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**COI QUERY**

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The target audience is caseworkers, COI researchers, policy makers, and decision making authorities. The answer was finalised on the 6 June 2018. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this answer.



COI QUERY RESPONSE

1. Information on the treatment of Pashtun-Pakistani citizens by Pakistani authorities, especially in Punjab province, following the 2015 terrorist attacks in Punjab

Pashtuns (also called Pushtan, Paktun, Pathan, Pakhtuns) are an ethnic group based in Afghanistan and Pakistan¹. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia (DFAT) Country Information Report (for the year 2016) states that there are about 30 million Pashtuns living in Pakistan, making them the second largest ethnic group in the country².

The Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) reports that, throughout 2015, 24 terrorist attacks were recorded in Punjab province³.

On 27 March 2016, a terrorist attack by Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a group of Pakistani Taliban, killed 75 persons and injured more than 350 in Lahore (capital of Punjab province). According to the US Department of State Country Report on Human Rights Practices (for the year 2016), following this attack in Lahore, the Pakistani authorities arrested more than 200 suspected militants in a crackdown throughout Punjab province⁴.

The DFAT, in the aforementioned report, indicates to be 'aware that members of the Pashtun community, particularly in Lahore, have claimed to have been harassed by police and security forces and to have had difficulty obtaining identification'⁵.

The same source explains that, since the launch of anti-terrorism measures, Operation 'Zarb-e-Azb' and the National Action Plan (NAP)⁶, in 2014, 'large numbers' of Pashtuns have been arrested across the country on suspicion of terrorist activities. According to the DFAT, the fact that the support base of TTP is composed primarily of Pashtuns, mainly explains the detention of thousands of Pashtun citizens⁷.

An article by the Washington Post, dated March 2017, reports that Pashtun residents, especially in Punjabi cities, denounced security forces for 'rounding up and detaining Pashto-speaking men for no reason'. These claims followed the launch of the nationwide anti-terrorism Operation 'Radd-ul-Fassad'⁸ in February 2017. The article continues:

'Since the Pakistani security forces launched a nationwide anti-terrorist operation in February [2017] after a spate of suicide bombings, Pashtun leaders have complained vociferously that their communities are being targeted for harassment and racial profiling, especially here in

¹ Minority Rights Group International, *Profile – Pashtuns*, (n. d.), ([url](#))

² DFAT, *Country Information Report – Pakistan*, 1 September 2017, p. 12, 13, ([url](#))

³ PIPS, *2015 Pakistan Security Report*, 5 January 2016, p. 8, ([url](#))

⁴ US DoS, *2016 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Pakistan*, 3 March 2017 p. 22 ([url](#))

⁵ DFAT, *Country Information Report – Pakistan*, 1 September 2017, p. 12, 13, ([url](#))

⁶ For more information on Operation Zarb-e-Azb and National Action Plan, see: EASO, *EASO Country of Origin Report – Pakistan security situation*, 26 July 2016, ([url](#)); and Javaid U., *Operation Zarb-e-Azb: A Successful Initiative to Curtail Terrorism*, in *South Asian Studies* (University of the Punjab, Lahore), Vol. 30, No.2, July – December 2015, p. 43, ([url](#)); and International Crisis Group, *Revisiting counter-terrorism strategies in Pakistan: Opportunities and pitfalls*, 22 July 2015, ([url](#))

⁷ DFAT, *Country Information Report – Pakistan*, 1 September 2017, p. 12, 13, ([url](#))

⁸ For more information on Operation Radd-ul-Fassad, see: Nato Association of Canada (NAOC), *Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad: Pakistan's Latest Response to the Jihadist Threat*, 21 March 2017 ([url](#))



Punjab province. Traditionally based in the northwest region bordering Afghanistan, Pashtuns who migrate or flee south to the Punjabi heartland have often been viewed as suspect outsiders, disdained by some as backward tribal people or war refugees with a penchant for crime and violence. Now they have been further tarred by the Afghan and Pashtun origins of the militants who claimed most of the recent bombings, which took more than 125 lives; one blast ripped through a crowded public square in Lahore, Punjab's capital⁹.

The Diplomat, a magazine covering the Asia-Pacific region, documented, in 2017, a series of 'official and unofficial circulars' issued by the police targeting the Pashtuns and portraying them as 'suspected terrorists':

'In another unofficial notification — issued by a local police station in Punjab province — people were asked to inform the police immediately if they see a street vendor in "Pashtun attire, and having Pashtun looks." The notification implied that anyone who "looked Pashtun" might be a potential terrorist'¹⁰.

As a result of these circulars, the article notes that the Pakistani authorities engaged in a campaign of profiling and targeting Pakistan Pashtuns as well as Afghan refugees in Punjab¹¹.

On February 2017, Dawn, a Pakistani newspaper, reported statements by leaders of various political parties in Pakistan condemning 'what they called the racial profiling and harassment of Pakhtuns by the Punjab police following the recent wave of terrorist attacks in the country'¹².

In an interview with the Deutsche Welle (DW) regarding 'apparent racial profiling' and 'stereotyping' of Pashtun by Pakistani authorities, Dr. Saba Gul Khattak, a researcher and country representative for the Open Society Foundations¹³ – Pakistan, stated:

'The profiling is being carried out mainly in Punjab province - and to some extent in the capital Islamabad. This time round, it was spurred by the last month's suicide attacks in Lahore and Sehwan. However, similar trends have persisted for a while; the police in Punjab and Islamabad began ethnic profiling of Pashtuns in low-income areas prior to these attacks, and there were reports that the authorities blocked the national identity cards of Pashtuns settled in Punjab. The profiling is restricted to a particular class - laborers/daily wage workers, hawkers, small shopkeepers and others who live in low-income communities. It is being carried out systematically as Punjab's government instructed police teams to identify a Pashtun at the community level to assist with identification processes'¹⁴.

In a February 2017 article, The Nation, a Pakistani media publication, also refers to police instructions on the profiling of Pashtuns/Afghans:

⁹ Washington Post, *Pakistan targets Afghan Pashtuns and refugees in antiterrorism crackdown*, 3 March 2017 ([url](#))

¹⁰ The Diplomat, *Pakistan's Pashtun Profiling*, 1 March 2017, ([url](#))

¹¹ The Diplomat, *Pakistan's Pashtun Profiling*, 1 March 2017, ([url](#))

¹² Dawn, *KP politicians slam 'racial profiling' of Pakhtuns in Punjab*, 27 February 2017, ([url](#))

¹³ The Open Society Foundations are a family of offices and foundations created by philanthropist George Soros and aiming to 'build vibrant and tolerant societies whose governments are accountable and open to the participation of all people'. For more information, see: Open Society Foundations, *About Us*, ([url](#))

¹⁴ DW, *Why Pakistan associated terrorism with Pashtuns and Afghans*, 3 March 2017, ([url](#))



'The Punjab police has issued written instructions to its personnel to keep an eye on people with Pashtun/Afghan dresses and food habits as terror suspects. Even their Pakistani Identity Cards wouldn't help them as Punjab police and Federal Investigation Agency would block these cards after their arrests'¹⁵.

In a response published in July 2017 on the section 'Parliamentary Questions' of the European Parliament website, the Vice-President of the European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, answered a question concerning the 'Racial profiling of the Pashtuns in Pakistan'. The answer reads:

'The respect of human rights in Pakistan remains a strong EU priority. [...] The EU Delegation in Islamabad monitors the implications of the ongoing military operations following the increase of terrorist attacks in Pakistan, where i.a. Pashtun people seem to have been systematically discriminated against, as potential terrorists. All major human rights issues in Pakistan will be raised at the next meeting of the EU — Pakistan Joint Commission and of its Subgroups. [...] The EU seeks to provide assistance to the Government of Pakistan in the implementation of its Human Rights Action Plan, but also support a number of local and international Civil Society Organisation active in defending human rights and minorities, in particular'¹⁶

In January 2018, during a raid, the police killed a Pashtun man, Naqeebullah Mehsud, suspected of being a member of the Pakistan Taliban. His family members rejected the accusation, stating he was innocent¹⁷. Following this episode, a grass-root movement, the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM), also called 'Pashtun Protection Movement', has become increasingly prominent in Pakistan¹⁸. PTM has launched a campaign to push the government to stop the 'stereotyping of Pashtuns as militants'¹⁹, to 'provide justice for the thousands of alleged victims of forced disappearances through the court system and probe tens of thousands of extrajudicial killings'²⁰.

In March 2018, Human Rights Watch issued a statement calling the Pakistani authorities 'to end its longstanding discriminatory laws and practices against Pashtuns and act to end hostile attitudes toward them'²¹.

2. Information on access to ID documents for Pashtun citizens

According to an article by Dawn, a number of people listed in the Fourth Schedule of the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) 1997²² claimed that the government had blocked their Computerised National

¹⁵ The Nation, *Pashtun Profiling*, 25 February 2017, ([url](#))

¹⁶ European Parliament, *Parliamentary Questions: Racial profiling of the Pashtuns in Pakistan - Answer by Vice-President Federica Mogherini on behalf of the Commission*, 24 July 2017 ([url](#))

¹⁷ Al Jazeera, *Police killing of Naqeebullah Mehsud angers Pakistanis*, 19 January 2018, ([url](#))

¹⁸ For more information on the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM) also called Pashtun Protection Movement, see: The Nation, *On 'Pashtun Tahafuz Movement*, 25 April 2018 ([url](#)) and The Diplomat, *What does the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement want?*, 27 April 2018 ([url](#))

¹⁹ New York Times, *In Pakistan, long-suffering Pashtuns find their voice*, 6 February 2018, ([url](#))

²⁰ Washington Post, *Pashtun people power is jolting the military establishment in Pakistan*, 10 May 2018 ([url](#))

²¹ Human Rights Watch, *Listen to Pakistan's Marginalized Pashtuns*, 13 March 2018 ([url](#))

²² The Fourth Schedule of the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) 1997 contains a list of 'proscribed' persons. According to Section 11EE of the ATA, the government may list a person in the Fourth Schedule if such a person is: 'concerned in terrorism; an activist, office-bearer or an associate of an organisation kept under observation [...]; in any way concerned or suspected to be



Identity Cards (CNICs). None of the authorities, the article observes, ‘acknowledged that such a direction had ever been issued’. The article adds that, in fact, ‘there is no law that allows the government to block the CNICs of proclaimed offenders or persons listed on the Fourth Schedule’²³.

In March 2017, the Express Tribune, a Pakistani newspaper, mentioned data by the Federal Ministry of Interior revealing that a total of 344,597 CNICs had been blocked. Out of this total number, 217,007 CNICs belonged to ‘people of Pashtun ethnic origins’²⁴.

In April 2017, The Pashtun Times – an online news outlet focusing on issues regarding the Pashtun community – reported that members of the Awami National Party (a political party in Pakistan), in Parliament, launched a hunger strike to protest against the government’s measures to block the CNICs of Pashtun persons²⁵.

An article by Dawn, dated May 2017, states that the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) had ‘temporarily unblocked’ around 150,000 CNICs, adding that the authorities were considering unblocking additional 20,000. The article continues:

‘Sources also informed DawnNews that CNICs of another 1,510 people have been blocked on the recommendations of the National Counter-Terrorism Authority (Nacta), which has compiled a more comprehensive list of people named in the Fourth Schedule — the government’s list of undesirable individuals who must be kept under watch and whose activities need to be monitored closely. The details of people enlisted in the Fourth Schedule have also been forwarded to the banks. It was compiled in coordination with the intelligence agencies and the police, sources said. Those enlisted in the Fourth Schedule will not be able to use their bank accounts, arms and driving licences, and passports in Pakistan’²⁶.

Amongst all sources consulted, no additional updated information could be found on access to ID documents for Pashtun citizens.

affiliated with any group or organisation suspected to be involved in terrorism or sectarianism [...]. See: Government of the Punjab (Pakistan), Punjab Code, *The Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) 1997* ([url](#))

²³ Dawn, *No order to block CNICs of fourth schedulers, officials claim*, 18 October 2016 ([url](#))

²⁴ The Express Tribune, *Ethnic bias seen in blocked CNICs*, 27 March 2017 ([url](#))

²⁵ Pashtun Times, *ANP stages hunger strike against blocking of CNICs of Pashtuns in Pakistan*, 12 April 2017 ([url](#))

²⁶ Dawn, *Nadra temporarily unblocks 150,000 CNICs*, 2 May 2017 ([url](#))



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