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Amnesty International Annual Report 2011 - Pakistan

Head of state: Asif Ali Zardari

Head of government: Yousuf Raza Gilani

Death penalty: retentionist

Population: 184.8 million

Life expectancy: 67.2 years

Under-5 mortality (m/f): 85/94 per 1,000

Adult literacy: 53.7 per cent

Massive floods displaced millions of Pakistanis, leaving them in need of food, health care and shelter. Insurgent groups unlawfully killed people in Pakistan's conflict-ridden Northwest and Balochistan. They inflicted cruel punishments on the civilian population and launched deadly suicide attacks in the major cities, causing hundreds of civilian deaths and injuries. More than 2 million people were displaced by the conflict in north-west Pakistan. Torture, deaths in custody, "honour killings" and domestic violence persisted, despite new international commitments to safeguard rights. Members of the armed forces continued to arbitrarily arrest civilians, subjecting some to extrajudicial executions. New cases of enforced disappearance soared, particularly in Balochistan, where many victims were found dead. Old cases of enforced disappearance remained unresolved. Violence against religious minorities intensified with the government failing to prevent or punish the perpetrators. An informal moratorium on executions remained, but over 300 people were sentenced to death.

Background

Floods, which began in north-western Pakistan in July, killed almost 2,000 people and directly affected more than 20 million. This acute humanitarian crisis added to the existing misery of those already displaced by the conflict. The Pakistani army pushed Taleban forces out of the Swat Valley and South Waziristan in 2009, and out of the Bajaur and Orakzai agencies in 2010. Despite successes on the battlefield, military and civilian authorities failed to address the underlying causes of the conflict. They did nothing to improve the area's significant underdevelopment, failing to re-build basic infrastructure, including schools, and neglecting to restore businesses. Humanitarian relief for the displaced remained inadequate. Humanitarian organizations and independent monitors were barred from effectively operating in conflict areas.

US drone strikes targeting suspected al-Qa'ida and Taleban insurgents in Pakistan's border regions more than doubled to a reported 118 strikes in 2010, fuelling anti-American sentiment among the population.

On 24 March, Pakistan ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Convention against Torture, with sweeping reservations. No steps were taken to incorporate these international commitments into domestic law.

In April, the 18th constitutional amendment ended the President's power to dissolve Parliament, introduced citizens' right to freedom of information, enhanced provincial autonomy, and obliged provinces to provide free education to all children.

In October, Asma Jahangir, a prominent human rights advocate, was elected the first woman President of the Supreme Court Bar Association.

Violations by security forces

Hundreds of civilians were killed in army operations against insurgents in the Northwest. Dozens of suspected insurgents were killed by *lashkars* (tribal militias) sponsored by the army but lacking proper training or monitoring.

- On 8 March, a *lashkar* set fire to 130 homes of suspected Taleban members in Bajaur agency.

Extrajudicial executions

Security forces reportedly killed suspected members of armed groups in the Northwest and Balochistan, mostly with impunity. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), an NGO, recorded 282 bodies of suspected insurgents found between the end of military operations in Swat Valley in July 2009 and May. Local people attributed these

killings to the security forces. Several activists campaigning against enforced disappearance in Balochistan disappeared themselves and were killed.

- On 14 July, Supreme Court lawyer and former senator Habib Jalil Baloch was shot dead in Quetta district. The Baloch Armed Defence Group, allegedly sponsored by Pakistani security forces, claimed responsibility.
- In late October, Mohammad Khan Zohaib and Abdul Majeed, both aged 14, were found shot dead after reportedly being detained by Frontier Corps personnel in October and July respectively in Khuzdar town, Balochistan.
- Faqir Mohammad Baloch, a member of the Voice for Baloch Missing Persons, was abducted on 23 September. His body, bearing a bullet wound and signs of torture, was found in Mastung district on 21 October.
- The mutilated body of 38-year-old lawyer Zaman Marri was found on 5 September in Mastung. He had gone missing on 19 August in Quetta. Zaman Marri had represented his cousin Ali Ahmed Marri, who was taken by men in plain clothes on 7 April. His body was found on 11 September in the same area.

Abuses by armed groups

Armed groups in the Northwest inflicted cruel and inhuman punishments, attacked civilians and destroyed civilian structures, including schools.

- On 19 February, the Pakistani Taleban publicly amputated the hands of five men they had accused of theft in Dabori town, Orakzai.
- In May, the Taleban publicly executed a man in Miramshah town, North Waziristan, after accusing him of murdering two brothers. The Taleban "sentenced" him unlawfully in a makeshift tribunal.
- In late October, the Taleban publicly flogged 65 alleged drug dealers in Mamozai town, Orakzai agency.

Anti-government armed groups killed or injured thousands of civilians in suicide bombings and targeted attacks.

- On 17 April, suicide bombers killed 41 displaced people queuing for relief supplies in Kohat town in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.
- On 20 May, the Taleban in North Waziristan strapped explosives on two men suspected of passing information to the USA and publicly blew them up.
- On 14 August, 17 Punjabis were killed in Quetta district. The Balochistan Liberation Army declared the attack retribution for the disappearance and murder of people in Balochistan.

- On 2 October, Mohammad Farooq Khan, a doctor, religious scholar and educator, and his associate, were shot dead in Mardan city. The Taleban claimed responsibility for the killing. Mohammad Farooq Khan had publicly declared suicide bombing un-Islamic.

Arbitrary arrests and detentions

According to the HRCP, between 1,000 and 2,600 people, including children related to suspected insurgents, continued to be held in military custody after search and military operations in Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

- A local *jirga* (council of tribal elders) demanded that families of Taleban members in Swat surrender them by 20 May or face expulsion. As a result, 130 relatives of suspected Taleban members were taken into "protective custody" in a camp guarded by the army at Palai area, Swat.

Torture and other ill-treatment

Police tortured and otherwise ill-treated detainees in their custody. They failed to take sufficient measures to protect people from mob violence and in some instances appeared to have colluded in it.

- On 1 March, two men accused of robbery were filmed being held down and whipped by police in a police station in Chiniot city, Punjab province. Following broadcast of the film on national television, five police officers were arrested. Their cases were pending.
- On 15 August, two brothers accused of robbery, 17-year-old Hafiz Mohammad Mughees Sajjad and Mohammad Muneeb Sajjad, aged 15, were beaten to death by a mob in Sialkot city, Punjab. The incident was caught on film. A judicial inquiry found that the boys had been innocent of the charges and that police officers present at the scene of the lynching had failed to stop the attack.

Enforced disappearances

In March, a three-member panel constituted by the Supreme Court began to review cases of enforced disappearance. Its mandate included recording evidence of released people and investigating the role of the intelligence agencies. The Judicial Commission reached its conclusion on 31 December and submitted its findings and recommendations to the Federal government for review. The Commission's report remained classified at the end of the year.

Hundreds of people went missing, apparently after being held by the intelligence services or the army. The majority of cases were in Balochistan. Hundreds of habeas corpus petitions remained pending in provincial High Courts but the intelligence services refused to respond to court directions. Families of the disappeared were threatened for speaking out about their missing loved ones.

- The whereabouts of two members of the Baloch National Front, Mahboob Ali Wadela and Mir Bohair Bangulzai, remained unknown. Mahboob Ali Wadela was taken by Maripur police from a bus in Yousuf Goth neighbourhood, Karachi city, on 2 April; Mir Bohair Bangulzai was taken by uniformed police from his car in Quetta on 1 April. Maripur and Quetta police refused to register a complaint by the men's relatives.

Freedom of expression

Journalists were harassed, ill-treated and killed by state agents and members of anti-government armed groups. State agents failed to protect journalists from attacks by armed groups; 19 media workers were killed, making Pakistan the most dangerous country for media workers in 2010, according to the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists and the Committee to Protect Journalists. The authorities blocked some online news sites.

- Umar Cheema, journalist with *The News*, reported that he had been abducted and held for six hours on 4 September. He was taken blindfolded to the outskirts of the capital, Islamabad, stripped naked, hung upside down and beaten by people who warned him about criticizing the government. Prime Minister Gilani ordered a judicial inquiry and the Lahore High Court took notice of the case of its own accord but by the end of the year, no one was held to account.
- Misri Khan Orakzai, aged 50, of the *Daily Ausaf* in Hangu city, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, was shot dead by unidentified gunmen on 13 September after receiving several death threats from insurgents.
- On 8 November, access to the online news site *Baloch Hal* was blocked by the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority for allegedly publishing "anti-Pakistan" material. The site covered human rights violations including enforced disappearances.
- On 18 November, the bodies of 24-year-old Abdul Hameed Hayatan, a journalist at *Daily Karachi* and *Tawar*, and Hamid Ismail were found in Turbat city, Balochistan. The whereabouts of the two men had remained unknown after their arrest at a security forces checkpoint near Gwadar city on 25 October. Their

bodies bore torture marks. Nearby a message was found, saying: "Eid present for the Baloch people."

Discrimination – religious minorities

The state failed to prevent and prosecute discrimination, harassment and violence against religious minorities and, increasingly, moderate Sunni Muslims. Ahmadis, Shi'as and Christians were attacked and killed in apparent sectarian violence. Sectarian groups reportedly linked to the Taliban attacked Shi'as, Ahmadis and Sufis with impunity. Blasphemy laws continued to be misused against Ahmadis and Christians, as well as Shi'a Muslims and Sunnis.

- On 28 May, 93 members of the Ahmadiyya community were killed and 150 injured in attacks on two Ahmadiyya mosques in Lahore after the provincial government ignored requests for improved security following threats from armed groups. On 31 May, gunmen stormed the hospital where victims were undergoing treatment and killed six more people, including hospital staff.
- On 1 July, 42 people were killed and 175 others injured in a suicide bomb attack on the Data Darbar Sufi shrine in the city of Lahore.
- On 1 September, at least 54 Shi'a worshippers were killed and some 280 others injured when suicide bombers attacked a procession in Lahore.
- On 3 September, a suicide attack killed at least 65 people in a Shi'a gathering in Quetta and injured another 150; the Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack.

Abuse of blasphemy laws persisted. At least 67 Ahmadis, 17 Christians, eight Muslims and six Hindus were charged with blasphemy and several cases were dismissed following dubious accusations or improper investigations by the authorities, according to the National Commission for Justice and Peace.

- On 8 November, 45-year-old Asia Bibi, a Christian mother of five, was charged with blasphemy and sentenced to death after an unfair trial. Following an altercation with local women who regarded a bowl of water she brought as "unclean", Asia Bibi had been saved by police from the ensuing mob violence but was arrested on 19 June 2009. An appeal was pending.

The state failed to protect several of those charged with blasphemy from subsequent attacks.

- On 19 July, two Christian brothers, 32-year-old Rashid, a pastor, and Sajid Emanuel, aged 27, were shot dead in front of a court in Faisalabad city after they

had been charged with blasphemy. The police did not adequately protect the brothers despite credible death threats.

- On 11 November, Imran Latif, aged 22, was shot dead in Lahore after being released on bail on 3 November. The court had found little evidence to substantiate a blasphemy charge brought against him five years earlier.

Violence against women and girls

Gender-based violence, including rape, forced marriages, "honour killings", acid attacks and other forms of domestic violence, was committed with impunity as police were reluctant to register and investigate complaints. According to the women's helpline Madadgaar, 1,195 women had been murdered as of late November. Of these, 98 had been raped before they were killed. Madadgaar figures showed a total of 321 women raped, and 194 gang-raped.

On 22 December the Federal Shariat Court ruled to reverse several provisions of the 2006 Women's Protection Act. The verdict sought to reinstate certain provisions of the 1979 Hudood Ordinance which were extremely discriminatory against women.

- On 29 April, three sisters, Fatima, aged 20, Sakeena, aged 14 and Saima, aged 8, were disfigured by acid thrown at them in Kalat town, Balochistan, apparently for violating a ban on leaving the house without a male guardian.

Death penalty

An informal moratorium on executions, begun in late 2008, continued. However, the death penalty was imposed on 356 people, including one juvenile, mostly for murder. Some 8,000 prisoners remained on death row, according to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.