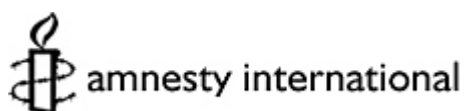


Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	227
Land:	Pakistan
Kilde:	Amnesty International
Titel:	Annual Rapport 2012
Udgivet:	24. maj 2012
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	28. juni 2012

Title	Amnesty International Annual Report 2012 - Pakistan
Publisher	Amnesty International
Country	Pakistan
Publication Date	24 May 2012
Cite as	Amnesty International, <i>Amnesty International Annual Report 2012 - Pakistan</i> , 24 May 2012, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4fbc391b5f.html [accessed 8 June 2012]
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Amnesty International Annual Report 2012 - Pakistan

Head of state: Asif Ali Zardari
 Head of government: Yousuf Raza Gilani
 Death penalty: retentionist
 Population: 176.7 million
 Life expectancy: 65.4 years
 Under-5 mortality: 87 per 1,000
 Adult literacy: 55.5 per cent

Salmaan Taseer, the outspoken Governor of Punjab, and Shahbaz Bhatti, the Minister for Minorities (and sole Christian cabinet member), were assassinated in January and March, respectively, because of their criticism of the blasphemy laws. Security forces continued to be implicated in violations, including enforced disappearances, torture and extrajudicial executions, especially in Balochistan and the Northwest. In May, US forces killed al-Qa'ida leader Osama bin Laden in a raid on his hideout in the north-western city of Abbottabad. Senior US officials publicly accused Pakistan of supporting the Taliban in Afghanistan. The Pakistani Taliban and other armed groups killed civilians in targeted and indiscriminate attacks across the country. Karachi was gripped by a wave of killings sparked by rival gangs associated with different ethnic and political groups. Individuals continued to be sentenced to death, but there were no executions. A successive year of monsoonal floods led to further displacement and outbreaks of dengue fever countrywide. Chronic energy shortages caused violent protests in most major cities and stifled economic activity. Women and girls in conflict-prone areas in the Northwest and Balochistan faced severe difficulties in accessing education and health care.

Background

The human rights situation remained poor, with security and intelligence officials often complicit in violations. The authorities were frequently unwilling or unable to protect women, ethnic and religious minorities, journalists and other vulnerable groups from abuses, and bring perpetrators to justice. Promises by federal and provincial authorities aimed at improving the rule of law in violence-racked Balochistan province – including greater oversight of police and the paramilitary Frontiers Corps, increased recruitment of ethnic Baloch into the civil service, and a rise in the province's share of the national budget – had little effect.

Nearly one million people remained displaced as a result of continued conflict between the security forces and the Pakistani Taliban, while communities returning to regions recaptured from the insurgency complained of lack of security and access to basic services. A parallel judicial system based on a narrow reading of Shari'a law was established in Malakand despite the removal of the Pakistani Taliban, creating fears that their harsh social codes might be applied. In June, President Zardari granted security forces in the Northwest retrospective immunity from prosecution and sweeping powers of arbitrary detention and punishment. On 14 August, Pakistan's Independence Day, the President approved landmark reforms, extending the Political Parties Order 2002 to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and amending the Frontier Crimes Regulation, a British-era law that deprived residents of the region of many of their human rights and protections under Pakistan's Constitution. The reforms limited state powers of arbitrary detention and collective punishment, allowed people in the region a right to judicial appeal of decisions under the Regulation, and enabled political parties to operate in the Tribal Areas.

On 9 June, Pakistan ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. In September, Pakistan removed most of its reservations to the ICCPR and the Convention against Torture, but retained other problematic reservations that prevent non-Muslims from becoming Prime Minister or President, and discriminate against women's equal right to inheritance.

Violations by security forces

Security and intelligence forces acted largely with impunity and were accused of violations, including enforced disappearances, torture and killing of civilians, journalists, activists and suspected members of armed groups in indiscriminate attacks and extrajudicial executions.

Extrajudicial executions

Reports of extrajudicial executions were most common in Balochistan province, as well as the Northwest and violence-ridden Karachi.

- On 28 April, human rights activist Siddique Eido and his friend Yousuf Nazar Baloch were found dead in the Pargari Sarbat area of Balochistan. According to witnesses, they were abducted while travelling with police by men in plain clothes accompanied by paramilitary Frontier Corps forces on 21 December 2010. Hospital reports said their bodies had bullet wounds and bore signs of torture.
- On 8 June, a television crew filmed the extrajudicial execution of Sarfaraz Shah by paramilitary Rangers in a Karachi park. Following the Supreme Court's intervention, the Sindh government dismissed senior law enforcement officials and, on 12 August, the Anti-Terrorism Court sentenced one of the Rangers to death for the murder. Five other Rangers and a civilian were sentenced to life in prison. All appealed against their sentences to the Sindh High Court.
- On 17 May, police and Frontier Corps forces killed five foreigners in Quetta, including a heavily pregnant woman, whom they claimed were suicide bombers. An inquiry concluded that the victims were not armed and two police officers were suspended. A journalist who took photos of the killings went into hiding after receiving death threats, and the doctor who conducted autopsies on the victims was assaulted and later killed by a group of unknown men. Other witnesses were reportedly threatened by security personnel.

Enforced disappearances

The state failed to bring perpetrators of enforced disappearance to justice; most victims remained missing. In March, the government established a new Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances but took six months to appoint retired Supreme Court Justice Javed Iqbal to head it. Since the previous commission commenced in March 2010, over 220 of the several hundred individual cases filed had been traced. Both commissions were criticized for failing to protect witnesses and for conducting inadequate

investigations, especially in cases where state security forces and intelligence agencies were implicated.

- On 13 February, unknown men abducted Agha Zahir Shah, a lawyer representing relatives of alleged victims of enforced disappearance, in Dera Murad Jamali, Balochistan, while he was returning to Quetta. He was released in a poor state of health on 2 July.
- Muzaffar Bhutto, senior member of the Jeay Sindh Muttahida Mahaz political party, was abducted on 25 February in Hyderabad, Sindh, by men in plain clothes accompanied by police. His whereabouts remained unknown.
- In May, brothers Abdullah and Ibrahim El-Sharkawi (of Egyptian origin) went missing. Two weeks later, their family was told they were in prison charged with illegal residency, but a court confirmed they were Pakistani nationals. Ibrahim was released on bail on 27 June and Abdullah was released on 29 August. Both claimed they were tortured and ill-treated in secret detention facilities.

Abuses by armed groups

The Pakistani Taliban targeted civilians and carried out indiscriminate attacks using improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and suicide bombings. Several tribal elders were victims of targeted killings. The Taliban also tried to assassinate a number of politicians affiliated with the Awami National Party. According to the government, 246 schools (59 girls' schools, 187 boys' schools) were destroyed and 763 damaged (244 girls' schools, 519 boys' schools) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province as a result of the conflict with the Taliban, depriving thousands of children of access to education. Threats of violence from the Pakistani Taliban imposed severe restrictions on access to health services, education and participation in public life for women and girls.

- On 9 March, a suicide bomber attacked the funeral of an anti-Taliban leader's wife, killing 37 people in the outskirts of Peshawar. Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the bombing.
- On 18 July, TTP released a video showing masked militants executing 16 captured policemen in response to earlier footage of Pakistani forces executing arrested insurgents.
- TTP claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing on 19 August that killed at least 47 and injured more than 100 during Friday prayers at a mosque in Khyber tribal agency.
- In September, Pakistani Taliban insurgents abducted 30 boys aged between 12 and 18 on the Afghanistan border in Bajaur, and attacked a school van in Peshawar, killing four children and the driver.

Nationalist groups in Balochistan assassinated members of rival factions, ethnic Punjabis and state security forces, and claimed responsibility for attacks on gas and electricity infrastructure, causing severe energy shortages in the province. Sectarian attacks by the armed group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and others on Shi'a Muslims resulted in at least 280 deaths and injuries.

- On 4 January, five children were injured in an IED attack on a school bus carrying more than 30 children of Frontier Corps troops in Turbat town, Balochistan. Although no one claimed responsibility, ethnic Baloch groups were blamed for the attack.
- On 25 April, at least 15 people, including five children, were burnt to death when unidentified assailants set a Quetta-bound bus on fire in the Pirak area of Sibi district.
- Lashkar-e-Jhangvi claimed responsibility for the execution-style killing of 26 Shi'a pilgrims in Mastung district and three of the victims' relatives as they travelled from Quetta to collect their bodies, on 20 September. A similar attack on Shi'a pilgrims on 4 October claimed 14 lives.

Karachi saw a surge of violence as rival gangs, some linked to political parties, clashed over territorial claims, killing 2,000 people. Security forces detained hundreds of suspects but the Supreme Court criticized political parties for fuelling the violence and authorities for failing to stop many known perpetrators.

Freedom of expression

At least nine journalists were killed during the year. Media workers were threatened by security forces, intelligence agencies, political parties and armed groups for reporting on them. Pakistani authorities failed to bring perpetrators to justice or provide adequate protection to journalists.

- On 13 January, GeoNews reporter Wali Khan Babar was killed in a drive-by shooting by unidentified assailants in Karachi, hours after filing a report on a police operation against drug traffickers in the city.
- On 29 May, Asia Times Online's Saleem Shahzad disappeared from outside his Islamabad house, minutes after leaving for a television interview. His body was found in Punjab province two days later. He had earlier filed a report on al-Qa'ida infiltration in the Pakistani Navy. In October 2010, he had privately notified colleagues that he had received death threats from the Inter-Services Intelligence agency over similar reports.

Discrimination – religious minorities

Sectarian groups continued to threaten minority Ahmadis, Christians, Hindus and Shi'as, as well as moderate Sunni practitioners, and incited violence against those calling for reform of the country's blasphemy laws. The state failed to prevent sectarian attacks against religious minorities or bring perpetrators to justice.

- On 25 January, a suicide bomber targeting Shi'a worshippers killed at least 13 people in Lahore. Fidayeen-e-Islam claimed responsibility for the attack.
- In June, the All Pakistan Students Khatm-e-Nubuwwat Federation distributed pamphlets in the city of Faisalabad, Punjab, listing prominent members of the Ahmadiyya community and calling for their murder as an act of "jihad".
- On 24 September, Faryal Bhatti, a 13-year-old Christian schoolgirl from Abbottabad, was expelled from school for misspelling an Urdu word, resulting in accusations of blasphemy. Her family were forced to go into hiding.
- All suspects in the August 2009 attack on a Christian colony in Gojra, Punjab, were released on bail after witnesses failed to give evidence out of fear for their safety.

The trial judge who sentenced Salmaan Taseer's assassin to death was forced to go into hiding due to death threats while Shahbaz Bhatti's killers had yet to be brought to justice. Politician Sherry Rehman withdrew a blasphemy law reform bill from the National Assembly following death threats. Aasia Bibi, a Christian farmer sentenced to death for blasphemy in 2009, remained in detention while her case was on appeal.

Violence against women and girls

Women faced legal and de facto discrimination and violence at home and in public. The Aurat Foundation documented 8,539 cases of violence against women, including 1,575 murders, 827 rapes, 610 incidents of domestic violence, 705 honour killings and 44 acid attacks. In December, Pakistan's parliament sought to address this problem by passing the Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Bill 2010 and the Prevention of Anti-Women Practices (Criminal Law Amendment) Bill 2008, aimed at empowering and protecting women and increasing penalties for perpetrators of gender-based violence. This was the first time that acid attacks and practices like forced marriages were criminalized in Pakistan.

- On 10 September, four women – all teachers – were attacked with acid by two masked perpetrators riding a motorbike, as they left a co-educational school in Quetta, capital of Balochistan province. One of the women escaped without any

injuries and another two were discharged from hospital with minor burns, but the fourth sustained severe burns and required major reconstructive surgery. Federal and provincial authorities took notice of the attack, but the perpetrators had yet to be brought to justice.

- On 15 October, a teenage girl accused 13 people, including three police officers, of abducting and gang raping her in captivity for a year in the district of Karak in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. On 9 December, her brother was shot dead as he left the district court hearing the criminal case against the accused.

Death penalty

More than 8,000 prisoners remained on death row. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, at least 313 people were sentenced to death, over half of them for murder. Three people were sentenced to death for blasphemy. The last execution took place in 2008.

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