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Pakistan: Situation and treatment of Shia [Shi'a, Shi'i, Shiite] Muslims, including Hazaras and Turi, particularly in Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad, and Hyderabad; state response to violence against Shias (2017-January 2020) [PAK106393.E]

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

1. Shia Muslims

1.1 Demographics

According to sources, the Shia population of Pakistan is estimated to be between 10 and 15 percent (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.72; *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 4 Oct. 2019; US 18 Dec. 2019), or "some 17-26 million people" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* 4 Oct. 2019).

The information in the following paragraph was provided in a country report on Pakistan by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT):

... Pakistani Shi'a live throughout the country in urban centres, including Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Peshawar, Multan, Jhang and Sargodha. While Shi'a are not a majority in any of Pakistan's four provinces, they are a majority in the autonomous region of Gilgit-Baltistan.

... Significant numbers of Shi'a live in Peshawar, Kohat, Hangu and Dera Ismail Khan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; in Kurram and Orakzai districts in the former FATA [Federally Administered Tribal Areas]; in and around Quetta and the Makran coastline in Balochistan; in parts of southern and central Punjab; and throughout Sindh. Although some Shi'a live in enclaves in these cities [Hazaras and Turis], Shi'a and Sunni communities are generally well integrated. (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.90-3.91)

Concentrations of Shia in Karachi, "particularly" Hazaras, can be found in Abbas Town, Hussain Hazara Goth, Mughal Hazara Goth, Rizvia, Ancholi, Defence Housing Authority (DHA) Gizri, Pak Colony and Manghopir (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.105). Shia live throughout Punjab, including in Lahore, though the report notes that in southern Punjab, Sunni and Shia communities are "more segregated," while communities in cities are "much more integrated" (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.106). "[M]ost" Shia in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa live in Hangu, Kohat, Peshawar and Dera Ismail Khan, explaining that "[m]ost Shi'a in Peshawar are long-term residents of the Old City, while many Shi'a in Hangu, Kohat and Dera Ismail Khan are Turi or Bangash Shi'a from Kurram and Orakzai agencies" (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.108). According to the same source,

[a]pproximately two million people live in Gilgit-Baltistan, a sparsely populated autonomous region in the north. The population comprises Shi'a (approximately 39 per cent), Ismaili Shi'a (18 per cent), Sunnis (27 per cent), and Nurbakshis, who adhere to a Sufi tradition combining aspects of Shi'a and Sunni theology (16 per cent). (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.112)

Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1.2 Distinguishing Features

According to the Australian DFAT report, “[m]ilitants identify Shi'a by Shi'a names displayed on CNICs [Computerized National Identity Cards], or flagellation marks from Ashura [or Ashoura] ceremonies” and “Hazara Shi'a are more readily identifiable due to their distinctive physical appearance” (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.102). The source explains the following:

... Most Pakistani Shi'a are not physically or linguistically distinguishable from Pakistani Sunnis. NADRA [National Database and Registration Authority] collects sectarian information during the application process for identity documents, but CNICs do not identify a cardholder's religion, and passports do not distinguish between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims. Some Shi'a may be identifiable by common Shi'a names such as Naqvi, Zaidi and Jafri. Similarly, ethnic and tribal names can reveal a person's ethnicity or tribal affiliation: nearly all Hazaras and Turis are Shi'a, and significant numbers of Bangash are Shi'a.

... Shi'a in Pakistan are most prominent during Shi'a religious events and pilgrimages to Iraq and Iran. Shi'a commemorate the Day of Ashura with re-enactments of the martyrdom and processions, during which Shi'a men and women dressed in black parade through the streets slapping their chests and chanting. Self-harm, such as flagellation performed during Ashura processions, can leave permanent marks. Shi'a and Sunni mosques are clearly distinguishable.

... Shi'a mosques and places of worship, or *imambargahs*, feature different Muslim iconography, including the Shi'a sword, horses, images of Ali and Hussein, and 'U-shaped' crescent moons. Shi'a and Sunni mosques have different prayer times, and worshippers use different hand positions while praying. Shi'a mosques are located throughout Pakistan. Shi'a can pray in Sunni mosques and vice versa, although this rarely happens. Both sects share a number of famous religious sites, including Sufi shrines. (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.92-3.94, italics in original)

Other sources also explain that Ashura, in the month of Muharram [Moharram], is an important date for Shias, commemorating the death of Husayn [Hussein] ibn Ali, during which self-flagellation is common (Business Insider 4 Oct. 2015; Field 1996, 14). Other sources also note variations in prayer practices, including hand placement (NBC 4 Jan. 2016; Rubin 2015, 329).

2. Situation and Treatment of Shia Muslims

According to a 2012 demographic study by the Pew Research Centre, a non-partisan think-tank based in Washington, DC (Pew Research Center n.d.), which states that “[i]n some countries in the Middle East and North Africa with predominantly Sunni populations, such as Egypt and Morocco, the prevailing view is that Shias are *not* members of the Islamic faith,” 53

percent of Pakistani respondents [1] agreed that Shias are Muslim, while 37 percent said that they are not (Pew Research Center 9 Aug. 2012, 83, 88, emphasis in original). According to Minority Rights Group International (MRG),

Pakistani Shi'a are represented in all walks of life, but in many cases have succeeded in playing prominent roles in Pakistan's cultural sphere and attaining influential, high-profile positions. Though as Muslims they are free from certain restrictions affecting other religious groups, Shi'a are still regarded as apostates by some extremist Sunni groups and individuals. (MRG June 2018)

According to the same source, Shia have been "subjected to various forms of hate speech, most commonly as campaigns in mosques, schools, public spaces and increasingly on social media," and are "vilified as a community for their religious beliefs" (MRG June 2018).

According to the Australian DFAT report, the DFAT found "no evidence of systemic discrimination against Shi'a in gaining employment in the public service, police, military or the private sector" and the report notes that Shia are "well represented in parliament and regularly contest elections for mainstream political parties" (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.96, 3.98). The report notes, however, that "[l]ow-level anti-Shi'a discrimination does occur at the community level, and can manifest in violence or damage to property" and that Shia groups have "raised concerns that the public school syllabus and prescribed textbooks contain depictions of Sunni prayer rituals, and omit prominent historical Shi'a figures" (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.96, 3.97). According to the same source,

[t]he mountainous terrain, sparse (and majority Shi'a) population, and the fact that communities tend to live in isolation from each other mean that Gilgit-Baltistan has fewer violent incidents than other regions in Pakistan. ... However, Gilgit-Baltistan's economy is less advanced and it can be hard for people of any faith, especially youth, to secure employment. (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.112)

Specific information regarding the situation and treatment of Shias in the cities of Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad, and Hyderabad could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2.1 Violence Against Shia Muslims

According to the Australian DFAT report, "[s]ectarian violence in Pakistan has historically targeted individuals, places of worship, shrines and religious schools, however Shi'a traditionally represented a higher proportion of the casualties," noting that Shia face threats from anti-Shia militant groups, including Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), which "seeks to have Shi'a declared 'non-believers' or apostates," as well as from Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), also known as Ahl-e-Sunnat-Wal-Jamaat (ASWJ), LeJ al-Alami, and other factions of the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.99). For information on the TTP, see Response to Information Request PAK106391 of January 2020.

MRG also mentions the TTP and SSP or ASWJ as associated with "targeted killings" of Shias, explaining that Shia are targeted by militant groups who have declared that Shias "'are worthy of killing,'" and that there have been "a number of attacks" on Shia pilgrims travelling to and from Iran, noting that the 700 km highway through Balochistan is "vulnerable to militant attacks" (MRG June 2018). According to the US Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report for 2018*,

[s]ectarian violent extremist groups continued [in 2018] to target Shia houses of worship, religious gatherings, religious leaders, and other individuals in attacks resulting in at least 41 persons killed during the year. On November 23, a bomb blast near a Shia place of worship in Orakzai District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa killed 33 people, including Sunni and Shia Muslims, as well as three Sikhs, and injured 56. ISIS-K [Islamic State Khorasan Province] claimed responsibility for the attack.

There were multiple reports of targeted killings of Shia in Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, although observers stated it was often unclear whether religion was the primary motivation, or whether other disputes could have been a factor. In February and May alleged Lej militants killed several Shia residents. According to the media, on August 9, the same group was believed to be responsible for the subsequent killing of three individuals in the same area. (US 21 June 2019, 25)

In its 2018 annual report, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), an "independent, democratic, nonpartisan organisation" (HRCP n.d.), states that the

Shia community continued to be under threat of targeted killings. In February, three persons, including a religious leader, died in a targeted firing on an Imambargah in Dera Ismail Khan. On 22 March, a Shia man was shot dead and two were seriously injured in a sectarian attack in Karachi. On 8 August, three Shias were shot dead in Dera Ismail Khan. The Shia Missing Persons Release Committee claims that around 140 Shia Muslims are missing. (HRCP Mar. 2019, 113)

The Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), a "research and advocacy think-tank" composed of Pakistani scholars, researchers, and journalists (PIPS n.d.), states the following in its security report for 2018:

Apart from one major attack in Orakzai [Khyber Pakhtunkhwa] (claimed by ISIS), which killed 35 people, most among 10 other sectarian-related attacks were of low intensity [and were] mainly incidents of targeted killings that were reported from Quetta (6 attacks), [Dera Ismail] Khan (3), and Peshawar (1 attack.). One incident of sectarian clash took place in Mansehra, at a shrine, causing one death. Shia community members, including Hazaras[,] were targeted in most of these attacks. (PIPS Jan.-June 2019, 22-23)

The source surmises that the violence is concentrated in these areas due to the following factors:

[t]he Hazara community in Quetta valley, the Shia population in northern Sindh and Shia influence on Sunnis there, a pluralist culture of shrines, poorly governed provincial borders and most importantly, the Shia pilgrimage routes to Iran and Iraq attract a multitude of sectarian actors in this region. (PIPS Jan.-June 2019, 76)

The same source also notes that "Karachi has long been the most active theatre of sectarian violence between Sunni, Deobandi and Shia groups," resulting in a "crackdown" by law enforcement agencies, and states that "Karachi has also witnessed a rise in 'enforced disappearances' of Shia youth for their alleged links with militancy in the Middle-East" (PIPS Jan.-June 2019, 127-128).

The PIPS report also indicates that

[d]own 40 percent from the year before, there were recorded 12 incidents of sectarian violence in 2018 – including 11 sectarian-related terrorist attacks and one armed clash between rival sectarian groups.

...

The number of people killed in such incidents also decreased by about 31 percent, from 74 in 2017 to 51 in 2018. (PIPS Jan.-June 2019, 53)

The South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), which "evaluat[es] terrorist and violent movements" in South Asia and is a project of the Institute for Conflict Management, a non-profit NGO based in New Delhi (SATP n.d.), similarly notes, regarding violence against Shias, that up to 17 June 2018, there were 7 deaths and 4 injuries across 5 incidents, compared to 114 deaths and 308 injuries across 10 incidents in 2017 (SATP 17 June 2018). The SATP lists the following incidents between January and 17 June 2018:

- March 22: "A Shia man was shot dead and two others - including an infant - were injured in a suspected sectarian attack in [the] Sachal area of Malir Town in Karachi, the provincial capital of Sindh";
- April 1: "In a suspected targeted killing incident, one member of the Shia Hazara community was killed and another was injured when unidentified assailants opened fire on their vehicle in [the] Kandahari Bazaar area of Quetta, the provincial capital of Balochistan";
- April 18: "A shopkeeper belonging to the Shia Hazara community, identified as Muhammad Asif (50), ... was killed in a drive-by shooting at an auto parts shop on Abdul Sattar Road in Quetta";
- April 22: "Two persons belonging to the Hazara community, identified as Muhammad Ali and Muhammad Zaman, were killed, while a third was injured in an incident of firing in [the] Western Bypass area of Quetta"; and
- April 29: "Two shopkeepers belonging to the Shia Hazara community were killed in a drive-by shooting at [the] Jamaluddin Afghani Road area in Quetta" (SATP 17 June 2018).

According to the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), a "think tank/advocacy center" based in Islamabad that is "committed to the cause of independent research and nonpartisan analysis, and informed advocacy" on Pakistan (CRSS n.d.), across the country, there were 91 fatalities from sectarian violence in 2018, compared to 324 in 2017 (CRSS 28 Feb. 2019, 54). According to the same source, in 2018, "FATA suffered the highest number of fatalities from sectarian violence (43), followed by Balochistan (18), Punjab (11), Sindh (11), and [Khyber Pakhtunkhwa] (8)" (CRSS 28 Feb. 2019, 54). According to data from the same source, Islamic State [IS, Daesh, ISIS, ISIL] (38 incidents) and the TTP and its splinter groups (11 incidents) claimed a combined total of 54 percent of fatalities (CRSS 28 Feb. 2019, 59).

The CRSS also notes that for the first quarter of 2019, there were 2 reports of fatalities resulting from sectarian violence against Shias, while there were 33 in the fourth quarter of 2018 (CRSS 16 Apr. 2019). The CRSS reports 12 fatalities of Shia Hazaras in the second quarter of 2019 (CRSS 17 July 2019), and 2 fatalities of Shia Hazaras and 1 [other] Shia individual in the third quarter of 2019 (CRSS 10 Oct. 2019). According to the Jinnah Institute [2], between January and September of 2019, there were 5 incidents of attacks against Shias that resulted in 12 casualties, and 3 incidents against Hazaras that resulted in 82 casualties (Jinnah Institute 31 Oct. 2019).

3. Hazaras

3.1 Demographics

According to MRG, Hazaras are "an ethnic group predominantly based in Afghanistan, but also with a large population in Pakistan"; population estimates range from 650,000 to 900,000, with the majority of Pakistani Hazaras, approximately 500,000, living in the city of Quetta (MRG June 2018). According to a report on Hazaras by Pakistan's National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), citing other sources, Hazaras reside in different areas of Pakistan, "including, Parachinar, Karachi, Sanghar, Nawabshah, Hyderabad, different parts of Punjab and Gilgit Baltistan," as well as in Quetta, Sanjawi, Much, Zhob, Harnai, Loralai, and Dukki in Balochistan (Pakistan Feb. 2018, 4). According to the same source, citing the World Hazara Council, the population of Hazaras is "approximately between" 400,000 and 500,000 in Balochistan (Pakistan Feb. 2018, 4).

According to MRG, Hazaras have "clearly identifiable features" (MRG June 2018). The report on Hazaras by the NCHR similarly notes that Hazara people have "unique facial features [that] distinguish them from others" (Pakistan Feb. 2018, 3). According to the Australian DFAT report,

[t]he Hazara ethnic group, native to Hazarajat in central Afghanistan, is of Eurasian descent, rendering Hazaras visibly distinct from other ethnic groups in Pakistan. Estimates of the size of the Hazara population in Pakistan range from around 600,000 to under one million. Most Hazaras are Shi'a Muslim, predominantly of the Twelver Sect (*athna asharia*), although a small number are Sunni.

... Most Hazaras live in enclaves in Quetta ... [and] [o]utside of Balochistan, smaller but significant populations reside in major urban centres such as Karachi. Hazaras in urban centres other than Quetta tend not to live in enclaves, to reduce the risk of ethnic profiling, discrimination and attack. (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.27-3.28, italics in original)

The DFAT report adds that the Hazara community in Quetta "lives in two main areas, Hazara town and Mariabad: Mariabad is located to the east of Quetta near the Pakistan air force base, and Hazara town to the west, near the cantonment and the Benazir hospital" (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.30).

3.2 Situation and Treatment of Hazaras

MRG notes that "[w]hile some Hazaras are Sunni, the majority identify as Shi'a" (MRG June 2018). The same source states that the freedom of mobility of the Hazara community has been "heavily restricted due to threat of attack," that the community in Quetta has been "effectively ghettoized" to Hazara Town and Alamdar Road, and that insecurity has "affected other areas of their everyday life, including access to education and employment" (MRG June 2018).

The Pakistani NCHR report indicates that Hazaras have worked in and contributed to various fields, "including defense, administration, trade, politics, education, [and] sports" (Pakistan Feb. 2018, 4). The same source states that

[t]he existing situation of [the] Hazara community is precarious, [as they] are facing enormous difficulties in exercising their fundamental human rights i.e. right to life, freedom of movement, right to higher education, and right to participate in the earning of their daily living and access to necessities of life. They are also having limited social opportunities due to fear

of violence. During the [NCHR's] field work, a Hazara student expressed that, "A Hazara cannot visit the whole city of Quetta without inviting danger to his life". They feel threat[ene]d and targeted while going to Iran for pilgrimages. They also feel fearful to go to shopping centers and earn [a] livelihood in Quetta as their movement is limited to a few safe areas of Quetta. (Pakistan Feb. 2018, 5)

According to interviews conducted during NCHR's field work for the same report,

[m]ost members of [the] Hazara community were of the view that their persecution is not just sectarian. They explained that other Shia groups are living peacefully in Dera Murad Jamali and Jafarabad in Balochistan, which gives weight to the view that these killings are not religiously-motivated against Shias as only Hazaras are being targeted. (Pakistan Feb. 2018, 6)

The same source also notes that during interviews, Hazara interviewees expressed that attainment of higher education and access to hospitals were difficult to pursue due to safety concerns and affordability (Pakistan Feb. 2018, 9-10). The source adds that the Hazara "try to hide their identity" when outside of their communities, that "economic activity is now confined to Hazara[-]populated areas" and that isolation has "impacted the psychological well-being of Hazaras" (Pakistan Feb. 2018, 10, 12, 13).

According to an HRCP report on a fact-finding mission conducted in August 2019 in Pakistan's Balochistan province,

[i]n Quetta, the Shia Hazara community resides primarily on Alamdar Road and Hazara Town. Their movement outside these areas is managed by security forces, including the [Frontier Corps]. Their access to education and employment remains limited, their businesses have suffered and many other aspects of their lives have been affected severely. There is insufficient access to well-functioning hospitals and universities in these areas. A campus of Balochistan University was to have been set up on Alamdar Road, but there has been no progress in this regard. HDP [Hazara Democratic Party] leaders were of the view that this was because no land was available; they claimed that the authorities of the cantonment area, which is adjacent to Alamdar Road, should be approached and asked to provide land to make the prospect of a campus viable as soon as possible.

...

Obstacles to what should be tasks the average Pakistani citizen might take for granted – such as having passports and national identity cards issued – remain a key problem for the Shia Hazara community. Government authorities ask them to prove that they are indeed "Pakistanis" and that they have not "emigrated" from Afghanistan. The community believes this is indicative of systemic discrimination. (HRCP 2019, 8-9)

According to the Australian DFAT report, Hazaras are "reluctant" to travel outside their enclaves, which restricts them "only to services within enclave walls" and, due to the risk of attacks, "many education and health facilities in Quetta ... deny Hazaras access to transportation or attendance, in order to protect non-Hazar[a] clients and students" (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.36, 3.38). The DFAT report adds that

... [t]he government provides some security to Hazara enclaves. The paramilitary Frontier Corps ... maintains checkpoints on roads leading to Hazara town in Quetta, and search people on entry and exit. Sources report Frontier Corps are known to routinely discriminate against and harass Hazaras at checkpoints. (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.30)

According to the Australian DFAT,

Hazaras report that the few Hazara enclaves in Karachi, such as Mungo Pir, are unsafe and have only arisen out of necessity where poorer Hazaras have had to pool resources.

... While living in ethnically diverse locations such as Karachi affords increased security, Hazaras still experience societal discrimination and security threats. Some Hazara members of the military employ measures to reduce their profile, such as varying daily travel routes and times, changing vehicles and avoiding the use of military vehicles. (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.43-3.44)

The same source also notes that

travel in and out of, or between, the enclaves, involves document checks that can serve to block access to services. While most Hazaras in Pakistan can obtain formal identification such as CNICs, Hazaras claim the [NADRA] officials have at times caused delays for Hazaras applying for official documentation. Hazaras have suffered lethal attacks outside the NADRA office in Quetta, located outside the enclaves, while trying to obtain passports and CNICs. As a result, many Hazaras do not feel safe leaving the enclave to apply for documentation. (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.41)

The DFAT report adds that NADRA officials have reportedly "refused to amend CNICs of Hazaras attempting to relocate within Pakistan, thus preventing them from applying for a passport, which must be obtained at the place of residence" (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.45). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

3.3 Violence Against Hazaras

According to the PIPS report for 2018, "six sectarian-related attacks were reported from Balochistan in 2018, which killed 8 people and injured 3 others. All these attacks happened during the first quarter of the year and targeted Hazara Shia community" (PIPS Jan.-June 2019, 45). Citing Pakistani news sources, the report lists the attacks as follows:

- March 4: A member of [the] Hazara Shia community Naiz Ali was gunned down in the Ali Bhai Road area. Police termed it a case of targeted killing.
- March 7: One policeman was killed and another sustained injuries when militants opened fire on them while they were guarding Hazara vegetable vendors in [the] Hazar Ganji area of Quetta.
- April 1: Militants opened fire on a taxi on Alamdar Road that was heading to Hazara Town. One person in the taxi, Nazar Hussain, was killed and another, Gul Hassan, was injured. The driver and a woman in the car remained safe.
- April 18: A Hazara Shia man[,] Muhammad Asif, who ran an auto parts business, was shot dead at his shop on the busy Abdul Sattar Road in Quetta. The deceased received 5 bullets in upper parts of his body.
- April 22: Two members of the Shia Hazara community were shot dead and another was injured in an attack in [the] Western Bypass area of the city. It was the third such incident in [the preceding] 3 weeks.

- April 28: Armed militants riding a motorcycle opened fire on the two Hazara men who were sitting in an electronics shop in the Jamaluddin Afghani Road area, which is located in the centre of the city. Both died in the firing on the spot, after receiving bullet wounds in their heads. (PIPS Jan.-June 2019, 45-46)

According to the US *International Religious Freedom Report for 2018*,

In April six Shia Hazaras were killed in four targeted drive-by shooting incidents in Quetta, Balochistan. The killings sparked sustained protest by Quetta's ethnic Hazara community, who stated that at least 509 Hazaras were killed and 627 were injured in Quetta from 2012 to 2017. Chief of Army Staff Bajwa met with protest leaders in May, and police subsequently provided additional security in Quetta to protect religious minorities from attack. Although the violence subsided, some Quetta Hazara community members complained that increased security measures had turned their neighborhoods into isolated ghettos. (US 21 June 2019, 25)

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)'s *2019 Annual Report* adds that

In April 2018, two young Hazara men were shot dead; no arrests were made. Responding to the government's failure to act, leaders in the Hazara community launched a sit-in protest to demand action by the government to protect them. During a special case hearing in May 2018, the chief justice of Pakistan stated that attacks on the Hazara Shi'a Muslims in Balochistan Province were tantamount to wiping out an entire generation and that the state must "protect lives and property of the Hazara community". (US 29 Apr. 2019, 6)

The HRCP's *State of Human Rights in 2018* report similarly notes that

[i]n April, there were four targeted attacks on Hazaras in Quetta, leaving nine dead and two injured. Some were killed in drive-by shootings at their own shops. The authorities' failure to protect Hazaras sparked protests in Quetta, including a five-day sit-in led by Jalila Haider, which ended after the Army Chief met protestors. In May the CJP took suo moto notice of these attacks, directing provincial and national authorities to file reports within 10 days. (HRCP Mar. 2019, 109)

Sources indicate that in April 2019, "[a]t least" 20 people were killed by a bomb reportedly targeting Hazaras in Quetta (Al Jazeera 13 Apr. 2019; CNN 12 Apr. 2019; Thomson Reuters with AP 12 Apr. 2019); sources report that the attack was claimed by Islamic State (Al Jazeera 13 Apr. 2019) or LeJ (CNN 12 Apr. 2019).

According to the Australian DFAT report,

[l]ocal sources consider the road from Quetta airport to the city and Double Road to be dangerous for all travellers, regardless of ethnicity. Local sources, including from the Hazara community, consider Giant Road to be dangerous for both Hazaras and Frontier Corps. Militants have targeted Shi'a pilgrims on the road through Balochistan[;] during pilgrimage to Iran and Iraq and Hazara Shi'a are easier targets because of their distinctive appearance. Local sources claim that government security for Shi'a undertaking religious pilgrimage ... is more readily available for non-Hazara Shi'a, and the government provides escorts for Hazaras only every couple of months. (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.35)

4. Turis

4.1 Demographics

According to the Australian DFAT report,

The Turi tribe is a Shi'a Pashtun tribe of around 500,000 people. Turis are not generally distinguishable from other Pashtuns by appearance, but are identifiable by tribal names, accents, and residency in known Turi areas. Most Turis live in Parachinar, lower and upper Kurram Agency, Orakzai, [Dera Ismail] Khan, Kohat, and Hangu. Concentration of Turis in small geographic areas, particularly in and around Parachinar and Kurram Agency, renders Turi communities vulnerable to attack. (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.13)

Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

4.2 Situation and Treatment of the Turis

Information on Turis in Pakistan was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to the Australian DFAT report,

Turis relocating from Parachinar and Kurram Agency to access adequate services face difficulties finding employment outside of Parachinar due to ethnic and religious profiling and are generally discriminated against in employment selection processes. ...

[G]lobal Turi Shi'a networks and donation systems can assist Turis to relocate to other cities in Pakistan. Such support often relies on a senior male Turi advocate, limiting access for poorer members of the community, especially women and children. Turis leaving Kurram Agency tend to relocate to other known Shi'a areas, irrespective of language barriers, notably Wah Kant, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore and Karachi. (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.20-3.21)

Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

4.3 Violence Against the Turis

According to the Australian DFAT report,

[i]n the first quarter of 2018, the Turi community reported two attacks, including one involving an improvised explosive device that targeted women and children. This compares to community estimates that 200 Turis were killed and 1000 injured in 2017. (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.16)

Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

5. State Response

5.1 Anti-Terrorism Operations

In a section on anti-Shi'a violence, the Australian DFAT report states that while Karachi has "historically experienced high levels of violence due to rival ethnic, sectarian, political, business and criminal interests," the National Action Plan (NAP) on human rights, launched in February 2016, and the "highly visible presence of the paramilitary Rangers" have "led to a significant decrease in violence, including sectarian violence" (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 2.57, 3.105). According to the same source, despite a "relative decline," violent incidents are still "widespread" across the former FATA and "sectarian attacks can be lethal" (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.110). For information on counter-terror operations against the TTP and related groups, see Response to Information Request PAK106391 of January 2020.

5.2 Protection of Ashura Processions

The Australian DFAT report notes that Shia are "most vulnerable during large gatherings, such as Ashura processions" and that "[h]eighted state protection measures during these events partly mitigate the threats associated with this greater exposure" (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.101). The same source notes that the Pakistani military also "provides escort services for Shi'a pilgrims," but that these escorts can be "infrequent" (Australia 20 Feb. 2019, para. 3.103). According to the US *International Religious Freedom Report for 2018*,

[i]n September leading to and during the days of ninth and tenth Muharram (September 20-21), the government condemned sectarianism and urged all Muslims to respect Shia processions around the Ashura holiday. Prime Minister Khan gave a nationwide address upholding the martyrdom of Hussein at Karbala as an example of sacrifice for the greater good, and President Arif Alvi called on Muslims of all sects to resist oppression. Law enforcement deployed extra security around Shia processions in major cities throughout Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan provinces, including for Hazara Shia communities in Quetta. According to civil society contacts, authorities also restricted the movement and public sermons of both Sunni and Shia clerics accused of provoking sectarian violence. The government placed some clerics on the Schedule 4, a list of proscribed persons based on reasonable suspicion of terrorism or sectarian violence, and temporarily detained others under the Maintenance of Public Order Act. (US 21 June 2019, 22)

Sources indicate that for the 2019 observance of Ashura, cellular services were suspended in specific areas of cities across Pakistan as a security measure (*Dawn* 10 Sept. 2019; *Pakistan Today* 9 Sept. 2019), and that thousands of security personnel were deployed in Karachi, Lahore, and Quetta, in addition to security measures elsewhere, to protect mourners observing Ashura (*Dawn* 10 Sept. 2019).

5.3 Treatment by Authorities

An article in the *Express Tribune*, a Pakistani newspaper, states that the chairman of the Muharram committee in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa expressed concerns that First Information Reports (FIRs) were registered "against Shia elders during Muharram for taking out mourning processions without police permission" (*The Express Tribune* 1 Sept. 2018). An article in the newspaper *Pakistan Today* similarly quotes leaders of the All Parties Shia Federation as stating at a protest rally that "[d]uring the holy month of Muharram, police arrested hundreds of people belonging to the Shia community without any reason. At least 52 FIRs have been lodged against the administrators of different congregations for violating time restrictions" (*Pakistan Today* 23 Oct. 2018).

A BBC article reports that, according to community activists, 140 Pakistani Shias have "disappeared" since 2016, believed to have been taken into the custody of the intelligence services over suspected "links to a secretive militia in Syria, the Zainabiyoun Brigade, thought to be made up of around 1,000 Pakistani Shias fighting on behalf of the regime of President Bashar al-Assad" (BBC 31 May 2018). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Notes

[1] The Pew Research Centre demographic study interviewed 1,450 individuals in Pakistan and calculated a margin of error of 5.6 points (Pew Research Center 9 Aug. 2012, 120).

[2] The Jinnah Institute is "an independent policy research and public advocacy think tank in Pakistan" that seeks to "articulate independent national security strategies for Pakistan" (Jinnah Institute n.d.). The data concerning the number of incidents of attacks were gathered "from mainstream news reportage for terrorist attacks, ethnic strife, persecution of religious minorities, interfaith conflict, sexual and gender based violence" (Jinnah Institute 31 Oct. 2019).

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ecoi.net summary:

Query response on the situation and treatment of Shia Muslims, including Hazaras and Turi, particularly in Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad and Hyderabad (2017 - January 2020)



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