



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)  
LEGAL AID BOARD

## **Pakistan – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 24 March 2010**

### **Information regarding the treatment by the authorities in Pakistan of family of perceived members of the Taliban.**

The *Human Rights Commission of Pakistan* comments on the alleged detention of family members of suspected Taliban as follows:

“The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan on Monday expressed grave concern over detention of family members of suspected militants and continuing reports of revenge killings in Swat in the Malakand Division. A statement issued by the Commission said: “HRCP has noted with deep concern credible reports of a large number of people in custody of the security forces in the Malakand Division who have not been produced in court. Many such detainees are relatives, including female family members, of suspected militants, who have apparently been taken into custody to press the militants to surrender. Of similar concern are continuing reports of revenge killings targeting individuals suspected to have sided with the Taliban.” (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (22 February 2010) *HRCP alarmed over illegal detentions, revenge killings in Swat*)

See also a *Human Rights Commission of Pakistan* document which states:

“HRCP also cannot countenance the detention by the security forces of families of militants, including women and children, where they have been unable to arrest the militants themselves.” (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (18 September 2009) *HRCP cautions govt against use of lashkars, detention of militants’ families*)

In a section titled “Innocents detained” a *BBC News* report on operations by the security forces in the Swat valley states:

“The security forces are continuing to conduct operations in the Swat valley,’ points out a local journalist. ‘While many militants have been arrested in these raids, a lot of innocent people have also been detained,’ he says. ‘The security forces often storm into houses from whose perimeter they have been fired upon. Most of these houses are used by the Taliban without the consent of the poor owner. But what happens is that when they [security forces] arrive, the militants have already left. The people in the household are then the focus of their wrath and the male members are usually dragged off,’ he said Reports says that many of those taken away have not been heard from since.” (BBC News (3 September 2009) *Killings continue bloodshed in Swat*)

A *Guardian* article on the application of the practice of collective punishment by the Pakistani army states:

“The local people had already fled to refugee camps in nearby North-West Frontier province. But army retaliation against them - for allowing the militants to operate - was swift and harsh. Bulldozers and explosives experts turned Spinkai's bazaar into a mile-long pile of rubble. Petrol stations, shops, even parts of the hospital, were levelled or blown up. Four months later the villagers are forbidden from returning home. Their wheat is rotting in the fields. But Pakistani commanders insist they have been merciful in their application of ‘collective punishment’ - a practice invented by the British who demarcated the tribal areas over a century ago.” (The Guardian (20 May 2008) *Demolished by the Pakistan army: the frontier village punished for harbouring the Taliban*)

A report on this incident from the Pakistani newspaper *Dawn* states:

“Spinkai is like a ghost town. There are scores of mud and pucca houses along the river bed and beyond in a valley surrounded by mountains, but not a soul is living there. And it's not that no one had ever lived here. A peep into some of the houses once occupied by local tribesmen indicated that these were abandoned by the occupants in such haste that many of them even left their precious belongings behind. There are houses where blankets and quilts were left on beds. In some of them crockery and kitchen utensils are spread all over, and in one house even the deep freezer and other electronic equipment were left behind. The situation appears even more disturbing as one moves a couple of hundred metres away from the residential quarters to what possibly was Spinkai's own market and business area. Not a single shop that is now intact. Even petrol stations and local factories have been razed to the ground. A few of these may have been damaged by gunfire, but we are told that almost all others were destroyed under the infamous local law of ‘collective punishment’.” (Dawn (19 May 2008) *Taliban ousted, but Spinkai is now a ghost town*)

A *BBC News* report states:

“For many people in the war-hit north-west there is increasingly only one choice, join the Taliban or leave their ancestral lands. That is maybe one reason why almost every family in Taliban-dominated areas has a member in the militant forces. The young glamourise the militants and that - combined with the tribal concept of badal, or an eye for an eye - becomes binding on each family who loses a member in the war.” (BBC News (2 June 2009) *Long war against Pakistan Taliban*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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