



Home Office

Country Information and Guidance

Pakistan: Security and humanitarian situation

Version 1.0

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Preface

This document provides country of origin information (COI) and guidance to Home Office decision makers on handling particular types of protection and human rights claims. This includes whether claims are likely to justify the granting of asylum, humanitarian protection or discretionary leave and whether – in the event of a claim being refused – it is likely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under s94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Decision makers must consider claims on an individual basis, taking into account the case specific facts and all relevant evidence, including: the guidance contained within this document; the available COI; any applicable caselaw; and the Home Office casework guidance in relation to relevant policies.

Country Information

The COI within this document has been compiled from a wide range of external information sources (usually) published in English. Consideration has been given to the relevance, reliability, accuracy, objectivity, currency, transparency and traceability of the information and wherever possible attempts have been made to corroborate the information used across independent sources, to ensure accuracy. All sources cited have been referenced in footnotes. It has been researched and presented with reference to the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), dated April 2008, and the [European Asylum Support Office’s research guidelines, Country of Origin Information report methodology](#), dated July 2012.

Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve the guidance and information we provide. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this document, please [e-mail us](#).

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to make recommendations to him about the content of the Home Office’s COI material. The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office’s COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy.

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Information about the IAGCI’s work and a list of the COI documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector’s website at <http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/country-information-reviews/>

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Guidance

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1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of Claim

- 1.1.1 That the general humanitarian situation in Pakistan is so severe as to make removal a breach of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR); and/or
- 1.1.2 That the security situation in Pakistan presents a real risk which threatens life or person such that removal would be in breach of Article 15(c) of European Council Directive 2004/83/EC of 29 April 2004 ('the Qualification Directive').
- 1.1.3 That the person is at real risk from the Taliban or other militant groups in Pakistan.

2. Consideration of Issues

2.1 Is the person's account credible?

- 2.1.1 For guidance on assessing credibility, see sections 4 and 5 of the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview. See the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)
- 2.1.3 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing. See the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#).

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2.2 Does the person have a well-founded fear of persecution?

- 2.2.1 There are several interrelated armed conflicts between militants and the government, and between militants and international forces, in Pakistan. Most fighting between militants and the government takes place in the northwest of Pakistan though civilians have also been affected across the country. However, a state of civil instability and/or where law and order has broken down does not of itself give rise to a well-founded fear of persecution for a Convention reason. Simply living in an area where the Pakistani Taliban or other militant groups are active, either wholly or partly, may not give rise to a protection need. The level of risk will depend on the particular profile of the person, the nature of the threat and how far it would extend.
- 2.2.2 Where a person comes from a place where there is a state of civil instability and/or where law and order has broken down and/or where Pakistani Taliban or other militant groups are active, they may have a well-founded fear of persecution for a Convention reason.
- 2.2.3 The risk will be highest in areas where those armed anti-government groups are operating or have control. The most affected areas are:

- Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and the semi-autonomous Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) that have a strong Taliban presence;
- Balochistan, where separatists are seeking greater political autonomy and control over local mineral resources; and
- Some areas of Sindh and Punjab.

2.2.4 The Pakistan Taliban and other militant groups are able to reach persons outside of those areas, depending on their profile and the area in which the person resides (see [Nature and levels of violence](#)). Primary targets for militants include political and/or tribal leaders, security forces, minority religious groups and perceived political opponents, including journalists, NGO and aid workers. In addition, ordinary Pakistanis, including students and those perceived to be opposing the Taliban and other militant groups, or not following sharia law, have also been targeted by these groups.

2.2.5 Where decision makers conclude that the person is at real risk of the Pakistani Taliban or other militant groups it is likely to be for a Convention reason, most notably (imputed) political opinion. If the applicant is unable to acquire effective protection or relocate internally a grant of asylum will be appropriate.

2.2.6 The reported case of [AW \(sufficiency of protection\) Pakistan \[2011\] UKUT 31\(IAC\)](#) (26 January 2011) found that there is 'systemic sufficiency of state protection' in Pakistan. However, the judgment also noted that notwithstanding this, a claimant may still have a well founded fear of persecution if authorities know or ought to know of circumstances particular to his/her case giving rise to the fear, but are unlikely to provide the additional protection the particular circumstances reasonably require. Decision makers must assess whether effective protection is available in relation to the particular circumstances and profile of the person. Any past persecution and past lack of effective protection may indicate that effective protection would not be available in the future.

2.2.7 The onus is on the person to show that they are at risk of being targeted by the Pakistani Taliban or other militant groups.

2.2.8 For further guidance on assessing risk, see section 6 of the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

2.2.9 Where the person qualifies for protection under the Refugee Convention, decision makers do not need to go on to make an assessment of the need for protection under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) or under Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive.

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2.3 [Does the person fall to be excluded from a grant of protection?](#)

2.3.1 Human rights abuses have been committed against the civilian population by both the security forces as well as anti-government groups (see [Nature and levels of violence](#)). Decision makers must consider if there are serious reasons for considering that a person was involved in or associated with such acts, or with the groups concerned. Decision makers are reminded that

there is evidence of forcible recruitment of child soldiers by non-state militant groups.

- 2.3.2 If so, decision makers must consider whether one of the exclusion clauses is applicable, seeking advice from a Senior Caseworker if necessary.
- 2.3.3 Where a person is excluded from protection under the Refugee Convention they are also excluded from Humanitarian protection but if there is a real risk of a breach of Article 3 ECHR or Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive, they may be entitled to Discretionary Leave or Restricted Leave.
- 2.3.4 For further guidance on the exclusion clauses, discretionary leave and restricted leave, see the [Asylum Instruction on Exclusion: Article 1F of the Refugee Convention](#), the [Asylum Instruction on Discretionary Leave](#) and the [Asylum Instruction on Restricted Leave](#).

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2.4 [Is the humanitarian situation in Pakistan so severe that removal would be a breach of Article 3 of the ECHR?](#)

- 2.4.1 There are estimates of up to 1.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Pakistan as a result of the conflict and violence, including military operations. The worst affected areas are Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA with 1.5 million IDPs, though hundreds of thousands are also displaced in Balochistan and other areas of Pakistan. Natural disasters, mainly flooding, have also caused huge displacement. Despite this, a minority of IDPs return to their homes and some receive government support packages to aid their return (see [Internally displaced persons \(IDPs\)](#) and [Counter-terrorism strategies](#)).
- 2.4.2 The humanitarian situation in Pakistan is not such that it represents, in general, a risk of harm contrary to Article 3 of the ECHR, but certain groups, such as women IDPs, are particularly vulnerable. However, decision makers must consider on the facts of the case whether a returnee, by reason of his or her individual vulnerability, may face a real risk of harm contrary to Article 3 of the ECHR as a result of the humanitarian situation if they are unable to relocate.
- 2.4.3 For further guidance and factors to be considered see the [Asylum Instruction on Humanitarian Protection](#).

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2.5 [Is there indiscriminate violence in Pakistan, which is at such a level that substantial grounds exist for believing that the person, solely by being present there, faces a real risk of harm which threatens their life or person?](#)

- 2.5.1 Unlike Article 3 ECHR, Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive applies only to civilians, who must be genuine non-combatants and not those who are party to the conflict. This could include former combatants who have genuinely and permanently renounced armed activity.
- 2.5.2 An assessment of protection needs under Article 15(c) should only take place if the person is unable to establish a need for refugee protection or for humanitarian protection. Decision makers must therefore consider whether

there are particular factors relevant to the person's individual circumstances which might place them at risk.

- 2.5.3 Although there are reports that the security situation has improved due to ongoing military operations, terrorist and sectarian violence continues in Pakistan. In 2014, 4,876 civilians were killed or suffered injuries as a result of the violence. There are significant numbers of civilian fatalities, including through drone strikes. However, the proportion of civilians directly affected by violence remains low: taking the average number of civilians killed and injured in 2014, approximately 1 in 20,000 were physically directly affected by violence during this time. However, some areas are more affected than others (see [Nature and levels of violence](#)).
- 2.5.4 For information on the provinces and regions affected see sections 2.2 to 2.6 of the [EASO Country of Origin Information Report Pakistan – Country Overview](#).
- 2.5.5 The level of civilian casualties does not amount to there being substantial grounds for believing that a person, solely by being present in areas affected by terrorist and sectarian violence, faces a real risk of harm which threatens their life or person.
- 2.5.6 Even though there is no general Article 15(c) risk, the decision maker must consider whether there are particular factors relevant to the person's individual circumstances which might nevertheless place them at risk.
- 2.5.7 For guidance on Article 15(c), including consideration of enhanced risk factors, see [Asylum Instruction on Humanitarian Protection](#).

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2.6 [Are those at risk able to internally relocate within Pakistan?](#)

- 2.6.1 Pakistan is a large country with a population of nearly 200 million. A person who has a localised threat on the basis that they are perceived to be collaborating with the Pakistani authorities, or to be acting against the Taliban or other militant groups, or because of the general security situation in that area, may be able to relocate to an area where that localised threat does not exist. However, the Pakistan Taliban and other militant groups may reach persons outside of those areas, depending on their profile and the area in which the person resides (see [Nature and levels of violence](#)). Where internal relocation is suggested, decision makers must also consider accessibility of the intended place of relocation.
- 2.6.2 For information on internal relocation see the [Country Information and Guidance Pakistan: Background information including actors of protection and internal relocation](#) and specifically for women, the [Country Information and Guidance Pakistan: Women fearing gender based harm/violence](#).
- 2.6.3 For further guidance on considering internal relocation, see section 8.2 of the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.7 [If refused, is the claim likely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded'?](#)
- 2.7.1 Where a claim falls to be refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

- 2.7.2 For further information on certification, see the [Asylum Instruction on Non-Suspensive Appeals: Certification Under Section 94 of the NIA Act 2002](#).

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3. Policy summary

- 3.1.1 **Simply living in an area where the Pakistani Taliban or other militant groups are active, either wholly or partly, does not of itself give rise to real risk of persecution or serious harm. The level of risk will depend on the particular profile of the person, the nature of the threat and how far it would extend.**
- 3.1.2 **The level of casualties does not amount to there being substantial grounds for believing that a person, solely by being present there, would face a real risk of serious harm resulting in a breach of Article 15(c).**
- 3.1.3 **Even where there is no general Article 15 (c) risk, the decision maker must consider whether there are particular factors relevant to the person's individual circumstances which might nevertheless place them at risk.**
- 3.1.4 **Internal relocation will generally be a viable option, but the reasonableness of internal relocation must be considered on the facts of the case.**

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4. The protagonists

- 4.1.1 For information on militant groups operating in Pakistan, see section 2.1.2 of the [EASO Country of Origin Information Report Pakistan – Country Overview](#).

5. Nature and levels of violence

- 5.1.1 According to Neta C. Crawford, Professor of Political Science at Boston University and co-director of the Costs of War Project, there are ‘several interrelated armed conflicts between the militants and the government, and between militants and international forces, underway in Pakistan.’ Most fighting between militants and the government takes place in the northwest of Pakistan though civilians have also been affected across the country. Along with US drone strikes, which have caused civilian deaths, injury and displacement, thousands of civilians have been killed in suicide attacks, assassinations and ambushes by the Pakistani Taliban (Tehreek-i-Taliban – TTP), al Qaeda and other militant groups. Pakistan’s security forces have also killed civilians as they targeted militants.¹
- 5.1.2 According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, from 2003 to 2015 (data up to 27 September), at least 20,697 civilians have died as a result of terrorist violence. Pakistan’s National Security Policy 2014-2018 was quoted as saying ‘Pakistan is facing serious traditional and non-traditional threats of violent extremism, sectarianism, terrorism and militancy. This has adversely affected economic stability and social harmony and continues to instill a sense of insecurity among the people at large.’²
- 5.1.3 The US State Department annual report for 2014 noted that:
- ‘The most serious human rights problems were extrajudicial and targeted killings, disappearances, torture, lack of rule of law (including lack of due process, poor implementation and enforcement of laws, and frequent mob violence and vigilante justice), and sectarian violence... Lack of government accountability remained a problem, and abuses often went unpunished, fostering a culture of impunity. Authorities seldom punished government officials for human rights violations.
- ‘Violence, abuse, and social and religious intolerance by militant organizations and other nongovernmental actors contributed to a culture of lawlessness in some parts of the country, particularly in the provinces of Balochistan, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP, formerly known as the North

¹ Crawford, Neta.C., Costs of War: War-related Death, Injury, and Displacement in Afghanistan and Pakistan 2001-2014, 22 May 2015, Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University, <http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2015/War%20Related%20Casualties%20Afghanistan%20and%20Pakistan%202001-2014%20FIN.pdf>, page 10, date accessed 21 August 2015

² The Nation, Text of National Security Policy 2014-18, 27 February 2014, <http://nation.com.pk/islamabad/27-Feb-2014/text-of-national-security-policy-2014-18>, date accessed 29 September 2015.

West Frontier Province), and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).³

- 5.1.4 The Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) reported ‘Surgical strikes against militants in Karachi have been going on since 2013.’⁴ The US State Department annual report for 2014 noted that there is a separatist insurgency in Balochistan⁵, and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan noted that ethnic and sectarian violence, particularly towards the Hazara Shia community, continued.⁶ However, overall sectarian violence was reported to have statistically decreased in the past year and a half.⁷

(See also [Counter-terrorism strategies](#))

(For further information on Shia Muslims see the [Country Information and Guidance Pakistan: Shia Muslims](#))

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5.2 Trends in 2013/2014

- 5.2.1 The International Crisis Group noted in a report dated 23 January 2014 that: ‘Endemic violence in Pakistan’s urban centres signifies the challenges confronting the federal and provincial governments in restoring law and order and consolidating the state’s writ. The starkest example is Karachi, which experienced its deadliest year on record in 2013, with 2,700 casualties, mostly in targeted attacks... Some of the worst assaults on religious and sectarian minorities in 2013 occurred in Quetta and Peshawar, including the 10 January suicide and car bomb attack that killed over 100, mostly Shias, in Quetta; the 16 February terror attack that killed more than 80, again mostly Shias, in Quetta’s Hazara town; and the 22 September bombing.’⁸
- 5.2.2 The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) noted in its report concerning Pakistan that ‘High rates of terrorist and sectarian violence continued in 2014, particularly in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta, and wider Balochistan. State security forces, supporters

³ US Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2014, Pakistan, 25 June 2015, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=236648>, Executive Summary, date accessed 21 September 2015.

⁴ Pak Institute for Peace Studies, Conflict and Research Studies, (Jul-Dec 2015), <http://san-pips.com/download.php?f=289.pdf>, date accessed 6 October 2015.

⁵ US Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2014, Pakistan, 25 June 2015, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=236648>, Section 1g, date accessed 28 August 2015.

⁶ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, HRCP’s alarm over sectarian, ethnic violence in Balochistan, 8 July 2015, <http://hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/hrcps-alarm-over-sectarian-ethnic-violence-in-balochistan/>, date accessed 28 August 2015.

⁷ Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, Country of Origin Information Department, Fact Finding Mission Report Pakistan, September 2015, available at: http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/90_1443527547_bfa-paki-ffm-report-2015-09.pdf, Executive summary, date accessed 2 October 2015.

⁸ International Crisis Group, Policing Urban Violence in Pakistan, 23 January 2014, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/pakistan/255-policing-urban-violence-in-pakistan.aspx>, date accessed 21 September 2015

of political parties, and sectarian groups are the most frequent targets. The perpetrators are rarely caught and brought to justice.⁹

- 5.2.3 Amnesty International's annual report for Pakistan, published in February 2015, noted that:

'Parts of FATA in northwestern Pakistan continued to be affected by internal armed conflict, facing regular attacks by the Taliban and other armed groups, the Pakistan armed forces, and US drone aircraft that claimed hundreds of lives. In June [2014] the Pakistan Army launched a major military operation in North Waziristan tribal agency, and carried out sporadic operations in Khyber tribal agency and other parts of FATA. Affected communities routinely complained of the disproportionate use of force and indiscriminate attacks by all sides to the conflict, especially the Pakistan armed forces'.¹⁰

(See also [Counter-terrorism strategies](#))

- 5.2.4 For a more detailed overview of violent incidents in 2013 and 2014, including the provinces and regions affected; the nature and levels of violence; and the impact on civilians; see sections 2.1.3 to 2.6 of the [EASO Country of Origin Information Report Pakistan – Country Overview](#).

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5.3 Trends in 2015

- 5.3.1 Reporting on its Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) to Pakistan undertaken between 27 July and 31 July 2015, the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum stated that, in comparison to its previous FFM in 2013, the overall security situation in Pakistan had improved. The security situation in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) had also improved, or was continuing to improve, due to ongoing military operations.¹¹
- 5.3.2 For more detailed information on the security situation across Pakistan's provinces, see the [Austrian Fact Finding Mission Report: Pakistan, September 2015](#).
- 5.3.3 The number of violence-related fatalities varied across sources, which were based on different definitions, variables and methodologies.
- 5.3.4 The Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) reported a slight drop in civilian fatalities attributed to "a significant improvement in the security situation" in its second quarterly (April to June) report for 2015, stemming from counter-militancy operations. However, the report also noted that a major upsurge in violence was recorded in the month of May 2015, when the fatalities from violence went up 20% compared to the previous month. On

⁹ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'Pakistan – Country of Concern', 15 March 2015, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pakistan-country-of-concern--2/pakistan-country-of-concern>, date accessed 12 August 2015.

¹⁰ Amnesty International, Amnesty International Report 2014/15 - Pakistan, 25 February 2015, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/54f07db215.html>, date accessed 21 September 2015.

¹¹ Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, Country of Origin Information Department, Fact Finding Mission Report Pakistan, September 2015, available at: http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/90_1443527547_bfa-paki-ffm-report-2015-09.pdf, Executive summary, date accessed 2 October 2015.

the district level, Karachi recorded the highest number of fatalities from violence during the second quarter (April to June 2015). The report also cited the military-run counter-crime operation in Karachi as having had a positive impact on organised crime. Compared to the same quarter in 2014, CRSS recorded a decrease in overall fatalities from 1,979 to 1,309. Of those, 330 were civilian deaths in April to June 2015, compared to 628 for the same period in 2014.¹²

- 5.3.5 For the same quarterly period in 2015, the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) recorded the total number of fatalities in terror-related violence as 1,084, which included 232 civilians. This was in comparison to April to June 2014, where the SATP cited the total fatalities as 1,404, 394 of whom were civilians.¹³
- 5.3.6 In 2015, up till 19 June, IntelCenter recorded the total number of people killed by terrorist and rebel group incidents in Pakistan as 479, though stated that actual figures were likely to be higher due to underreporting. These figures did not include deaths of militants killed by security forces.¹⁴
- 5.3.7 The Pakistani Taliban (Tehreek-i-Taliban – TTP) and its splinter groups continued to claim responsibility for a number of attacks across Pakistan in 2015. The Jamestown Foundation reported that Jundallah, a splinter group of the TTP and aligned with Islamic State, claimed responsibility for most anti-Shia attacks.¹⁵
- 5.3.8 In its July 2015 update on Pakistan, the FCO reported that sectarian killings continued across the country, where members of rival Sunni and Shia Muslim political parties were targeted. Over 150 Shia Muslims have been killed in the first 6 months of 2015.¹⁶ On 26 June, the Jamestown Foundation stated suicide bombings and targeted attacks had killed over 170 Shias in 2015.¹⁷ In June, International Association of Human Rights Chair, Rubab Mehdi H. Rizvi, told Pakistan Today that there had been 42 attacks on Shia communities since the beginning of 2015.¹⁸ According to Dawn News, at least 60 people were killed in an explosion inside an imambargah (Shia

¹² Center for Research and Security Studies, Quarterly Security Report – April-June 2015, 23 July 2015, <http://crss.pk/story/crss-quarterly-security-report-april-june-2015/>, date accessed 13 August 2015.

¹³ South Asia Terrorism Portal, Fatalities in Terrorist Violence in Pakistan 2003-2015, data till 9 August 2015, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/casualties.htm>, date accessed 13 August 2015.

¹⁴ IntelCenter, Total Killed in Terrorist & Rebel Incidents by Country in 2015, as of 19 June 2015, <http://intelcenter.com/reports/charts/killed-country-2015/index.html>, date accessed 14 August 2015.

¹⁵ Jamestown Foundation, Growing Islamic State Influence in Pakistan Fuels Sectarian Violence, 26 June 2015, Terrorism Monitor Volume: 13 Issue: 13, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/559d00ea4.html>, date accessed 28 August 2015.

¹⁶ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Pakistan - in-year update July 2015, 15 July 2015, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pakistan-in-year-update-july-2015/pakistan-in-year-update-july-2015>, date accessed 14 August 2015.

¹⁷ Jamestown Foundation, Growing Islamic State Influence in Pakistan Fuels Sectarian Violence, 26 June 2015, Terrorism Monitor Volume: 13 Issue: 13, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/559d00ea4.html>, date accessed 28 August 2015.

¹⁸ Pakistan Today, Hazara Shia genocide and the evils we don't see, 6 June 2015, <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/06/06/national/hazara-shia-genocide-and-the-evils-we-dont-see/>, date accessed 14 August 2015.

place of worship) in Shikarpur, Sindh province, on 30 January.¹⁹ In the first 26 days of 2015, 13 terrorism-related fatalities were recorded in Punjab Province causing the death of at least 11 Shia Muslims.²⁰ In a targeted gun attack on a bus on 13 May, at least 45 Ismaili Shia Muslims were killed in Karachi, according to the BBC.²¹ The FCO noted that in April and May 2015 at least 7 Hazara Shias were killed in Quetta in 3 separate attacks by unidentified gunmen.²²

For further information on Shia Muslims see the [Country Information and Guidance Pakistan: Shia Muslims](#)

- 5.3.9 On 17 February, a suicide attack at the police headquarters in Lahore killed 6 people, including 4 civilians and a police officer.²³ On 15 March, at least 14 people were killed in bombings targeting 2 churches in Lahore. A further 70 were wounded.²⁴ The SATP provided data on major incidents of terrorism-related violence for 2015. From 1 January 2015 until 20 September 2015, they noted 2,466 fatalities.²⁵
- 5.3.10 On 29 July 2015, Malik Ishaq, leader of the banned militant group, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), was killed in gunfight that occurred in Punjab province after his supporters allegedly attacked a police convoy in an attempt to free him. Ishaq's two sons, his deputy and 11 militants were also killed.²⁶ There was speculation that Ishaq was killed in a police "encounter", whereby shoot-outs are staged to eliminate suspects.²⁷ In an apparent response to the killing of the LeJ leader, Punjab Home Minister, Shuja Khanzada, was killed in a suicide attack on 16 August. Sixteen others were also killed in the blast.²⁸

¹⁹ Dawn, At least 60 killed in blast at Shikarpur imambargah, 31 January 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1160444>, date accessed 14 August 2015.

²⁰ South Asia Terrorism Portal, Punjab Assessment 2015, undated, <http://www.satp.org/satporqtp/countries/pakistan/punjab/index.html>, date accessed 4 September 2015; Al Jazeera, Suicide bomber targets Pakistan mosque, 10 January 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2015/01/suicide-bomber-targets-pakistan-mosque-20151917506910361.html>, date accessed 4 September 2015.

²¹ BBC News, Pakistan gunmen kill 45 on Karachi Ismaili Shia bus, 13 May 2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-32717321>, date accessed 14 August 2015.

²² Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Pakistan - in-year update July 2015, 15 July 2015, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pakistan-in-year-update-july-2015/pakistan-in-year-update-july-2015>, date accessed 14 August 2015.

²³ Reuters, Taliban suicide attack on Pakistani police headquarters in Lahore kills six, 17 February 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/02/17/us-pakistan-militant-attacks-idUSKBN0LLOIS20150217>, date accessed 14 August 2015.

²⁴ Al Jazeera, Worshippers killed in Pakistan church bombings, 15 March 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/03/lahore-churches-hit-deadly-bomb-attacks-150315074103093.html>, date accessed 14 August 2015.

²⁵ South Asia Terrorism Portal, Major incidents of Terrorism-related violence in Pakistan – 2015, data till 9 August 2015, <http://www.satp.org/satporqtp/countries/pakistan/database/majorincidents.htm>, date accessed 14 August 2015.

²⁶ Dawn, LeJ leader, two sons, 12 other militants killed, 30 July 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1197227>, date accessed 21 August 2015.

²⁷ Reuters, Pakistan police kill leader of banned sectarian group, 29 July 2015, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/07/29/uk-pakistan-militant-idUKKCN0Q308O20150729>, date accessed 21 August 2015.

²⁸ BBC News, Punjab minister Shuja Khanzada killed in Pakistan blast, 16 August 2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-33952413>; The Express Tribune, Punjab Home Minister Shuja Khanzada killed in Attock suicide blast, 16 August 2015, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/939003/blast->

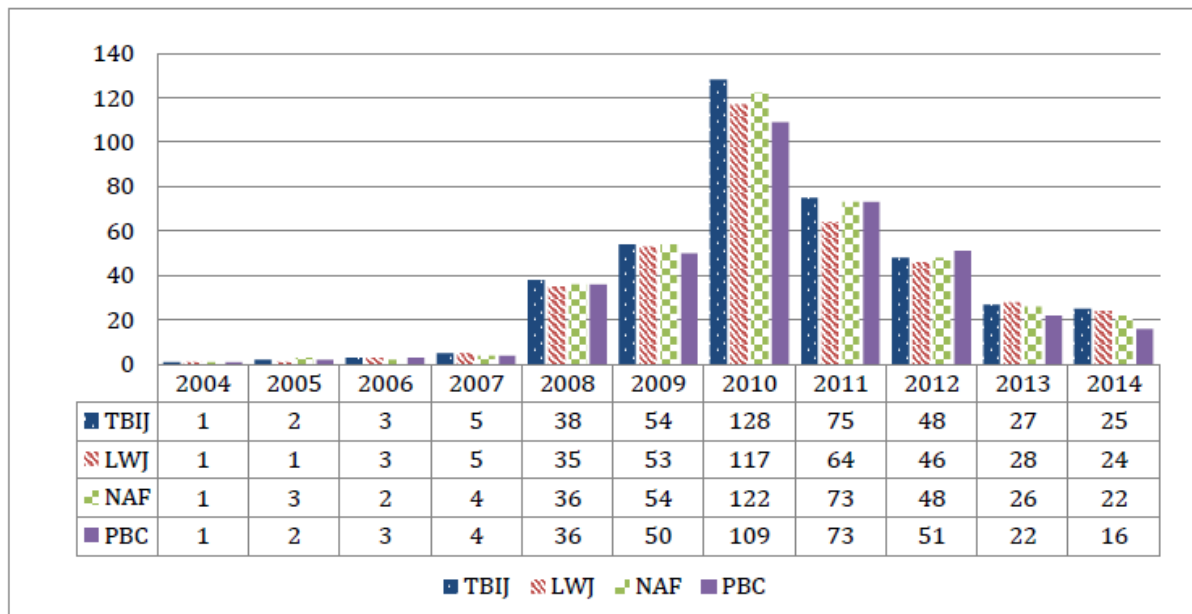
(See also [Counter-terrorism strategies](#))

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5.4 Drone strikes

5.4.1 A report published by the Watson Institute for International Studies on 22 May 2015, noted that the first US drone strike took place in Pakistan's Waziristan region in 2004. As the US did not regularly comment on the strikes or their consequences, the number of drone strikes since, and those killed or injured by them, varied according to sources as statistics could only be gathered from local media reports, police and NGO investigations. Neta C. Crawford, Professor of Political Science at Boston University and co-director of the Costs of War Project, provided a count of drone strikes and civilians killed between 2004 and 2014, recorded by The Bureau of Investigative Journalism (TBIJ); Long War Journal (LWJ); New America Foundation (NAF); Pakistan Body Count (PBC)²⁹:

Count of US drone strikes 2004-2014 1



[rocks-punjab-home-minister-shuja-khanzadas-political-office-in-attock/](#), date accessed 21 August 2015.

²⁹ Crawford, Neta.C., Costs of War: War-related Death, Injury, and Displacement in Afghanistan and Pakistan 2001-2014, 22 May 2015, Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University, <http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2015/War%20Related%20Casualties%20Afghanistan%20and%20Pakistan%202001-2014%20FIN.pdf>, page 11, date accessed 21 August 2015

Civilians killed 2004-2014 1

Source	Civilians Killed	Total Killed	% Civilians Killed
TBIJ Min	416	2,648	15.7
TBIJ Max	953	3,837	24.8
LWJ	156	2,883	5.4
NAF average	286	3,002	9.5
PBC Min	1,409	1,944	72.5

5.4.2 The Bureau of Investigative Journalism also compiled its own data on drone strikes as of May 2014 and the types of targets that have been reportedly attacked by CIA drones in Pakistan. The Bureau has recorded what targets were reportedly hit. The targets were divided into domestic, public, religious, and commercial buildings, outdoor gatherings (such as meetings and funerals), and vehicles.³⁰ In 2015, the Bureau recorded 13 strikes as of 29 September.³¹

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5.5 Impact on women and children

5.5.1 The International Crisis Group, in a report dated 8 April 2015, noted that:

‘Targeted by violent extremists with an overt agenda of gender repression, women’s security is especially threatened in the conflict zones in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

‘...The extent to which rights violations go unpunished is particularly alarming in FATA and KPK, where women are subjected to state-sanctioned discrimination, militant violence, religious extremism and sexual violence. Militants target women’s rights activists, political leaders and development workers without consequences. The prevalence of informal justice mechanisms in many parts of Pakistan, particularly in Pakhtunkhwa and FATA, are also highly discriminatory toward women; and the government’s indiscriminate military operations, which have displaced millions, have further aggravated the challenges they face in the conflict zones.’³²

5.5.2 The same report noted that women were affected by both militant violence and military operations, which caused displacement and the destruction of homes and livelihoods, particularly in the conflict-hit areas of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK). Women

³⁰ Bureau of Investigative Journalism, Get the data: What the drones strike, 23 May 2014, <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2014/05/23/get-the-data-what-the-drones-strike/>, date accessed 29 September 2015.

³¹ Bureau of Investigative Journalism, CIA drone strikes in Pakistan, 2004 to present, <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1NAfjFonM-Tn7fziqiv33HIGt09wgLZDSCP-BQaux51w/edit?pli=1#gid=694046452>, date accessed 29 September 2015.

³² International Crisis Group, Women, Violence and Conflict in Pakistan, 8 April 2015, [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/265-women-violence-and-conflict-in-pakistan.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/265-women-violence-and-conflict-in-pakistan.pdf), pages ii - iii, date accessed 18 August 2015.

also faced sexual violence by both militants and security forces. The report noted that within FATA's conflict zones, sexual violence is endemic. As reported by the International Crisis Group, on the plight of women's security in conflict areas of Pakistan, 'Armed conflict has contributed to men abusing or murdering women relatives with impunity. "When a woman is killed, you can just blame it on the Taliban or the paramilitary depending on what side you're on", said a women's rights activist and FATA researcher.' The report added that the militant violence and heavy-handed military operations have also undermined access to health care and education and that internally displaced persons are particularly vulnerable.³³

See also [Country Information and Guidance Pakistan: Women fearing gender based harm/violence](#).

- 5.5.3 A report by the BBC dated 16 January 2015 noted that sectarian violence and indiscriminate attacks, including by improvised explosive devices and suicide bombers, continued to affect children, particularly in the provinces of Balochistan and KPK. Armed groups regularly attacked educational institutions. In 2014, at least 40 secular schools were reportedly attacked, mostly in KPK, FATA, and Balochistan.³⁴ On 16 December 2014, over 140 people were indiscriminately killed, including 132 children, when Pakistani Taliban gunmen stormed an army-run school in Peshawar, apparently in response to military operations in North Waziristan.³⁵
- 5.5.4 The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan noted in a report dated March 2015 that: 'Military operation in North Waziristan displaced 400,000 children among about one million people from their homes. The Pakistani Taliban stormed the Army Public school in Peshawar in December [2014]. It was the worst terror attack Pakistan had experienced in recent history, and one in which children were specifically targeted. Over 141 people, including 132 students, were killed in a brutal massacre.'³⁶
- 5.5.5 The US Department of State noted that: 'Non state militant groups kidnapped boys and girls and used fraudulent promises to coerce parents into giving away children as young as age 12 to spy, fight, or die as suicide bombers. The militants sometimes offered parents money, often sexually and physically abused the children, and used psychological coercion to convince the children that the acts they committed were justified.'³⁷

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³³ International Crisis Group, Women, Violence and Conflict in Pakistan, 8 April 2015, [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/265-women-violence-and-conflict-in-pakistan.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/265-women-violence-and-conflict-in-pakistan.pdf), pages 20-21, date accessed 18 August 2015.

³⁴ UN Security Council, Children and armed conflict: report of the Secretary-General, 5 June 2015, A/69/926-S/2015/409, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/557abf904.html>, date accessed 18 August 2015.

³⁵ BBC News, Pakistan Taliban: Peshawar school attack leaves 141 dead, 16 December 2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-30491435>, date accessed 18 August 2015.

³⁶ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, State of Human Rights in 2014, March 2015, <http://hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/data/HRCP%20Annual%20Report%202014%20-%20English.pdf>, page 222, date accessed 25 August 2015.

³⁷ US Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2014, Pakistan, 25 June 2015, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dclid=236648>, Section 1g, date accessed 21 September 2015.

6. Counter-terrorism strategies

6.1 Military operations

6.1.1 According to Dawn News, since 2007, a number of major military operations, executed by the armed forces, have taken place against local and foreign militants in Pakistan's tribal areas and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.³⁸ According to Neta C. Crawford for the Watson Institute for International Studies:

'The Pakistani military, paramilitary Frontier Corp, and police have conducted more than 1,600 "operational attacks" on militants from 2007 through 2014. Like the US drone strikes, most Pakistani military strikes against militants occur in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)... These attacks have killed more than 17,000 people, including civilians, militants, and Pakistani security forces. Operational attacks are not simply one-off strikes. Rather, operational attacks are often part of long planned military operations, in which the government aims for and anticipates not only the killing and arrest of militants and the destruction of their military equipment, but also the displacement of civilians.'³⁹ (See [Internally displaced persons \(IDPs\)](#)).

6.1.2 The Jamestown Foundation noted that in June 2014, following a breakdown in talks between the government and the Pakistani Taliban, the Pakistan Army launched operation "Zarb-e-Azb" against Islamic insurgents in North Waziristan, of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas.⁴⁰ The Express Tribune noted that one year on (in June 2015), the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) of the Pakistan Army claimed that the military had: destroyed 837 militant hideouts; recovered 253 tons of explosives and 18,087 weapons; killed 2,763 militants and apprehended "thousands" of terrorists and their abettors. The ISPR also reported the deaths of 347 officers and soldiers.⁴¹ According to Dawn News, details could not be independently verified due to reporting restrictions in the region.⁴²

6.1.3 On 10 August 2015, according to Pakistan Rangers in Sindh, ongoing "targeted action" in Karachi, which commenced in September 2013, had led to 'an improvement in the security environment in the city.' Despite this, statistics suggested more than one civilian fatality per day due to violence in the city. Total fatalities, including civilians, security forces, terrorists and criminals, averaged more than 2 a day. There were widespread allegations

³⁸ Dawn, Major military operations in Pakistan, 17 June 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1113132>, date accessed 18 August 2015.

³⁹ Crawford, Neta.C., Costs of War: War-related Death, Injury, and Displacement in Afghanistan and Pakistan 2001-2014, 22 May 2015, Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University, <http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2015/War%20Related%20Casualties%20Afghanistan%20and%20Pakistan%202001-2014%20FIN.pdf>, page 14, date accessed 21 August 2015

⁴⁰ Jamestown Foundation, The Successes and Failures of Pakistan's Operation Zarb-e-Azb, 10 July 2015, Terrorism Monitor Volume: 13 Issue: 14, http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=44144&cHash=d4281630e5ad104ab6fbc0bd5f3bbf9f, date accessed 18 August 2015.

⁴¹ The Express Tribune, 2,763 terrorists killed in Operation Zarb-e-Azb, 14 June 2015, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/903282/2763-terrorists-killed-in-operation-zarb-e-azb/>, date accessed 18 August 2015.

⁴² Dawn, Nearly 350 military men killed in Zarb-e-Azb: ISPR, 13 June 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1187994>, date accessed 18 August 2015.

of indiscriminate and extrajudicial executions, human rights' violations, and political executions due to “targeted action” by the security forces.⁴³

6.2 National Action Plan (NAP)

- 6.2.1 The International Crisis Group noted in their report dated 22 July 2015 that following the December 2014 attack on the army-run school in Peshawar, the Pakistan government unveiled a new counter-terrorism strategy, the twenty-point National Action Plan (NAP). Under the Plan, the 2008 moratorium on the death penalty was lifted, initially for convicted terrorists, but later for all death-row convicts, and special military courts were empowered to try all terrorism suspects, including civilians. The International Crisis Group (ICG) noted that ‘Most of NAP’s twenty points relate to implementing existing laws and constitutional bars, including preventing banned organisations from operating and/or regrouping under new names; preventing terrorist funding; dismantling terrorist communication networks; prohibiting private militias; acting against sectarian organisations and countering hate speech and the dissemination of hate literature.’⁴⁴
- 6.2.2 The United States Institute of Peace noted in a report dated May 2015 reported that:
- ‘Attacks by terrorists and militants have ... continued... Terrorists have specifically targeted the Shia community in particular. Militant groups and their leaders remain free to organize rallies. For instance, Pakistan’s Ministry of Interior banned the radical anti-Shia militia group Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat years ago, but the group continues to operate freely across the country. Initial efforts to curb sectarianism and hate speech have been encouraging: More than two thousand people have been arrested across the country for spreading hate literature. Such crackdowns, however, in the absence of a coherent plan, tend to be temporary at best and ineffective at worst.’⁴⁵
- 6.2.3 In February 2015 it was reported by Pakistan Today that according to government officials, over 600 terrorists had been arrested since the inauguration of the NAP.⁴⁶ However, Dawn News noted that rates of conviction in terrorism cases were slow.⁴⁷

⁴³ South Asia Terrorism Portal, South Asia Intelligence Review, Weekly Assessments and briefings, Volume 14, No. 8, 24 August 2015, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/sair/Archives/sair14/14_8.htm, date accessed 28 August 2015; Foreign Policy News, Karachi: Uncertain gains, 25 August 2015, <http://foreignpolicynews.org/2015/08/25/karachi-uncertain-gains/>, date accessed 10 September 2015.

⁴⁴ International Crisis Group, Revisiting Counter-terrorism Strategies in Pakistan: Opportunities and Pitfalls, 22 July 2015, [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/271-revisiting-counter-terrorism-strategies-in-pakistan-opportunities-and-pitfalls.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/271-revisiting-counter-terrorism-strategies-in-pakistan-opportunities-and-pitfalls.pdf), pages 5-8, date accessed 18 August 2015.

⁴⁵ United States Institute of Peace, Charting Pakistan’s Internal Security Policy, Special Report 368, May 2015, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR368-Charting-Pakistans-Internal-Security-Policy.pdf>, page 14, date accessed 4 September 2015.

⁴⁶ Pakistan Today, 600 terrorists arrested in seven weeks, 16 February 2015, <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/02/16/national/600-terrorists-arrested-in-seven-weeks/>, date accessed 20 August 2015.

⁴⁷ Dawn, 2,562 arrested in Pindi district under NAP, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1193560>, date accessed 21 August 2015.

- 6.2.4 The Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) reported in the Autumn 2015 edition of its research journal, Conflict and Research Studies, that, since the launch of the NAP, violence has declined in Pakistan. PIPs added:
- ‘... if gone by the number, there has been a decline in terrorist attacks in the country: According to statistics provided by Pak Institute for Peace Studies’ digital database on security, from January 1 to August 31 this year, a total of 471 terrorist attacks took place across Pakistan, which represented a 47 percent decrease from such attacks recorded during the corresponding period of 2014. The number of people killed (752) and injured (931) also posted a decrease of 36 percent and 43 percent, respectively, from corresponding months of previous year.’⁴⁸ (See also [Trends in 2015](#))
- 6.2.5 The US Institute of Peace noted in a report dated August 2015 noted that Pakistan’s Anti-Terrorism Act’s (ATA’s) broad definition of terrorism acts overburdens the already overstretched police, prosecution and courts and result in delays in the disposal of “real” terrorism cases. The report stated: ‘Pakistan’s abysmally low conviction rates shape the perception that even if terrorists are caught, the probability of getting punished is very remote. According to the Punjab Prosecutor General, during 2014, ATCs heard 785 cases of terrorism in the province, resulting in 196 convictions—an acquittal rate of roughly 75 percent.’⁴⁹
- 6.2.6 The ICG criticised the NAP’s progress, citing the majority of the 176 executions since late December 2014 were for crimes unrelated to terrorism; the continued operation of banned groups and individuals; the poor regulation of madrassas; and the inability to prevent hate speech and literature, as well as terrorist financing. The report noted that: ‘Instead of countering terrorism, the executions further increase the risk of miscarriage of justice; confessions are often obtained through torture, and the poor, who lack good legal counsel, are the worst affected.’⁵⁰

For further information on Pakistan’s anti-terrorism acts see section 2.1.4 of the [EASO Country of Origin Information Report Pakistan – Country Overview](#).

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7. Humanitarian situation

7.1 Internally displaced persons (IDPs)

- 7.1.1 As of 31 March 2015, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) estimated that there were up to 1.8 million IDPs in Pakistan as a result of conflict and violence. Up to 1.5 million IDPs were concentrated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA),

⁴⁸ Pak Institute for Peace Studies, Conflict and Research Studies, (Jul-Dec 2015), <http://san-pips.com/download.php?f=289.pdf>, date accessed 6 October 2015.

⁴⁹ United States Institute of Peace, An appraisal of Pakistan’s Anti-Terrorism Act, Special Report 377, August 2015, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR377-An-Appraisal-of-Pakistan%E2%80%99s-Anti-Terrorism-Act.pdf>, pages 2-3, date accessed 1 September 2015.

⁵⁰ International Crisis Group, Revisiting Counter-terrorism Strategies in Pakistan: Opportunities and Pitfalls, 22 July 2015, [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/271-revisiting-counter-terrorism-strategies-in-pakistan-opportunities-and-pitfalls.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/271-revisiting-counter-terrorism-strategies-in-pakistan-opportunities-and-pitfalls.pdf), pages ii and 8, date accessed 21 September 2015.

and up to 275,000 in Balochistan and other areas of Pakistan. Numbers were likely to be underestimated as they did not include unregistered IDPs in KPK or FATA, or those living in other areas of Pakistan. As well as conflict-related displacement, large-scale displacement was caused by natural disasters, mostly flooding.⁵¹

- 7.1.2 According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 79,121 families had returned to KPK and FATA as of 20 August 2015. Some registered IDPs were provided with government support packages to aid their return. However, over 217,000 families remained displaced.⁵²
- 7.1.3 The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) noted that: 'Besides being forced to leave their homes, the internally displaced persons also faced threats and attacks from the militants in their camps and at locations established by the authorities for their registration. At times it seemed that the very threats which these people had fled from had followed them.'⁵³
- 7.1.4 The same report noted that displaced women are particularly vulnerable: 'Because of the local norms in FATA that restricted women's mobility, education and social interaction, the displaced women were said to lack confidence to access relief goods. The female literacy rate in the area was reported to be only 3 percent. A large number of women did not possess national identity cards, which made access to relief goods impossible. There were no separate registration points for women.... The young women in the camps were also reported to be facing sexual harassment, which was said to be forcing minor girls' families to marry them.'⁵⁴ (See [Impact on women and children](#))

For further information on the humanitarian situation and internal displacement see sections 1.8.2 and 4.2 of the [EASO Country of Origin Information Report Pakistan – Country Overview](#).

7.2 Afghan refugees

- 7.2.1 At the end of 2014, Pakistan hosted approximately 1.5 million registered Afghan refugees. A similar number of unregistered Afghan nationals were also believed to be living in Pakistan, according to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP).⁵⁵ The report also noted that unregistered

⁵¹ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Pakistan IDP Figures Analysis, as of 31 March 2015, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/south-and-south-east-asia/pakistan/figures-analysis>, date accessed 25 August 2015.

⁵² Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Pakistan: FATA Return Weekly Snapshot, 24 August 2015, https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/ocha_pakistan_weekly_return_snapshot_20_aug_2015_0.pdf, date accessed 25 August 2015.

⁵³ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, State of Human Rights in 2014, March 2015, <http://hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/data/HRCP%20Annual%20Report%202014%20-%20English.pdf>, page 344, date accessed 21 September 2015

⁵⁴ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, State of Human Rights in 2014, March 2015, <http://hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/data/HRCP%20Annual%20Report%202014%20-%20English.pdf>, page 346, date accessed 21 September 2015.

⁵⁵ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, State of Human Rights in 2014, March 2015, <http://hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/data/HRCP%20Annual%20Report%202014%20-%20English.pdf>, pages 11 & 335, date accessed 25 August 2015.

Afghans did not enjoy any protected status in Pakistan and were dealt under the scope of the provisions of the 1946 Foreigners Act.⁵⁶

- 7.2.2 With the support of UNHCR and partners' the Government of Pakistan extended Afghan refugees' Proof of Registration (PoR) cards until the end of 2015, issued birth certificates for 800,000 Afghan refugee children, provided land for several refugee villages, and gave refugees access to public schools and health clinics.⁵⁷ Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that, with the exception of children reaching the age of 5 whose parents already held PoR cards, no new PoR cards were being issued thus effectively preventing newly arrived Afghans from registering as refugees.⁵⁸
- 7.2.3 Despite assurances to Afghan refugees that the December 2014 Peshawar school attack would not prompt official reprisals, HRW stated that since then there have been a number of reports of government and public harassment and intimidation.⁵⁹ According to UNHCR, Afghans in Pakistan have reportedly faced 'arrests, detention, termination of lease agreements by local landowners, closure of business, evictions, extortion and harassment by local police.' UNHCR added that 'Eviction notices by the authorities are cited as the primary push factor that influenced Afghan refugees to return from Pakistan. Discrimination, harassment, movement limitations, economic factors, settlement closure/consolidation and fear of arrest or deportation are mentioned as additional reasons for return from Pakistan in 2015.'⁶⁰
- 7.2.4 The International Crisis Group also noted in their report dated 22 July 2015 that the twenty-point National Action Plan (NAP) scapegoated Afghan refugees. The report stated: 'By also calling for formulation of a "comprehensive policy to deal with the issue of Afghan refugees", it implicitly scapegoats them for the spread of crime and militancy that has weakened the state's writ in FATA and KPK.'⁶¹

7.3 Aid workers, journalists and human rights defenders

- 7.3.1 Amnesty International reported 'Health workers involved in polio and other vaccination campaigns were killed in various parts of the country. Killings were particularly prevalent in parts of the northwest and the city of Karachi,

⁵⁶ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, State of Human Rights in 2014, March 2015, <http://hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/data/HRCP%20Annual%20Report%202014%20-%20English.pdf>, page 338, date accessed 21 September 2015

⁵⁷ UNHCR, 2015 UNHCR country operations profile – Pakistan, undated, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e487016.html>, date accessed 25 August 2015.

⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch, Pakistan: Stop Forced Returns of Afghans, 22 February 2015, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/54ef0e144.html>, date accessed 27 August 2015.

⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch, Pakistan: Stop Forced Returns of Afghans, 22 February 2015, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/54ef0e144.html>, date accessed 27 August 2015.

⁶⁰ (UNHCR), Afghanistan - Volrep and Border Monitoring Monthly Update, 01 January-30 June 2015, 30 June 2015, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/55adf3e74.html>, page 1, date accessed 27 August 2015.

⁶¹ International Crisis Group, Revisiting Counter-terrorism Strategies in Pakistan: Opportunities and Pitfalls, 22 July 2015, [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/271-revisiting-counter-terrorism-strategies-in-pakistan-opportunities-and-pitfalls.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/271-revisiting-counter-terrorism-strategies-in-pakistan-opportunities-and-pitfalls.pdf), page 6, date accessed 21 September 2015.

areas with an active presence of Taliban and aligned groups which oppose vaccinations.⁶²

- 7.3.2 The BBC reported that in February 2015, 4 members of a polio vaccination team were found shot dead in Balochistan, 4 days after their abduction. Militants often accuse polio teams of being spies, or claim the vaccine causes infertility. At least 70 polio workers have been killed in the last 4 years.⁶³ According to the Aid Worker Security Database, there were a reported 12 major attacks against aid workers in 2014⁶⁴, compared to 17 in 2013.⁶⁵
- 7.3.3 The HRCP reported that, regardless of the nature of their work, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and their staff suffered numerous attacks by extremist groups who accused them of promoting a Western agenda.⁶⁶
- 7.3.4 The same report stated: 'Pakistan was named as the most dangerous country for journalists in the year under review, according to the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), a global organization of journalists based in Belgium. The threat was most pronounced in volatile regions such as FATA and troubled districts such as Khuzdarin Balochistan. The targeting of journalists in these regions was a direct consequence of their association with journalism, whether through press clubs or as employees of print and electronic media outlets. According to HRCP's monitoring of 48 volatile districts in Pakistan, journalists and human rights defenders suffered 19 attacks in 2014.'⁶⁷

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⁶² Amnesty International, Amnesty International Report 2014/15 - Pakistan, 25 February 2015, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/54f07db215.html>, date accessed 27 August 2015.

⁶³ BBC News, Four kidnapped polio workers are found dead in Pakistan, 17 February 2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-31507217>, date accessed 27 August 2015.

⁶⁴ Aid Worker Security Database, Aid Worker Security Report 2015; Figures at a glance, undated, https://aidworkersecurity.org/sites/default/files/HO_AidWorkerSectyPreview_V1.pdf, date accessed 27 August 2015.

⁶⁵ Aid Worker Security Database, Aid Worker Security Report 2014, page 2, <https://aidworkersecurity.org/sites/default/files/Aid%20Worker%20Security%20Report%202014.pdf>, page 2, date accessed 27 August 2015.

⁶⁶ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, State of Human Rights in 2014, March 2015, <http://hrcpweb.org/hrcpweb/data/HRCP%20Annual%20Report%202014%20-%20English.pdf>, page 178, date accessed 25 August 2015.

⁶⁷ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, State of Human Rights in 2014, March 2015, <http://hrcpweb.org/hrcpweb/data/HRCP%20Annual%20Report%202014%20-%20English.pdf>, page 178, date accessed 21 September 2015.

Version Control and Contacts

Contacts

If you have any questions about the guidance and your line manager or senior caseworker cannot help you or you think that the guidance has factual errors then email [the Country Policy and Information Team](#).

If you notice any formatting errors in this guidance (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability of the guidance then you can email [the Guidance, Rules and Forms Team](#).

Clearance

Below is information on when this version of the guidance was cleared:

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- this version approved by **Sally Weston, Head of Legal Strategy Team, International and Immigration Policy Directorate**
- approved on: **29 November 2015**

Changes from last version of this guidance

Update on country situation and guidance.

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