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**ARC and DCR comments on the EASO Country of Origin Information Report:
Pakistan Security Situation, October 2018**

Asylum Research Centre (ARC) and the Dutch Council for Refugees (DCR) welcome the publication of the [EASO, Country of Origin Information \(COI\) report: Pakistan: Security Situation, October 2018](#)

As our previous commentaries on EASO COI products and responses to EASO consultations and comments on EASO Work Plans have indicated, we are particularly interested in the EASO COI methodology¹ and await its publication following the formal consultation on its proposed revision in late 2017. We are pleased to note that the EASO COI report of October 2018 on 'Pakistan Security Situation' (from now on referred to as the EASO Pakistan report) does not 'draw conclusions' (as provided for in the current EASO COI Methodology report), or include distinct 'summary' or 'analysis' sections as for example earlier EASO COI reports did.²

We welcome the fact that a number of our previous recommendations made in commentaries on other EASO products, including the commentary on the July 2016 edition of this Pakistan Security Situation report, have been taken on board, notably:

- The reference period for inclusion of COI sources is defined which we commend as aiding transparency and user-friendliness
- The report does not summarise several reports in one sentence, making it clearer what information is EASO analysis, and what is a summary of COI
- References include page numbers or chapter names/numbers, aiding user-friendliness and traceability
- Inter-section hyperlinks between different sections have been included

Our comments are intended as constructive feedback based on an initial reading of the report, first making some general observations and recommendations and further focusing on chapters '1.3. Recent security trends and armed confrontations', '1.5. State ability to secure law and order' and '2.2.3. Balochistan'.

As active members of the Consultative Forum, we would have welcomed the opportunity to input into the Terms of Reference of the report and to be able to provide the following comments in advance of the reports' final publication.

¹ See ARC and Dutch Council for Refugees (DCR), [Comments on the EASO Country of Origin Information report methodology](#), November 2012

² See for example the EASO, [EASO Country of Origin Information report: Afghanistan: Insurgent strategies – intimidation and targeted violence against Afghans](#), December 2012

General observations and recommendations

1. Methodology

1.1. Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference (provided in Annex II of the EASO Pakistan report) sets out the topics that the content of the report should contain information on. We note that this is quite a succinct list and we welcome that the actual contents list and issues covered in the EASO Pakistan report far exceeds the limited initial Terms of Reference. However neither does the Terms of Reference explain who drafted these nor whether these were reviewed. We strongly recommend that EASO invite UNHCR, relevant external bodies, institutions, civil society actors or country experts to also be involved in this process, modelled on the Dutch practice which involves civil society actors in drafting the Terms of Reference for the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Ambtsbericht.

1.2. Acknowledgements

It is observed that whilst the EASO Pakistan report benefited from the quality review of three state COI units, no civil society actor was invited to peer review the report. This marks a change from the previous two editions of this publication which were both reviewed by a non-state actor. We strongly recommend that as a matter of principle EASO invite UNHCR and relevant external bodies, institutions, civil society actors or country experts to also be involved in the review process of every EASO COI report prior to publication as is provided for in section 1.4 of the EASO COI Report Methodology³. As stated above, we too would have welcomed the opportunity to submit our comments in advance of the report's final publication.

1.3. Methodology

We commend the level detail of the methodology, in particular the extremely helpful explanations on the limitations of the cited security data source material. Providing a comparative analysis of sources diverging methodologies and terminologies not only greatly aids a reader's ability to undertake source assessments, but also to digest complex information. It is recommended that such a useful approach is replicated in future EASO COI products.

With regards to the time frame for the inclusion of source material we note that the methodology states that "This report presents general information available from 1 June 2017 to 15 August 2018". This is corroborated by the introduction to section '2.2. Security trends per geographic subdivision' which states that "The subsections describe recent trends in the security situation, including the nature of violence, frequency, targets, locations, and victims within a timeframe from 1 June 2017 until 15 August 2018".

However this is contradicted in Annex II: Terms of Reference which details that "The reporting period for incidents and events illustrating the general trends of the conflict is from 1 June 2017 to 15 August 2018. Data on security incidents includes the period from 1 January 2017 to 30 June 2018".

³ EASO, [Country of Origin Information report methodology](#), 2012, Section 1.4 p.7

If the latter is correct, as we observed in our commentary on the July 2016 edition of this report, for any end-user having separate time frames for research is confusing, especially for those wishing to do follow up research for COI published after the EASO report. We therefore recommend that one reference period be agreed for all sources that clearly indicates the cut off point for events/incidents.

We note that the drafter of the report, a CEDOCA researcher, conducted what are described as “extensive interviews” with three renowned experts on Pakistan. As COI researchers on Pakistan ourselves we would welcome publication of transcripts of these interviews as an Annex for two reasons: 1) to put new COI in the public domain to the benefit of all users of this report and 2) to improve transparency.

For example Michael Kugelman, Asia Program Deputy Director and Senior Associate for South Asia at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (United States), was interviewed, but only cited three times in the whole report (out of 811 references) and Matthew Nelson, Reader in Politics, PhD, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, telephone interview was only cited twice.

In our view not publishing the full transcript also undermines the transparency of the EASO Pakistan report as we are unable to see the questions posed to the experts nor the nuance of their answers.

To exemplify, note the following excerpt from the report (emphasis added):

[EASO, Country of Origin Information \(COI\) report: Pakistan: Security Situation, October 2018](#)

[...] 1.1.1. Militant violence and government response

[...] In a Skype interview conducted on 14 June 2018 with Michael Kugelman, scholar and expert on the security situation in South Asia at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, **he stated that the security situation in Pakistan was improving**. He noticed a decline in insurgent attacks. According to Kugelman, the reason for this decline is the army’s extensive counterterrorism strategy. However, the environment for insurgent attacks was still present in June 2018. Until the border fence is completed and there is a ‘robust’ border management strategy between the two countries, militant groups based in Afghanistan are still able to stage attacks in Pakistan (58). Mohammad Amir Rana, Security and Political Analyst and director of the Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), stated in a Skype interview on 14 June 2018 **that the security situation was improving** but that it will be a challenge to maintain the same security level before and during the general elections on 25 July 2018 (59). [...]

(58) Kugelman, M., Skype interview, 14 June 2018. Michael Kugelman is Asia Program Deputy Director and Senior Associate for South Asia at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

(59) Rana Amir, M., Skype interview, 14 June 2018. Mohammad Amir Rana is Security and Political Analyst and Director of the Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS).

As we do not know how the question was posed to the interlocutors, it is very difficult to gauge the context of the two opinions that the security situation “was improving”. That is, we do not know what time frame the experts are referring to, what base level the situation is supposed to have improved in relation to, or the full context of their answer.

Section specific observations and recommendations

1. General description of the security situation in Pakistan

It is considered that the description of the four main sources reporting on the security situation in Pakistan in section '1.4.1. Figures on civilian casualties' of the report along with Figure 2 which presents a comparison of the persons killed in 2016 and 2017 by these four sources is incredibly clear and useful.

It is observed that on occasion the security situation is described in broad terms as having 'improved', without providing specific figures to that effect. For example it is considered that from the following description it is quite difficult for the reader to get a sense of the current extent of ethnic and sectarian violence in Pakistan (emphasis added):

[EASO, Country of Origin Information \(COI\) report: Pakistan: Security Situation, October 2018](#)

[...] 1.1.2. Ethnic and sectarian violence

Sectarian violence across Pakistan is present. Shias, but also Sunnis, Ahmadis, Christians and Hindus are victims of religiously motivated violence, especially carried out by Sunni militant groups (62). Religious minorities in Pakistan are the victims of legal, institutional and social discrimination, according to the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) (63).

According to the report of Pak Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS) the incidents of ethnic violence in Pakistan dropped in 2017 in comparison to 2016 (64). The 'low-key conflict' in the province of Balochistan (see Section 2.2.3. Balochistan) is an example of a conflict that erupts when ethnic groups fight for the same powers according to an article of July 2017 by Dr Raza Khan, researcher and political, security and governance expert (65).

(62) CRSS, Annual Security Report 2017, February 2018, url, pp. 59-63

(63) USCIRF, 2018 Annual Report, April 2018 url, pp. 65-70

(64) PIPS, Security Report 2017, 7 January 2018, url, p. 24

(65) Khan, R., Dynamics of ethnic conflicts in Pakistan, in: Express Tribune (The)/International New York Times (The), 21 July 2017, url

It is recommended that whenever describing a reduction (or increase) in security incidents, that an EASO report always clearly state the actual percentage change as well as the total number of incidents documented, as is generally done so throughout the EASO Pakistan report.

A similar issue was observed in the following section:

[EASO, Country of Origin Information \(COI\) report: Pakistan: Security Situation, October 2018](#)

[...] 1.3.3. Sectarian-related violence

The number of sectarian-related violent incidents declined in 2017 compared to 2016 according to PIPS. The numbers decreased by 41 % in 2017 compared to 2016. The number of people killed also decreased by about 29 % in 2017. Most victims of sectarian-related violence were documented in Kurram Agency in the FATA, Quetta in Balochistan and Dera Ismael Khan in KP (301). According to PIPS, main perpetrators were Sunni militant groups such as LeJ, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi Al-Alami, SeM and JuA. Most of the violence was directed against Shias (302).

In contrast, CRSS documented an increase in victims of sectarian-related violence. According to the same source, **955 sectarian-related casualties were counted in 2017 with 319 killed and 636 wounded** (303). [...]

Whilst this excerpt does provide the percentage change in sectarian related violence incidents and associated deaths as documented by the Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), it does not provide actual figures. It is therefore difficult to compare the PIPS figures to the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) figures.

This was also observed in section '2.2. Security trends per geographic subdivision':

[EASO, Country of Origin Information \(COI\) report: Pakistan: Security Situation, October 2018](#)

[...] 2.2.2. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

[...] Impact of the violence on the civilian population

According to PIPS, the number of deaths and injured of terrorist attacks showed a **downward trend** in 2017 compared to 2016 (522). The same trend was observed by PICSS, with a decrease of **47 % in deaths and 55 % decrease in injuries** (523).

CRSS documented a decrease in the number of fatalities especially among civilians (64) and security forces (64) in 2017 compared to 2016. The numbers of fatalities of militants (57) were slightly higher in 2017 than in 2016 (524)

Again, it would have been really helpful to have presented the actual figures to demonstrate the 'downward trend' as well as the total number of fatalities and injuries recorded in the province by the Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2016 and 2017 in order to more clearly illustrate the proportionate decrease. Similarly, when presenting the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) figures it would be useful to have the percentage increases and decreases, or the total figures from 2016 in order to be able to compare the annual figures. Should the original source not provide these calculations then we still suggest that EASO do so, making it clear when they are the author of such analysis.

1.3 Recent security trends and armed confrontations

Whilst it is recognised that the report cannot and is not intended to address every risk profile, it is considered that it is difficult to locate in the report information relevant to an assessment as to whether an applicant might show a real risk of suffering serious harm by virtue of specific harm(s) faced because of personal circumstances under Article 15 (c) under the 'sliding-scale' concept.⁴ Again, had we been able to provide input into the rather succinct Terms of Reference, we would have suggested that a distinct section be included to address these issues. To illustrate, subsections on 'Targeted killings' and 'Kidnappings' is provided for under '1.3.2. Attacks by militant groups', but these subsections do not appear in the contents page. The information provided on both of these issues is also rather minimal:

[EASO, Country of Origin Information \(COI\) report: Pakistan: Security Situation, October 2018](#)

[...] 1.3.2. Attacks by militant groups

[...] Targeted killings

According to PIPS, about 39 % of the 'terrorist attacks' (141) in 2017 were targeted killings or shootings (294). PICSS reported that most of the targeted killings took place in Balochistan province, followed by the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh (295). During the last few years, targeted killing has become a major tactic for all militant actors, whether sectarian or Islamic militants or nationalist insurgents (296). Also, the militants in Balochistan appear to have adopted targeted killings as their foremost strategy, according to PIPS and PICSS (297).

⁴ EASO, [Article 15\(c\) Qualification Directive \(2011/95/EU\) A judicial analysis](#), December 2014

Of the total reported attacks, 160 attacks were against personnel, convoys and check posts of the security forces and law enforcement agencies across Pakistan. Civilians were the apparent targets of 86 attacks (23 %). **Sixteen attacks targeted government officials, departments and offices and another 13 attacks hit political leaders/workers and offices of political parties.** Progovernment tribal elders, or members of tribal peace committees, came under 12 attacks.

Non-Baloch workers, settlers in Balochistan were targeted in 10 attacks. Nine attacks targeted media and journalists. Meanwhile 16 reported attacks targeted members of Shia community and 4 attacks, also including one non-sectarian, hit members of the Sunni community. Two lethal attacks also targeted worship places and shrines in 2017 (298).

Kidnappings

PICSS reported a slight increase in kidnappings in 2017 compared to 2016. Most kidnappings executed by militants in 2017 took place in Balochistan followed by KP (299). GEO News reported in April 2018 that most kidnappings in Pakistan are organised by criminal networks in Afghanistan (300).

(294) PIPS, Security Report 2017, 7 January 2018, url, p. 18

(295) PICSS, Annual Security Assessment Report 2017, 6 January 2018, url, p. 20

(296) Rana Amir, M., EASO COI Meeting Report: Pakistan; 16-17 October 2017, Rome, February 2018, url, p. 60

(297) PICSS, Annual Security Assessment Report 2017, 6 January 2018, url, p. 20; PIPS, Security Report 2017, 7 January 2018, url, p. 30 Rana Amir, M., EASO COI Meeting Report: Pakistan; 16-17 October 2017, Rome, February 2018, url, p. 60

(298) PIPS, Security Report 2017, 7 January 2018, url, pp. 17-18

(299) PICSS, Annual Security Assessment Report 2017, 6 January 2018, url, pp. 21-22.

(300) GEO News, Kidnappings in Pakistan being controlled from Afghanistan, 24 April 2018, url

It is considered that the first sentence above does not make it clear that the figure of 141 relates to the number of targeted killings or shootings, not the total number of what PIPS classed as 'terrorist attacks'. Similarly the sentence "Of the total reported attacks, 160 attacks were against personnel, convoys and check posts of the security forces and law enforcement agencies across Pakistan" does not make clear what the total number of reported attacks were.

No information at all is provided on the profiles of persons that are targeted for kidnappings, nor is information provided on the phenomenon of abductions and the scale of this problem throughout Pakistan. This section of the EASO Pakistan report could also be read to imply that kidnapping is only an issue that besets Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In fact, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan recorded in Punjab in 2017 "The police reported at least 13,618 abduction cases, with most of the victims women and young girls who were abducted by gunmen, and at least 41 cases of kidnapping for ransom".⁵ In Sindh it documented "135 kidnapping cases, 1,099 abductions".⁶

For further information on kidnapping and abductions, see:

- ❖ Asylum Research Centre, [Pakistan: Country Report](#), 18 June 2018, 5. *State Security Forces*

⁵ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, [State of Human Rights in 2017](#), 16 April 2018, *Crime, Punjab* p.47

⁶ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, [State of Human Rights in 2017](#), 16 April 2018, *Crime, Sindh* p.51

1.5. State ability to secure law and order

This section begins with the following disclaimer:

[EASO, Country of Origin Information \(COI\) report: Pakistan: Security Situation, October 2018](#)
[...] This chapter does not provide a detailed description of the state's ability to secure law and order and the human rights violations committed by the Pakistani security forces, but rather focuses on those elements that are important to understand the current security situation in Pakistan. For a detailed description, see the EASO Country Overview report on Pakistan (August 2015) (406). [...]

(406) EASO, Pakistan Country overview, August 2015, [url](#)

In our view it is rather disappointing that the report does not attempt to deal with the state's ability to secure law and order in detail, given its centrality to assessments of subsidiary protection under Article 15 (c) of the European Qualification Directive, and to the assessment of whether internal relocation/protection is available. Given the considerable time and resources accorded to the production of the EASO Pakistan report it is considered a missed opportunity not to have extended the scope of the report to include this key issue and to provide the user with more recent COI than that included in the referenced August 2015 report.

As we recommended in our commentary on the July 2016 edition of this report, we would have welcomed the opportunity to input into the Terms of Reference and would have recommended to expand on the topic 'State ability to secure Law and Order' by including sub-topics that address both the state's *ability to protect* (which should include inter alia: capacity; resources and equipment; training; oversight and accountability; functioning of the judicial system; evidence of security forces themselves being directly targeted; impunity for human rights abuses committed by state actors) *and willingness to protect* (which should include inter alia: insurgent infiltration of the security forces; extortion and corruption e.g. evidence of bribes required to open cases, or police accepting bribes from perpetrators resulting them dropping cases, judicial corruption; denial of protection to particular groups e.g. women, ethnic minorities etc).

However the only information included on the security forces with regards to '1.5.1. State protection, security forces and justice' is as follows:

[EASO, Country of Origin Information \(COI\) report: Pakistan: Security Situation, October 2018](#)
[...] 1.5.1. State protection, security forces and justice
[...] Security Forces
[...] Amnesty International (AI) stated in its 2018 annual report, covering events in 2017, that enforced disappearances by security forces continued (419). USDOS and Human Rights Watch reported in their annual year reports covering 2017 that extrajudicial killings, violence and harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and abuse of detainees and other human rights abuses by security forces occurred throughout the country (420). In June 2017, The UN Committee Against Torture (UNCAT) expressed in its concluding observations on the initial report of Pakistan, its concerns about the 'widespread practice' of torture by the Police, the military and intelligence agencies in Pakistan (421). Also the UN Human Rights Committee stated in August 2017 that 'the Committee is concerned by the high incidence of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings allegedly perpetrated by the police and military and security forces' (422).

(419) AI, Amnesty International Report 2017/18 - The State of the World's Human Rights - Pakistan, 22 February 2018, [url](#)

- (420) USDOS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2017 - Pakistan, 20 April 2018, url, p. 1, pp. 19-20; HRW, World Report 2018 - Pakistan, 18 January 2018, url
- (421) UNCAT, Concluding observations on the initial report of Pakistan [CAT/C/PAK/CO/1], 1 June 2017, url, p. 2
- (422) UN Human Rights Committee, Concluding observations on the initial report of Pakistan, 23 August 2017, url, paragraph 19

It is considered that the subsection heading 'security forces' does not make clear that this is the main section of the EASO Pakistan report which address human rights abuses committed by the security forces. Furthermore by not clearly identifying and listing such a topic in the contents page means that it is likely to be overlooked. Given the centrality of this topic to an assessment of whether a state is able and willing to protect a particular profile of applicant it is recommended that this topic always be addressed in detail in an EASO COI report.

In addition, this brief summary does not make clear what context the abuses are being committed; such as whether they are being perpetrated in a detention context or during security operations, or other setting. For example, the practice of 'encounter killings' is not explained. It is also not made clear which profiles of persons are documented to experiences these abuses which is relevant for an assessment of the willingness of the security forces to protect that profile. For further information on these topics, see:

- ❖ Asylum Research Centre, [Pakistan: Country Report](#), 18 June 2018, 5. *State Security Forces*

Moreover, it is considered that some of the sources cited are not fully accurately summarised. The EASO report cites Amnesty International as describing that "enforced disappearances by security forces continued". However the original source describes (emphasis added):

[Amnesty International Report 2017/18 - The State of the World's Human Rights - Pakistan, 22 February 2018](#)

[...] Enforced disappearances **were widespread**; impunity was **prevalent**. [...]

Reports continued that security forces were involved in human rights violations, including [...] enforced disappearances.

Furthermore, the UNCAT is cited as expressing concern over the 'widespread practice' of torture whereas the original source stated (emphasis added):

[United Nations Committee Against Torture \(UNCAT\), Concluding observations on the initial report of Pakistan \[CAT/C/PAK/CO/1\], 1 June 2017](#)

[...] 6. While noting with appreciation the State party's rejection of torture and the efforts made to develop and strengthen mechanisms to implement its obligations under the Convention, the Committee is deeply concerned at **consistent reports** that the use of torture by the police with a view to obtaining confessions from persons in custody **is widespread throughout the territory** of the State party. [...]

10. The Committee is deeply concerned at reports that members of the State party's military forces, intelligence forces, such as the Inter-Services Intelligence agency, and paramilitary forces, such as the Frontier Corps and the Pakistan Rangers, have been **implicated in a significant number of cases of extrajudicial executions involving torture** and enforced disappearances.

It should also be noted that the EASO report suggested to consult for a detailed description of the state's ability to secure law and order not only presents COI which describes the situation in 2014, but also includes very scant information on this topic:

[EASO Country of Origin Information Report Pakistan: Country Overview, August 2015](#)

[...] 3.2.7 Access to law enforcement and fair trial

State protection

While there is a fully functioning criminal justice system, the effectiveness of the police varies greatly by district, ranging from reasonably good to ineffective (603). Pakistan's police system suffers severe deficiencies in a number of areas, including equipment, technology, personnel, training, and intelligence capability. Much of the police force is regarded as corrupt, inefficient and unprofessional (604). There are reports that the police often fail to protect members of religious minorities (see section 3.4) (605) and women (see section 3.2.9) (606).

Civil, criminal and family courts provide for public trial, presumption of innocence, cross-examination and appeal. Lower courts are subject to corruption and political pressure (607).

[...]

(603) US DOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014, Pakistan, 25 June 2015; HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2014, March 2015, pp. 57-60.

(604) Hameed, Zulfiqar, 'Antiterrorism law', July 2012, p. 49; HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2014, March 2015, pp. 71-73.

(605) US DOS, International Religious Freedom Report for 2013, Pakistan, 28 July 2014; HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2014, March 2015, pp. 124-134.

(606) US DOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014, Pakistan, 25 June 2015.

(607) US DOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014, Pakistan, 25 June 2015.

1.5.3. Detention and death penalty

The section on detention is very brief:

[EASO, Country of Origin Information \(COI\) report: Pakistan: Security Situation, October 2018](#)

[...] Detention

USDOS stated in a report of April 2018 covering 2017 that harsh and sometimes lifethreatening conditions and abuse occur in some prisons and detention centres. Furthermore, inadequate food and water, and poor sanitation facilities were common. Overcrowding in the prisons remains a serious problem due to the lack of facilities (430). The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) reported in its annual report of 2018 that security in the jails, overcrowding, and health and hygiene conditions continue to be a challenge in prisons (431). The HRCP reported that Pakistan counted a prison population of 82 591 as per its April 2018 publication (432).

(430) USDOS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2017 - Pakistan, 20 April 2018, url, p. 7

(431) HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2017, 16 April 2018, url, p. 58

(432) HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2017, 16 April 2018, url, p. 4

It is surprising that no mention of torture or deaths in detention is made in this section. This is despite the cited sources both documenting its existence in a detention context in Pakistan:

[United States Department of State \(USDOS\), Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2017 - Pakistan, 20 April 2018](#)

[...] c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

[...] There were reports that security forces, including the intelligence services, tortured and abused individuals in custody. [...]

Multiple sources reported that torture occasionally resulted in death or serious injury and was often underreported. [...]

[Human Rights Commission of Pakistan \(HRCP\), State of Human Rights in 2017, 16 April 2018](#)

[...] According to the HRCP media monitoring in 2017, a total of 47 cases of violence and torture occurred in Pakistani jails, in which 32 men lost their lives, and one woman and 21 men were tortured.

It is recognised that the EASO Pakistan report does make some reference to the practice of torture, but it is considered that the location of this renders it difficult to find. For example reference is made in the subsection 'Security Forces' contained within '5.1. State protection, security forces and justice' but as detailed above this subsection is not listed in the contents page and anyway does not make clear that this is where information is presented on human rights abuses committed by the security forces.

It is therefore recommended that whenever an EASO report deals with the subject of detention, that a distinct subsection on torture be included that is clearly presented in the contents page for ease of access.

For further information and suggest sources on the practice of torture in detention in Pakistan, see:

- ❖ Asylum Research Centre, [Pakistan: Country Report](#), 18 June 2018, 5.3.2 *Torture and other forms of ill-treatment and abuse*

2.2.3. Balochistan

In reading the chapter on Balochistan, as an example of a more detailed description of the security situation in a specific province, reference to our previous point under 1.3 must be made:

whilst it is recognised that the report cannot and is not intended to address every risk profile, it is considered that it is difficult to locate in the report information relevant to an assessment as to whether an applicant might show a real risk of suffering serious harm by virtue of specific harm(s) faced because of personal circumstances under Article 15 (c) under the 'sliding-scale' concept. With such limited information on conflict and actors, it is difficult to identify e.g. the risk for targeted groups in Balochistan.

In our view, an overview of incidents does not give a clear enough picture of the risk of individuals being targeted. To identify this risk, it is necessary to know more about the motive of perpetrators and the profile of victims. The following paragraph is used as an example (emphasis added)

[EASO, Country of Origin Information \(COI\) report: Pakistan: Security Situation, October 2018](#)

[...] 2.2.3. Balochistan

[...] Background of the conflict and actors in Balochistan

[...] The presence of the military didn't prevent attacks or the presence of different militant groups in the province (550). The operations of the army are underreported and there are large information gaps on their impact on the civilian population, according to the Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) (551). **Religiously inspired violent sectarian and Islamist militant groups such as the TTP, JuA, LeJ, Jamaat-ul Ansar al-Sharia and ISKP have a presence in Balochistan (552).** In 2017, militant groups carried out 27 attacks, mostly on security force personnel (553). **The province is also affected by sectarian violence. Members of the local Shia community, mostly Hazara, have fallen victim of violent attacks, targeted killings and suicide attacks (554).** [...]

(550) International Crisis Group, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks, 29 June 2018, url

(551) ACAPS, Politics and Security, last update 12 April 2018, url

(552) PIPS, Security Report 2017, 7 January 2018, url, p. 46, pp. 147-148; Zahid, F., Jamaat ul Ansar al-Sharia: The New al-Qaeda Threat in Pakistan, in: Terrorism Monitor Volume: 15 Issue: 18, 22 September 2017, url

(553) PIPS, Security Report 2017, 7 January 2018, url, p. 46

(554) BBC News, Quetta's Hazara: The community caged in its own city, 12 December 2017, url; HRW, Pakistan's Hazara Community Under Attack, 30 April 2018, url

With the limited number of information given, it is difficult to assess the level of violence generated by these attacks. A deeper search to give a broader picture would have been welcomed. The following sources, for example, give a broader overview:

[Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, State of human rights in 2017, March 2018](#) p. 82-83

[...] Thousands of lives have been lost to sectarian killings in the last two decades in Pakistan. More than 5,000 Shias have been killed since 2001. Sufi shrines have been attacked. Hazaras in Balochistan have faced the most horrendous faith-based violence. Yet government officials still downplayed the sectarian aspect of the militancy. A report by a think tank (the Centre for Research and Security Studies) revealed that there were 955 casualties in 2017, 319 deceased and 636 wounded. In Sindh, the numbers went up three-fold, while in FATA they more than doubled. Overall, there was a 32% increase against the number of casualties of sectarian violence during 2016.[...]

The community of Hazaras has been devastated by a series of targeted killings and suicide bombings with security agencies largely unable to protect them. Under relentless assault in Pakistan, the Hazaras have very little choice other than to flee as refugees. They face desperation and danger in doing so but, according to community elders, 70,000 Hazaras have moved out of Quetta. [...]

[Public Radio International, Pakistani Hazaras face a constant threat of targeted violence. Many say the security response has been ghettoizing and ineffective, 31 May 2018](#)

[...] During a Supreme Court hearing this month on the growing violence against Hazaras, Chief Justice Mian Saqib Nisar declared that Hazaras were effectively undergoing “ethnic cleansing” at the hands of extremist groups, and that violence was “wiping out an entire generation.” [...] The April killings were the fourth attack against the Hazaras in a month, killing six people in total. It underscored the tenuous security afforded to the minority group of half a million, who are largely concentrated in Balochistan’s provincial capital Quetta. Marked by distinctive Central Asian features that can make them easy to identify and target, the Hazara are adherents of Shiite Islam in a predominantly Sunni country. [...]

As an addition to the subsection ‘Background of the conflict and actors in Balochistan’ we would suggest including the influence of the Afghan Taliban, especially in Balochistan’s capital Quetta as was stipulated by for example Matthew Nelson at the EASO COI meeting on Pakistan, October 2017:

[EASO, COI Meeting Report: Pakistan; 16-17 October 2017; Rome, February 2018](#)

[...] 7.4 The Pakistan Taliban and insurgency in FATA, PATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa [...] The Pakistan government is ferociously opposed to the anti - Pakistan Taliban, regarded as ‘bad Taliban’ because they attack Pakistan’s security forces. I will say a little bit more about this group. Even as Pakistan is opposed to the anti - Pakistan Taliban, however, Pakistan is also accused of sheltering Afghan - focused Taliban: Afghan - focused Taliban , and Afghan - focused Taliban leaders who have a base in Quetta, as well as an affiliated group, the Haqqani Network. The Haqqani Network is now even more closely affiliated with the Afghan Taliban, because as the Afghan Taliban is led by this guy, Mullah Haibatullah Akhunzada, and the deputy leader is now Sirajuddin Haqqani, drawn from the Haqqani network. [...]

This is corroborated in a news item by Radio Free Europe:

[RFE/RL – Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty: Bomb Kills At Least 15 In Southwestern Pakistan, 12 August 2017](#)

[...] Quetta also has been a stronghold for Taliban militants who frequently cross the border and carry out attacks against security forces in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. [...]

Another example of limited information on perpetrators and victims is seen in the section of the description of recent security trends (emphasis added).

[EASO, Country of Origin Information \(COI\) report: Pakistan: Security Situation, October 2018](#)

[...] 2.2.3. Balochistan

[...] Description of recent security trends

[...] PIPS documented 237 incidents of various types of violence in the province in 2017: 165 ‘terrorist attacks’, 39 anti-militant operational attacks by security forces, 13 armed clashes and encounters between security forces and militants, 13 cross-border attacks, **5 inter-tribal clashes and 2 incidents of mob violence** (557). [...]

(557) PIPS, Security Report 2017, 7 January 2018, url, p. 47

It is difficult to assess which incidents are meant here and who the targets were, as the only quoted source also does not shed a light on the incidents referred to.

Here we would like to add that sometimes it is not clear if the information is giving examples or intended to give a representative picture of the situation. For example the paragraph on Christians and Hazara:

[EASO, Country of Origin Information \(COI\) report: Pakistan: Security Situation, October 2018](#)

[...] 2.2.3. Balochistan

[...] Description of recent security trends

[...] In the first months of 2018, members of the Christian and Hazara community were also the targets of militants. On 2 April 2018, four members of a Christian family were shot dead by unidentified assailants (573). Human Rights Watch reported that in April 2018 four attacks were directed against Hazaras in Quetta (574). [...]

(573) Al Jazeera, Four killed in attack on Christians in Pakistan's Quetta, 2 April 2018, url

(574) HRW, Pakistan's Hazara Community Under Attack, 30 April 2018, url

For end-users not familiar with the Pakistani context this could easily be read as an overview of incidents, but in our opinion the scale and size of the consequences for these groups are not made clear. Not only because of the limited examples given, but also not because of the lack of numbers of people targeted by the attacks presented. We would have welcomed the use of a source giving a more extensive overview of e.g. the treatment of Hazara in Pakistan like the report of the Refugee Documentation Centre as of June 2018: [RDC, Pakistan - Treatment of Hazara in Balochistan including available state protection, 18 June 2018](#)

Finally we would like to suggest elaborating on the following section:

[EASO, Country of Origin Information \(COI\) report: Pakistan: Security Situation, October 2018](#)

[...] 2.2.3. Balochistan

[...] Displacement

In February 2017, the newspaper the Express Tribune writes that 'lawlessness' displaced people from the districts of Kech, Panjgur and Bolan to 'safer places' (585). The Pakistani newspaper Dawn reported in July 2018 that 'thousands of Baloch people are internally displaced due to target killings or forced disappearances of political workers' (586). [...]

(585) Express Tribune (The)/International New York Times (The), Displacement In Balochistan: Mengal renews plea for census delay, 19 February 2017, url

(586) Dawn, BNP-Mengal vows to ensure people's rights in CPEC, 2 July 2018, url

We know from our own experience that it is hard to find information on lawlessness in Pakistan, but also welcome the attention that is given to the notion that lawlessness has a huge impact on the security situation. It would have been interesting to know whether one of the experts interviewed could have given more information about this.