible to the bicameral parliament holds most executive power under the constitution. The president, who plays a more symbolic role, is elected for up to two five-year terms by an electoral college comprising the two chambers of the parliament and the provincial assemblies. Arif Alvi, nominated by PTI, was elected president in September 2018.

Imran Khan became prime minister in August 2018 when PTI formed a coalition government, having emerged from the general elections as the largest party in the National Assembly. In the run-up to the polls, observers documented concerted efforts by elements of the country's military and judicial establishment to hamper the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) to increase the chances that Khan would attain a parliamentary majority. These included corruption, contempt-of-court, and terrorism charges against PML-N leaders and candidates, and their politicized adjudication and military influence on the judiciary to deny bail until after the election. Observers also noted

pressure on and interference with the media, apparently at the behest of the security services, that resulted in muted coverage of the PML-N's campaign. In 2021, opposition parties continued to challenge Imran Khan's legitimacy as prime minister, claiming he had been "selected" by the army.

A2 0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

The parliament consists of a 342-member National Assembly and a 104-member Senate. Members of the National Assembly are elected for five years. Of the 342 lower-house seats, 272 are filled through direct elections in single-member districts, 60 are reserved for women, and 10 are reserved for non-Muslim minorities. The reserved seats are filled through a proportional representation system with closed party lists.

For the Senate, each provincial assembly chooses 23 members. The 8 seats representing the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) chosen by assembly members are being phased out, as the FATA region is being integrated with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The National Assembly chooses 4 senators to represent the Islamabad capital territory. Senators serve six-year terms, with half of the seats up for election every three years. In the March 2021 Senate elections using the electoral college formed from directly elected members of the National and Provincial Assemblies, the ruling PTI won 18 out of 48 seats contested, leaving it with 26 seats in total and without a majority. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP), with 20 seats, became the largest opposition party in the upper house.

International and domestic election observers delivered a mixed verdict on the July 2018 National Assembly elections. Polling was orderly and generally took place according to the electoral law, though serious technical difficulties with the Result Transmission System created significant delays in reporting the results. At the same time, the rash of judicial actions against PML-N leaders and restrictions on and interference with media coverage significantly disadvantaged the party, contributing to a substantial rise in PTI representation in the National Assembly.

The PTI received 32 percent of the vote and 149 seats, compared with just 35 seats previously, and formed a coalition government with the support of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), other minor parties, and independents. The PML-N received 24 percent of the vote and 82 seats, down from 157 seats. The PPP received 13 percent of the vote and 54 seats, an increase of 12 seats. Notably, parties and candidates linked to active Islamist militant groups, including Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) and Allah-o-akbar Tehreek (AAT), were able to participate. Voter turnout was 52 percent.

In the December 2021 local elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), part of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) alliance, won control of the largest number of tehsil councils and the mayoralty of the provincial capital, Peshawar.

A3 0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant 2 / election management bodies? 4

Elections are administered by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), whose members are current or retired senior judges nominated through a consultative process that includes the government and the parliamentary opposition. The ECP asserted its independence during the Senate election in March 2021 by insisting on use of the constitutionally mandated secret ballot. The prime minister and governing party severely criticized the ECP after their defeat in one of the electoral college votes. The ECP also continued to investigate accusations that the PTI received illegal foreign contributions to past election campaigns.

Electoral laws are considered largely fair, and candidates have extensive access to the courts in electoral disputes. However, in November 2021, the PTI government amended the 2017 Elections Law to mandate the use of electronic voting machines (EVMs). Opposition parties have opposed reliance on EVMs over fears of their vulnerability to poll-rigging.

Election observer missions in 2018 claimed that the ECP proved unable to counteract efforts by elements of the judicial and military establishment and their allies to manipulate the campaign environment. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, politically orchestrated judicial activism resulted in the disqualification of candidates, while the "censorship, intimidation, harassment, and abduction" of journalists who were critical of the security establishment or favored the PML-N or PPP ensured uneven access to the media.

Other, ongoing problems include lower rates of voter registration among women, a requirement that members of the Ahmadi religious minority register as non-Muslims despite considering themselves Muslims, and vague moral requirements for candidate nomination.

B Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 0-4 pts

Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political 2 / groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these 4 competing parties or groupings?

Several major parties and numerous smaller parties and independents compete in elections and are represented in the parliament and provincial legislatures. However, established parties maintain patronage networks and other advantages of incumbency that hamper competition in their respective provincial strongholds. In recent years, major parties’ freedom to operate is related to the strength of their relationships with unelected arms of the state, which have sought to sideline figures not to their liking through a variety of legal and extralegal means.

Additionally, Pakistani opposition parties maintained alliances and coordinated antigovernment protests in 2021. The PDM held a series of protest rallies early in the year, calling for the PTI government to resign. Though the PPP left the alliance after the March elections, the PDM continued to hold rallies calling for the government to step down or for the military to withdraw its support. In December, the PDM announced plans to demonstrate against the government’s failure to control inflation.

B2 0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through 2 / elections? 4

Opposition parties campaign and contest elections, and each of the last three national elections has resulted in an erstwhile opposition party taking power at the federal level. National opposition parties hold power or significant shares of assembly seats at the provincial level. However, the military is currently considered more powerful than elected politicians and able to influence the outcome of elections.

The PPP and PML-N have faced significant impediments to their competitiveness since the 2018 elections, as party leaders and senior figures faced a succession of charges from the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), the government’s anticorruption body. Nawaz Sharif, his daughter Maryam Nawaz, his younger brother and former Punjab chief minister Shahbaz Sharif, Shahbaz Sharif’s son Hamza, and former prime ministers Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and Raja Parvaiz Ashraf, all political figures within PML-N, and former president Asif Ali Zardari and his sister Faryal Talpur, both PPP politicians, have faced multiple court appearances, periodic detentions, and a ban from public office (Nawaz Sharif).

However, in 2021, Shahbaz Sharif and Asif Zardari were released on bail, and younger leaders Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari and Maryam Nawaz rose to prominence as political players in their parties. PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif stayed in self-imposed exile in London but was politically active.

Authorities continued to disrupt the activities of the PTM. The army reportedly suspects PTM leaders of opposing the Pakistani state and having links to the Indian intelligence agency, which PTM supporters deny. In the past, security forces have dispersed rallies, arrested participants and activists, suppressed media coverage, and charged rally participants with sedition. In November 2021, police in Quetta charged PTM leader Manzoor Pashteen and others for holding a rally without permission. Further, an Anti-Terrorism Court indicted Ali Wazir and 10 other PTM supporters for sedition, on the basis of their role in a December 2020 rally in Karachi.

B3 0-4 pts

Are the people’s political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political 1 / sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means? 4

The manipulation of politics by religious extremists has long hampered voters’ ability to freely express their political preferences. During 2021, the Sunni Barelvi militant party TLP continued to press for the release of its leader and activists as well as the expulsion of the French ambassador, after French President Emmanuel Macron made what they saw as disparaging remarks about Islam. The government initially banned the party in April 2021 but later capitulated to its demands in November 2021, when authorities reversed the party’s ban, released its leader and activists. Thereafter, the TLP did not continue to demand the expulsion of the ambassador.

In recent years, the military has reasserted its role as a political arbiter—more powerful than either the judiciary or the elected government—setting the constraints within which civilian politics play out.

The heavy presence of security agents at many polling stations in 2018 was interpreted by observers, including the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, as tantamount to voter intimidation. Several candidates in the 2018 election campaign had links with extremist groups that advocated or carried out acts of violence, further contributing to a sense of unease among many voters.

B4 0-4 pts

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other 1 / relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4

A joint electorate system allows members of non-Muslim minorities to participate in the general vote while also being represented by reserved seats in the national and provincial assemblies through the party-list system. However, the participation of non-Muslims in the political system continues to be marginal. Political parties nominate members to the legislative seats reserved for non-Muslim minorities, leaving non-Muslim voters with little say in the selection of their supposed representatives. Ahmadis, members of a heterodox Muslim sect, face political discrimination and are registered on a separate voter roll.

Political parties maintain women’s wings that are active during elections, but women face practical restrictions on voting, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan, where militant groups and societal constraints are stronger. Women rarely achieve leadership positions in parties or the government. The interests of LGBT+ people are generally not represented by elected officials.

The single member constituency system for national elections ensures that the major ethno-linguistic groups from each province are represented in the National Assembly and participate in party politics, government, and opposition. Although Sindhi, Pashtun, and Baloch figures all play visible roles in national political life—alongside the largest ethno-linguistic group, Punjabis—the military works to marginalize figures from minority groups it suspects of harboring antistate sentiments, as exemplified by its treatment of the PTM.

C Functioning of Government

C1 0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

Formally, the elected prime minister and cabinet make policy in consultation with the parliament, which holds legislative power. However, there has been a long-running struggle between these civilian structures and the military establishment for control of national security policy. The military has asserted primacy on relations with India, Afghanistan, China, and the United States, as well as on domestic counterterrorism policy. In the last two years of the previous PML-N government, it appeared that the civilian administration aspired to act independently of some military priorities, most notably through exploring détente with India. Since the August 2018 installation of the PTI government, the civilian administration has aligned itself more closely than its predecessor with the military’s foreign policy, domestic security, and economic priorities. In October 2021, the army again appeared to usurp the authority of the prime minister by publishing that Lieutenant General Nadeem Anjum would take over as chief of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) three weeks before Prime Minister Khan announced he had agreed to the appointment.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Despite numerous formal safeguards, official corruption is endemic in practice. The use of accountability mechanisms is often selective and politically driven, as demonstrated by the charges which continued to be brought against PML-N and PPP leaders and former politicians, such as former prime minister Sharif and former president Zardari, in 2021. The NAB focuses on cases against politicians and senior officials, which tend to be protracted. The military and judiciary have their own disciplinary systems for corruption.

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

The government has relatively progressive laws around public finances, procurement processes, and general government operations. Some effort is put into being seen as complying with international norms.

However, the military—which controls large parts of government functioning under the guise of national security concerns—is deeply opaque in its affairs. Military officials’ ability to influence policies, politics, and legislation is formidable, and military intelligence agencies act without oversight and often without the public’s knowing of their involvement. Intelligence agencies abduct, detain, interrogate, and torture individuals for extended periods without publicizing information of their whereabouts or the purpose for their detention. The military censors media and information published about its activity by means of vaguely worded regulations that empower officials to monitor and manage content deemed harmful to “national security interests.” Since 2018, multiple high-ranking military officers have been appointed to government positions historically under civilian control.

Access-to-information laws have long been applied in Pakistan; the parliament passed the Right to Access of Information Act in 2017 to update a 2002 law. Information commissions have been established in the provinces supposedly to enable implementation, which is inconsistent. Determined citizens can demand information from departments and complain to the information commissions when departments fail to deliver. Many departments tend to ignore requests.

Vocal civil society groups and journalists often weigh in on policy debates. However, debates about policies with national security implications are shut down quickly. Members of both provincial and national assemblies are expected to make themselves accessible to constituents. Parliament regularly debates and scrutinizes the budget, accompanied by commentary from the media.

There is a procurement regulatory agency that uses many standard transparency tools, including procurement manuals and publication of tenders. However, international bodies such as the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have scrutinized Pakistan’s public procurements. Parliamentarians and select public officials are compelled to submit asset declaration forms that civil society organizations often upload to the internet.

Civil Liberties

D Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts**Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4**

Over the past two decades, Pakistan has boasted a relatively vibrant media sector that presents a range of news and opinions, with more than 40 television news channels and some 700 newspaper print publications. However, both the civilian authorities and military in recent years have curtailed media freedom. In 2021, the government targeted prominent media personalities, individual journalists, television programs and stations, and media houses for raising issues authorities considered unpalatable by fining them, temporarily banning them, or withdrawing government advertising. In 2021, military intelligence agencies targeted critical journalists with violent attacks and temporary abductions. In May, Islamabad-based journalist Asad Ali Toor was severely beaten by individuals who identified themselves as ISI agents. A number of critical media figures sought sanctuary in exile but reported facing threats there, too, in the wake of suspicious deaths of Pakistani civil society activists abroad. Authorities used “troll farms,” to harass critical commentators, such as BBC Urdu-language service journalist Asma Shirazi.

Access to certain regions of the country is prohibited by the military, impeding coverage of issues there. In Baluchistan, local journalists are caught between authorities who order them not to cover separatist rebel activity, and rebel groups that threaten them for siding with the government.

In December 2021, President Alvi signed a law that ostensibly “protects” journalists but includes vague provisions prohibiting incitement and the publication of allegedly false information. The government also has plans to establish a powerful media regulator, the Pakistan Media Development Authority (PMDA), to replace the differing regulations for print, broadcast, and online media. The authority would have tribunal powers to punish journalists for infringements.

D2 0-4 pts**Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4**

Constitutional guarantees of religious freedom have not provided effective safeguards against discriminatory legislation, social prejudice, and sectarian violence. Members of the Shia sect, Christians, and other religious minorities remain at risk of blasphemy accusations that can arise from trivial disputes and escalate to criminal prosecution and mob violence. Blasphemy laws and their exploitation by religious vigilantes have also curtailed freedom of expression by Muslims.

Hindus have complained of vulnerability to kidnapping and forced conversions, and some continue to migrate to India. Vandals attacked and damaged a temple in Rawalpindi in March 2021. and a mob damaged a temple in Rahim Yar Khan in August.

Members of the Ahmadi community are legally prohibited from calling themselves Muslims and face discrimination. One Ahmadi man was killed during 2021 in a suspected hate crime. A Lahore High Court justice called on authorities to restrict Ahmadi religious content on social media.

D3 0-4 pts**Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4**

Pakistani authorities have a long history of using the education system to portray Hindus and other non-Muslims negatively and to rationalize enmity between Pakistan and India, among other ideological aims. Past attempts to modernize education and introduce religious tolerance into school textbooks have made little progress, and minority groups consider negative portrayals of non-Muslims in textbooks as a continuing source of hostility towards them. In August 2021, the government launched an integrated national curriculum at the primary school level, with a plan for a secondary school curriculum for subsequent years. Supporters claimed that it promoted tolerance within an Islamic and national framework. However, the initiative was also criticized for encroaching on provincial autonomy.

In recent years, scholars have been somewhat more able to discuss sensitive issues involving the military. However, there is no academic freedom on matters pertaining to religion, where academics remain vulnerable to blasphemy accusations.

D4 0-4 pts**Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of 2 / surveillance or retribution? 4**

Pakistanis are free in practice to discuss many topics both online and off, but the 2016 Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) gives the executive-controlled Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) unchecked powers to censor material on the internet. The PTA encourages reporting of websites complainants consider offensive. The broad and poorly defined censorship mandate of the PTA includes preventing both morally objectionable content and the maligning of the “state, judiciary, or armed forces.” In practice, the agency censors content arbitrarily.

The constitutionality of 2020 social media rules, which enabled the banning of social media platforms, was challenged in the Islamabad High Court in November 2021. These rules obliged companies to enforce the government’s restrictions on objectionable content and required them to maintain a physical presence in the country, with threats of fines and service interruption for noncompliance. The PTA had banned TikTok for four months beginning in March, allegedly for blasphemous and irreverent content. TikTok reported that it had removed some six million objectionable videos in the first quarter of the year.

Extralegal violence, including mob attacks on individuals accused of blasphemy also deter unfettered speech.

E Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

The constitution guarantees the right to assemble peacefully, though the government can harness legal provisions to arbitrarily ban gatherings or any activity designated a threat to public order. During 2021, the scale and frequency of political rallies returned to levels seen before the COVID-19 pandemic. The governing party and a range of opposition parties held multiple rallies, generally without interference from the authorities.

E2 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

The current government continued to crack down on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), both domestic and foreign. Organizations are subject to intrusive registration requirements and vetting by military intelligence. Officials can demand that NGOs obtain a "no-objection certificate" (NOC) before undertaking even the most innocuous activity.

E3 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

The rights of workers to organize and form trade unions are recognized in law, and the constitution grants unions the rights to collective bargaining and to strike. However, these protections are not strongly enforced. Roughly 70 percent of the workforce is employed in the informal sector, where unionization and legal protections are minimal. The procedures that need to be followed for a strike to be legal are onerous. Strikes and labor protests are organized regularly, though they often lead to clashes with police and dismissals by employers.

F Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

The judiciary is politicized and has a history of involvement in the power struggles between the military, the civilian government, and opposition politicians. Judges have often aligned rulings with the priorities of the military. During 2021, corruption cases against Nawaz Sharif and other senior PML-N and PPP opposition politicians continued. The paucity of equivalent cases against PTI figures suggest that the judiciary has allowed itself to be instrumentalized in national politics. Leaked audio recordings and testimony from a former Gilgit-Baltistan chief judge purportedly proved that former chief justice Saqib Nisar acknowledged he had been influenced by the army to convict and deny bail to Nawaz and Mariam Sharif in the run-up to the 2018 election, though Nisar publicly denied this.

In 2021, Supreme Court Justice Qazi Faez Isa continued to fight legal action over allegations of undeclared family property in the United Kingdom, which he argued was an attempt to punish him for exercising independence.

The broader court system is marred by endemic problems including corruption, intimidation, insecurity, a large backlog of cases, and low conviction rates for serious crimes.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Police have long been accused of biased or arbitrary handling of initial criminal complaints. Both the police and the prosecution service have been criticized for a chronic failure to prosecute terrorism cases and for their reliance on torture. In July 2021, the Senate passed legislation to ban torture.

Under the Army Act, the military continued to operate its own courts, primarily for its own personnel. However, the army asserted the right to selectively try civilians, on camera, under the Army Act courts, in cases of national security.

There has been progress in women's access to justice and generalized protection of their rights for all litigants in the former FATA, which in 2018 was absorbed into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Informal jirgas remain a form of local dispute resolution alongside the formal justice system.

F3 0-4 pts

Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

In 2021, 663 people were killed in terrorist incidents, continuing an upward trend since 2019, though violence remained lower than the 2009 peak of 11,317 people killed. The worst attacks in 2021 were the killing of 11 Shia coalminers in Baluchistan in January and a suicide bombing in July that killed 13 workers on a dam project, including 9 Chinese engineers.

Most terrorist violence has historically been connected to three distinct conflicts. A low-intensity insurgency in Baluchistan pitted the Baloch Liberation Army and other Baloch separatist outfits against security forces. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including the former tribal areas, the Pakistan Taliban Movement (TTP) conducted cross-border attacks from Afghanistan against security forces. Aided by elements in the Afghan Taliban government, Pakistan

officials in November 2021 negotiated a one-month ceasefire with the TTP. However, in December the TTP refused to extend the ceasefire, claiming the government had reneged on a promised release of prisoners. The local branch of the Islamic State (IS), Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), has also claimed responsibility for attacks on Shias.

Civilians face the threat of extralegal violence by state actors, including enforced disappearances. The Voice for Baloch Missing Persons, an advocacy NGO for those who have disappeared, accused the state of operating "death squads" to abduct and kill suspected separatist sympathizers. The number of cases of people registered as missing since 2011 by the official Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances rose to 8,279 as of the end of November 2021, of which 6,047 cases had reportedly been resolved. The International Commission of Jurists, an international human rights organization, found the Commission of Inquiry's approach had enabled impunity by diverting attention away from the judicial process into an ad hoc process vulnerable to political interference. Most victims are from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the former FATA, or Baluchistan, and typically are held incommunicado by security and intelligence agencies on suspicion of antistate agitation, terrorism, rebellion, or espionage.

In 2021, the Commission of Inquiry did not push for disciplinary action against agencies known to be involved in enforced disappearances; in December 2021, reports emerged that a secret military court sentenced human rights defender Idris Khattak, who had been abducted by the army in 2019, to 14 years imprisonment. The Commission of Inquiry claimed the case had been "disposed of," and did not consider Khattak to be a victim of an abduction. In November 2021, the National Assembly passed weak legislation to criminalize enforced disappearances, though controversial provisions allow individuals to be prosecuted for bringing supposedly false complaints.

F4 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

Women face discrimination in employment despite legal protections and are placed at a disadvantage under personal status laws. Perpetrators of gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual harassment or discrimination, which are societal challenges, often enjoy impunity. Individuals must register a "first information report" of a crime, and police are often reluctant to pursue complaints of crimes against women, including so-called crimes of honor. Videos of an incident in August 2021, in which a crowd of about 400 men abused a woman in a Lahore park, prompted acknowledgement that violence and degrading behavior by men were common. Prime Minister Khan was accused of perpetuating attitudes that drive endemic violence against women when he publicly opined in a June 2021 interview that women encouraged abuse by dressing inappropriately.

Ethnic and religious minorities, Afghan refugees, and LGBT+ people suffer legal or de facto discrimination and violence. The penal code prescribes prison terms for consensual sex "against the order of nature," deterring LGBT+ people from acknowledging their identity or reporting abuses. Transgender and intersex people are authorized to register for official documents under a "third gender" classification recognized by the Supreme Court since 2009, and some transgender people were recognized in the 2017 census. However, they face targeted violence and discrimination in housing and employment. Access to identity papers has become increasingly important to avail of rights and services.

G Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, 2 / employment, or education? 4

There are some legal limitations on travel and the ability to change one's residence, employment, or institutions of higher learning. Authorities routinely hinder internal movement in some parts of the country for security reasons. The main tool for restricting foreign travel is the Exit Control List (ECL), which blocks named individuals from using official exit points from the country. Though intended to prevent those posing a security threat and those facing court proceedings from fleeing, authorities periodically used it to control dissent.

G2 0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without 2 / undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4

In principle, Pakistan's constitution, legal system, and social and religious values all guarantee private property and free enterprise. In reality, organized crime, corruption, a weak regulatory environment, and the subversion of the legal system often render property rights precarious. Powerful and organized groups continue to engage in land grabbing, particularly in Karachi and Punjab.

Inheritance laws discriminate against women, and women are often denied their legal share of inherited property through social or familial pressure.

G3 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, 1 / protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4

In some parts of urban Pakistan, men and women enjoy personal social freedoms and have recourse to the law in case of infringements. However, historically prominent social practices in much of the country subject individuals to social control over personal behavior, and especially choice of marriage partner. Despite successive attempts to abolish the practice, "honor killing," the murder of men or women accused of breaking social and especially sexual taboos, remains common, and most incidents go unreported.

Though the legal age of marriage is 18 in most of the country, nearly 20 percent of girls are married before that age; 35 percent of child marriages take place in the former FATA. Nearly one-third of women in the country have experienced gender-based physical violence, according to the UN Population Fund. Abortion is illegal, except to save the pregnant person's life.

G4 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Bonded labor was formally abolished in 1992, and efforts to enforce the ban and related laws against child labor continue. For example, in November 2021, a court cancelled the bonds of 43 Hindus who worked for a Khuzdar landlord as agricultural workers. Gradual social change has also eroded the power of wealthy landowning families involved in such exploitation. Nevertheless, extreme forms of labor exploitation remain common. Employers continue to use chronic indebtedness to restrict laborers' rights and hold actual earnings well below prescribed levels, particularly among sharecroppers and in the brick-kiln industry. Marginalized groups, such as itinerant workers, continue to face difficulties in obtaining a National Identity Card.

ecoinet summary:

Annual report on political rights and civil liberties in 2021

Country:

Pakistan

Source:

[Freedom House](#)

Original link:

<https://freedomhouse.org/country/pakistan/freedom-world/2022>

Document type:

Periodical Report

Language:

English

Published:

28 February 2022

Document ID:

2071945

Austrian Red Cross
Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum
Research and Documentation (ACCORD)

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien
T (Telefon) +43 1 589 00 583
F (Fax) +43 1 589 00 589
info@ecoinet

Contact
Imprint & Disclaimer
F.A.Q.
Data Protection Notice

ecoinet is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoinet is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoinet is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

