



Pakistan: Stoking the Fire in Karachi

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Executive Summary

Decades of neglect and mismanagement have turned Karachi, Pakistan's largest and wealthiest city, into a pressure cooker. Ethno-political and sectarian interests and competition, intensified by internal migration, jihadist influx and unchecked movement of weapons, drugs and black money, have created an explosive mix. A heavy-handed, politicised crackdown by paramilitary Rangers is aggravating the problems. To address complex conflict drivers, the state must restore the Sindh police's authority and operational autonomy while also holding it accountable. Over the longer term, it must redress political and economic exclusion, including unequal access to justice, jobs and basic goods and services, which criminal and jihadist groups tap for recruits and support. It must become again a provider to citizens, not a largely absentee regulator of a marketplace skewed toward the elite and those who can mobilise force. Sindh's ruling party and Karachi's largest must also agree on basic political behaviour, including respect for each other's mandate, and reverse politicisation of provincial and municipal institutions that has eroded impartial governance.

The megacity's demographics are at the root of its many conflicts. Every major ethnic group has a sizeable presence; economically-driven waves of rural Sindhis, Pashtuns, southern Punjabis, those displaced by conflict and natural disasters and refugees and illegal immigrants from all over South Asia continue to add to the population. While long term these waves could reconfigure its politics, today's primary divide dates to British India's 1947 partition and the influx into Karachi of millions of Mohajirs (Urdu-speaking migrants from India and their descendants) that reduced Sindhis to a minority. In Pakistan's early years, a predominantly Mohajir Muslim League leadership stacked government institutions with its constituents, creating Sindhi resentment. In turn, the policies of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) government, including quotas for under-represented Sindhis in government jobs and other institutions, were resented by Mohajirs in the 1970s and resulted in violent clashes during the 1980s and 1990s that destabilised provincial and national politics.

With Sindhis now fewer than 10 per cent of Karachi's population, less than Mohajirs, Pashtuns and Southern Punjabi Seraiki speakers, the contest between the PPP, Sindh's largest party, and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), Karachi's largest, is not primarily electoral but over the nature of the city's governance. The Sindhi-dominated PPP has sought to centralise authority in the provincial government as a way to control Karachi's considerable resources; dominant in that city but with limited electoral prospects beyond the province's urban centres, the MQM has advocated decentralised authority in municipal institutions for the same reason. With both parties politicising the state institutions they control and providing services on partisan grounds, Karachi's citizens lack reliable access to health care, water and affordable transport and accommodation. This politicisation has also aggravated ethno-political conflict.

The growing informal economy and privatisation of basic services have opened opportunities for exploitive middlemen and mafias. Criminal gangs, to varying degrees in collusion with political parties and state authorities, have flourished, including

MQM-linked extortion groups and a Baloch-dominated outfit that had PPP patronage. Jihadist groups have benefited from a combination of lax law enforcement and state support. With sectarian violence again threatening Karachi's peace, some of the country's most dangerous religious and sectarian groups are actively contesting turf and resources, compounding law and order challenges. The predominately Pashtun Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP, Taliban Movement of Pakistan), which established a base in the city after military operations against it in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), is targeting the anti-militant Pashtun nationalist Awami National Party (ANP) and using force to assert its writ.

The state's September 2013 response to escalating violence – empowering the paramilitary Rangers, who are nominally under the federal interior ministry but in practice answer to the military leadership, to operate against jihadist and criminal networks – is unlikely to restore peace. Characterised by heavy-handedness and human rights violations, including extra-judicial killings, torture and enforced disappearances, it instead breeds ethnic tensions and could boost recruitment to criminal, including jihadist, networks. The MQM sees it as a partisan attempt to suppress the party and pit its Mohajir constituents against each other and competing ethnicities. The PPP, the military's historic foe, is also in the Rangers' sights, and its provincial government faces rising pressure to expand the paramilitary unit's policing powers to the rest of Sindh, the party's political lifeline. Meanwhile, anti-India outfits like the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba/Jamaat-ud-Dawa (LeT/JD) and Jaish-e-Mohammed continue to operate madrasas and charity fronts with scant reaction from the Rangers or police.

Tensions are escalating fast, and failure to defuse the impending ethno-political crisis and rein in criminal and jihadist networks threatens to sink Pakistan's most important economic centre further into conflict. The PPP and MQM leaderships should recognise that their governance failures have opened opportunities for the military's counterproductive intervention in Karachi's political affairs on the pretext of restoring stability. Reversing the military's impositions on civilian authority gives them a mutual interest in depoliticising and strengthening the police. Sindh's superior judiciary must also assume its primary responsibility of dispensing justice and protecting citizens' rights.

Recommendations

To achieve the political reconciliation needed so that technical fixes are achievable and gains are sustainable

To Karachi's political parties:

1. The PPP, MQM and Awami National Party (ANP) should restart a comprehensive dialogue to address Karachi's political and security challenges, recognising shared interests in reviving civilian political space and credibility and creating the conditions in which institutional reforms can be debated, agreed on and implemented.
2. Reestablish as basic rules of the game respect for each other's mandate; separation of provincial and municipal functions by credible and accountable devolution of power; and commitment to deliver provincial and local governance equitably rather than on the basis of patronage and exclusion.
3. Renounce the practice of collaborating with the military to counter political rivals and refrain from appealing for military intervention in the city's internal affairs.
4. Renounce any current or future alliance with criminal gangs and armed activist wings.

To demonstrate the political will to restore civilian authority, redress the adverse consequences of the Rangers' operation, enforce the rule of law in Karachi and prevent renewed criminal and jihadist violence

To the federal and provincial Sindh governments:

5. Replace selective counter-terrorism with an approach that targets jihadist groups using violence within or from Pakistani territory; regulate the madrasa sector; and act comprehensively against those with jihadist links.
6. End the Rangers' operation and commit to a law enforcement policy rooted in a reformed criminal justice system, including an operationally autonomous but accountable police force.
7. Resist military pressure to renew the Protection of Pakistan Act or grant wide powers to military and law enforcement agencies that lend themselves to abuse, including 90-day remand without charge; and repeal the 90-day remand provision in the 1997 Anti-Terrorism Act.
8. Resist military pressure to renew military courts, the authority of which under the 21st constitutional amendment expired in January 2017.
9. Replace, for the Sindh government, the 1861 Police Act with a new police order, using the 2002 Police Order as a template, to guarantee operational autonomy and robust internal and external accountability; and abandon plans to give police recruits military training, instead committing to fundamental reorientation of policing toward intelligence gathering, investigation and building court cases.
10. Investigate all allegations of custodial killings, torture, illegal detention and other human rights abuses by any law enforcement/security agency and hold individuals to account.

To the Sindh High Court:

11. Uphold the constitutional right to fair trial by:
 - a) prioritising petitions and cases involving alleged human rights abuses and denial of due process by law enforcement agencies, including the Rangers; and establishing and mandating implementation of practicable investigation procedures and fixing individual responsibility in those cases; and
 - b) ordering release of anyone detained in violation of basic due process; and using such cases as an opportunity to review and strike down any legal provisions that contradict the right to due process and fair trial.

To the political parties:

12. Establish funds to support female dependents of party members who have been detained, killed, gone missing or are otherwise unable to return to normal life, including material and psychological support; and facilitate unimpeded access to human rights and other civil society organisations for female dependents and family members affected by an operation.

To address the drivers of conflict, including extreme inequality that criminal and jihadist organisations exploit to expand their influence

To the provincial Sindh government:

13. Revive and properly resource public housing and public transport projects and ensure they benefit lower income groups rather than speculators, mafias and other elites, thus reconceiving the concept of land and transportation as a foundation of a peaceful body politic, not simply a market-provided good.
14. Ensure equal access to basic services, including water and power, for all residents, and prevent the Defence Housing Authority (DHA) and elite private real estate schemes from unfairly acquiring a disproportionate share.
15. End illegal regularisation and sale of public land and sale of valuable public agricultural and legally protected property to DHA and any similar public or private schemes.
16. Revive moribund state-run polytechnics, create additional ones and give the private sector incentives to establish vocational training institutions.

Karachi/Islamabad/Brussels, 15 February 2017

Pakistan: Stoking the Fire in Karachi

I. Introduction

An indiscriminate, opaque crackdown, ostensibly aimed at countering criminality, militancy and jihadist violence in Karachi, is increasing ethno-political tensions, while failing to curb growth of extremism in the country's economic hub. The heavy-handed, highly politicised operation by Rangers, who fall under the interior ministry but operate under military command, has targeted but not dented the support base of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), the megacity's largest party. Straying far from stated goals, the force has also targeted Sindh's ruling Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), detaining several leaders and straining a fragile democratic transition.¹

In September 2013, with ethno-political tensions, sectarian violence and criminality escalating in Karachi, the federal and Sindh governments empowered the Rangers to operate. They were given special police powers, including shoot-to-kill and to detain suspects for 90 days without charge. To be sure, the state's record in serving and protecting citizens has historically been poor, but by sidelining Sindh's regular law enforcement system, the Rangers' operation, like other military-led counter-terrorism efforts, has further weakened civilian capacity and deferred the reform process.²

This report examines the factors responsible for violence and insecurity in Karachi, assesses the impact and effectiveness of the state's response and explores options to contain and prevent renewed conflict and violence. It is based on interviews with political leaders, law enforcement and other officials, the legal community, urban planners, the media and civil society activists.

¹ For Crisis Group analysis of civil-military relations, and more specifically the military's relationship with the MQM and PPP, see Asia Reports N°s 249, *Parliament's Role in Pakistan's Democratic Transition*, 18 September 2013; 216, *Islamic Parties in Pakistan*, 12 December 2011; 102, *Authoritarianism and Political Party Reform in Pakistan*, 28 September 2005; 77, *Devolution in Pakistan: Reform or Regression?*, 22 March 2004; 49, *Pakistan: The Mullahs and the Military*, 20 March 2003; and 40, *Pakistan: Transition to Democracy*, 3 October 2002; also, Asia Briefings N°s 74, *After Bhutto's Murder: A Way Forward for Pakistan*, 2 January 2008; and 43, *Pakistan's Local Polls: Shoring Up Military Rule*, 22 November 2005.

² For Crisis Group analysis of military-led counter-terrorism, see Asia Reports N°s 279, *Pakistan's Jihadist Heartland: Southern Punjab*, 30 May 2016; 271, *Revisiting Counter-Terrorism Strategies in Pakistan: Opportunities and Pitfalls*, 22 July 2015; 255, *Policing Urban Violence in Pakistan*, 23 January 2014; 242, *Pakistan: Countering Militancy in PATA*, 15 January 2013; 196, *Reforming Pakistan's Criminal Justice System*, 6 December 2010; 178, *Pakistan: Countering Militancy in FATA*, 21 October 2009; 164, *Pakistan: The Militant Jihadi Challenge*, 13 March 2009; and 157, *Reforming Pakistan's Police*, 14 July 2008.

II. Drivers of Conflict in Karachi

A. Demographics

Karachi, Pakistan's largest city, is divided into six districts, South, East, Central, West, Korangi and Malir (each comprising three to four towns), which fall under the city administration; and six cantonments administered by military-dominated governing bodies and boards. With large Mohajir communities, Karachi Central and East have critical MQM strongholds, including North Nazimabad and Gulberg Town, with its central headquarters, known as Nine Zero.³ Karachi South, including Lyari town with its large Baloch community, has traditionally been a PPP stronghold. Largely industrial Karachi West has sizeable pockets of Pashtuns, traditionally constituents of the Pashtun nationalist Awami National Party (ANP). The cantonments, mostly in the south and centre, have ethnically mixed populations and include some of the most affluent neighbourhoods, such as Clifton. The Defence Housing Authority (DHA) is autonomous, managed by a military-dominated governing body.⁴

The city's demographics are at the roots of many of its conflicts. Large population influxes transformed a small Arabian Sea port of some 435,000 in the early 1940s into a megacity of 20-25 million residents, 10-12 per cent of Pakistan's total and 24 per cent of its urban population.⁵ With the migration of millions across new borders after the 1947 partition of British colonial India, Karachi's religious and ethnic configuration changed drastically. With Sindhi Hindus migrating to India, Muslims became 96 per cent of the city's population by 1951 compared to 42 per cent a decade earlier. The massive influx of Mohajirs from India caused the proportion of Sindhis to decline from 60 to 14 per cent. By the 1981 census, Sindhi speakers were about only 6 per cent of the city, while the numbers of Pashtun and Seraiki-speaking Southern Punjabi internal migrants continued to grow.⁶

The decision of Pakistan's founding and first ruling party, the predominately Mohajir Muslim League, to designate Karachi the federal capital (until 1967, when it moved to Islamabad), separating it from Sindh province, and to stack government institutions with fellow Mohajirs sparked Sindhi resentment. Following Pakistan's dismemberment and Bangladesh's secession in 1971, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's new PPP government appealed to its predominately Sindhi constituents, introducing quotas for their under-representation in government jobs and other institutions during the decade. Deeply resented by Mohajirs, this widened the ethno-political divide, result-

³ Urdu-speaking migrants and their descendants are known as Mohajirs (literally, refugees).

⁴ Arif Hassan, Noman Ahmed et al., *Karachi: The Land Issue* (Karachi, 2015).

⁵ Laurent Gayer, "A divided city: 'ethnic' and 'religious' conflicts in Karachi, Pakistan", Centre de Recherches Internationales, Sciences Po, May 2003; Arif Hasan, "Land contestation in Karachi and the impact on housing and urban development", International Institute for Environment and Development, April 2015.

⁶ Census of Pakistan, Karachi, 1951, vol. 6; 1981 Census Report of Karachi Division, Islamabad, 1984; also, Mohammad Waseem, "Ethnic conflict in Pakistan: the case of MQM", *The Pakistan Development Review*, 35:4 part II (Winter 1996).

ing in violent Mohajir-Sindhi clashes in the 1980s and 1990s that destabilised national as well as provincial politics.⁷

Today, Karachi is Pakistan's economic powerhouse, generating 90 per cent of Sindh's and around 50 per cent of national revenue, attracting new migration from every major ethnic and linguistic group across the country. Pashtuns and Punjabis are joining its labour force, along with rural to urban migration within Sindh province. Adding to Karachi's population and shaping politics are those displaced by natural disasters and conflict, including from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Afghan refugees and illegal migrants from all over South Asia.⁸

The PPP has won successive provincial elections and headed provincial governments because of its Sindhi-majority rural constituency, but its electoral standing in Karachi has shrunk considerably due to the demographic changes. Though Mohajirs remain the largest ethnic group, their relative size is also shrinking, with significant implications for the MQM's long hold on the city. The ANP won its first two provincial assembly constituencies in 2008. In 2013, Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) became the second largest party, though the MQM has since consolidated its Mohajir voters in reaction to the Rangers' actions against it (see below).⁹

Rather than becoming a melting pot, Karachi is sharply segregated along ethnic, political, and socio-economic lines. Though the city's diversity could have been constructively channelled, the state has pitted ethnic-based groups against each other. A labour leader argued: "Violence in Karachi is not a by-product of policy; it is policy".¹⁰ In particular, the military's divide-and-rule strategy has often fuelled tensions, using the MQM and its Mohajir constituency to undermine the Sindhi-dominated PPP and vice versa. These tensions have been further exacerbated by exploitation of ethno-political identities by local stakeholders to control the city and its economy and have sparked deadly conflict. While ethno-political violence has subsided during the current Rangers' operation, it could resume again given that those fault lines are as sharp today as in the past.

⁷ Samina Ahmed, "Centralisation, Authoritarianism, and the Mismanagement of Ethnic Relations in Pakistan", in Michael E. Brown and Sumit Ganguly (eds.), *Government Policies and Ethnic Relations in Asia and the Pacific* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997); Charles H. Kennedy, "The politics of ethnicity in Sindh", *Asian Survey*, vol. 31, no. 10, October, 1991; also, Crisis Group Report, *Authoritarianism and Political Party Reform*, op. cit.

⁸ During the 2010 floods, an estimated 500,000 moved to Karachi from elsewhere in Sindh. There are also an estimated 1.7 million undocumented migrants mainly from Bangladesh, Myanmar and Afghanistan. Hasan, "Land contestation", op. cit. Also, Crisis Group Asia Report N°237, *Pakistan: No End to Humanitarian Crises*, 9 October 2012.

⁹ In Pakistan's last (1998) census, the percentage of Mohajirs in Karachi had already begun to shrink, to 41 per cent from 54 per cent in the 1988 census. "ECP results show PTI second largest in Karachi", *The Express Tribune*, 14 May 2013.

¹⁰ Crisis Group interview, Karamat Ali, executive director, Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER), Karachi, August 2016.

B. Who Governs Karachi?

The PPP-MQM contest is not primarily electoral – the MQM remains by far the city’s largest party – but rather over the nature of governance. The PPP, dominant in the province, has sought to centralise authority in the Sindh government as a way of controlling Karachi’s considerable resources; the MQM, dominant in the urban centres but with limited prospects elsewhere, has advocated decentralised authority in the city’s municipal institutions for the same reason.

General Zia-ul-Haq’s military regime (1977-1988) supported the creation of the MQM in the 1980s, using it to counter its main opposition, the PPP, particularly in Sindh. In the Karachi context, the close relationship between the military and MQM resulted in the party benefitting from Zia’s devolution scheme in the 1980s and a subsequent similar effort by General Pervez Musharraf’s regime (1999-2008). Both aimed at creating a local clientele to marginalise political opposition toward the military, in part by weakening and bypassing provincial institutions, including legislatures.¹¹ With an elected local government enjoying more authority over municipal bodies such as the Karachi Port Trust (KPT), Karachi Municipal Corporation (KMC) and Karachi Development Authority (KDA), the MQM gained significant control over city resources and, correspondingly, patronage opportunities. Its government discriminated against non-Mohajirs in appointments to these municipal bodies and in service provision and development allocations in non-Mohajir areas.¹²

By the same token, after Musharraf’s local government system was dissolved by PPP’s provincial government and replaced by the Sindh Local Government Act 2013, funds often were not transferred to municipal bodies such as the KMC.¹³ In the current dispensation, local government institutions, traditionally controlled by the MQM, have been weakened, and the PPP-dominated Sindh provincial assembly has passed laws transferring many revenue-generating tasks to provincially controlled boards, thus empowering provincial representatives and bureaucrats in a zero sum contest against municipal counterparts.¹⁴

¹¹ Crisis Group Asia Reports, *Devolution in Pakistan*, op. cit.; N°137, *Elections, Democracy and Stability in Pakistan*, 31 July 2007; also, Dr Nausheen H. Anwar (lead author), “Urbanisation, gender & violence: a scoping study”, co-funded Safe and Inclusive Cities project, Canadian International Development Research Centre, UK Department of International Development (DFID), February 2014.

¹² Crisis Group Report, *Policing Urban Violence*, op. cit.

¹³ Noman Ahmed, “Micromanaging Karachi”, *Dawn*, 8 November 2016.

¹⁴ Large infrastructure projects have been transferred to provincial departments. For example, the Sindh High Density Board Act (2010, amended 2013), and the Sindh Special Development Board Act (2014), are non-elected boards under the chief minister that empower provincial representatives and bureaucrats to approve/undertake major city projects, including high rises, with limited consultation with urban and town planners or studies and planning – flaws concerned professionals acknowledge. In 2016, the Sindh planning and development department assigned the education department three projects for developing natural creeks in Gadap Town and New Karachi, envisioned for the KMC. Informed observers believe this was done to ensure provincial government control over the funds, in anticipation of MQM control of the KMC after the 2016 local elections. Crisis Group interviews, Karachi, July-August 2016. Mahim Maher, “Debate: where does Karachi need more high-rise buildings?”, *The Express Tribune*, 22 September 2014; “Review of high-rise building laws sought”, *Dawn*, 6 July 2014.

Though elected local bodies are in place after the 2016 polls, they have limited control over municipal affairs. “Slowly, the concept of Karachi as a city government has ceased to be”, said Arif Hassan, a prominent architect involved in urban planning. The marginalisation of municipal bodies, political interference and sidelining of government agencies are eroding services. With the gradual privatisation over several years of transport, water, public housing and power, the state’s role has receded from a service provider and facilitator to that of a largely absent regulator. “Given the sums involved, can the state be an effective regulator”, Hassan asked, “it’s doubtful. They’ll continue to give in to contractors’ demands”.¹⁵

The privatisation of the Karachi Electric Supply Company (KESC) in 2005, the city’s sole official power supplier, has led to price increases that make electricity unaffordable for lower income groups and aggravate power theft.¹⁶ Even health care has fallen victim to the political jockeying. During their intense conflict after the 2008 elections, the ANP and MQM used their respective control over hospitals to distribute it as a favour to constituents.¹⁷ The absence of a state-provided ambulance service is largely filled by credible social welfare entities like the Edhi Foundation but also gives opportunities for the charity fronts of jihadist organisations such as the Falah-i-Insaniyat Foundation (FIF) of the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT, renamed Jamaat-ud-Dawa, JD).¹⁸ Public transport and social housing are virtually non-existent; residents even depend on private tankers for water.

With the Sindh government unable to manage rapid population growth, lower-income groups depend on middlemen, not the state, for basic services, but control over these lucrative sectors is secured by force, money and official collusion. With corruption allowing flagrant disregard for rules and regulations, a large informal sector has annexed significant parts of the economy, leading to the growth of mafias and rackets. With large textile and manufacturing sectors and financial services, Karachi accounts for some half of national revenue, but it also generates a yearly black economy estimated at \$2.9 billion, including via land, water and transport mafias, illegal gambling, human trafficking and kidnapping. Its formal economy generates 20-25 per cent of national GDP, almost \$290 billion in 2014-2015, according to Sindh government figures. The city also accounted for much of Sindh’s some \$85.5 billion 2014- 2015 GDP and is the source of 54 per cent of central government tax revenue.¹⁹ As a major port, Karachi is also “a strategic hub for the Afghan heroin trade ... and an entry point for arms and munitions destined for Afghanistan”.²⁰

¹⁵ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, July 2016.

¹⁶ KESC was privatised in 2005, with the new management of K-Electric taking over in 2008. See, www.ke.com.pk.

¹⁷ Laurent Gayer, *Karachi: Ordered Disorder and the Struggle for the City* (Oxford, 2014).

¹⁸ “JuD charity launches ambulance service in Karachi”, *Dawn*, 27 January 2015.

¹⁹ Karachi contributes close to 96 per cent of Sindh’s tax revenues. “Budget strategy paper: 2016-17 to 2017-18”, Finance Department, Government of Sindh, February 2016; Gayer, *Karachi: Ordered Disorder*, op. cit., p. 5; S. Akbar Zaidi, “Karachi as a province”, *Dawn*, 11 January 2014.

²⁰ Noman Ahmed, Donald Brown, et al., “Public and private control and contestation of public space amid violent conflict in Karachi”, working paper, International Institute for Environment and Development, November 2015. Upon release of the 2016 annual UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) “World Drug Report 2016”, UNODC’s Pakistan country representative described Karachi

C. *The Challenges of Population Density and Urban Growth*

Continued population growth and increasing density have long undermined the capacity of an under-resourced city administration to provide security, shelter and other basic services, including health, education and transport. Some 70 per cent of Karachi residents are poor; given rapid, unplanned growth, half the population lives in squatter settlements (*katchi abadis*), first developed in the 1950s when officials and middlemen seized and sold provincial Board of Revenue land to low-income families at affordable prices.²¹ With much of the land allocated for residential use either undeveloped, bought by speculators and left vacant or seized by armed gangs, development plans have largely failed to distribute it to the urban poor.²²

Despite ill-defined and expanding borders, the city centre is still at the heart of industry and livelihood opportunities. Efforts to produce self-sustained satellite towns, for example North Karachi and Landhi-Korangi in the late 1950s, have failed to achieve desired results, since envisioned industrial bases did not materialise.

Housing and transport problems are especially acute for women, whose numbers are increasing in the informal labour force, particularly as house help, and in the manufacturing sector.²³ Working women reportedly spend four hours daily commuting in unsafe conditions. “Women’s Only” sections in buses are seldom enforced, and police typically ignore complaints about sexual harassment.²⁴ Leaving home early, travelling long distances and returning at night to unsafe neighbourhoods, they face threats and harassment. Even non-Muslims have started wearing the *burqa* (veil) as protection against harassment. Many home-based women workers complain about social isolation in the absence of safe, convenient transport.²⁵

With 24,000 people per sq. km., Karachi is one of the world’s most densely populated cities.²⁶ Given the choice, low-income groups do not opt for housing in the less dense outskirts, which involve additional costs, including transport, and add hours to work commutes. They prefer irregular settlements closer to the densely-populated city centre. Many irregular settlements, often high-rises run on informal rental arrangements, have become sanctuaries for criminality, gang recruitment and jihadist groups. The crowded spaces also create a “dependency towards various kinds of middlemen, the police and local politicians who navigate the murky waters between

as “the largest transit hub” of Afghanistan-sourced opiates. “UNODC report: Pakistan risks becoming drugs-consuming country”, *The Express Tribune*, 25 August 2016.

²¹ Pakistan’s methodology for measuring poverty, beyond food energy intake, includes expenditures on education, health and mobile connectivity. Mubarak Zeb Khan, “New poverty line makes a third of Pakistanis poor”, *Dawn*, 8 April 2016.

²² Hasan, “Land contestation”, op. cit. Many *katchi abadis* developed on the roads linking new neighbourhoods to the centre. In 1978, the Katchi Abadi Act, recognising that over half the city’s population lived in such informal settlements, regularised 89 per cent of all *katchi abadis* established before its enactment and extended the cut-off date to late 1997. Karachi’s expansion has taken place essentially on provincial Board of Revenue agricultural and pasture lands.

²³ “Denial and discrimination: labour rights in Pakistan”, PILER, 2007; “Karachi: home-based workers being exploited by middlemen”, *Dawn*, 24 September 2009.

²⁴ “Responding to the transport crisis”, working paper, The Urban Resource Centre, July 2015.

²⁵ Crisis Group interviews, women’s rights and other civil society activists, Karachi, May-October 2016.

²⁶ Hasan, “Land contestation”, op. cit.

the official and the unofficial economy”.²⁷ In the absence of subsidised housing and with prices constantly rising, even middle class families are increasingly unable to afford property. In contrast, the elite benefit from large housing schemes and gated communities that take land from small townships and villages and appropriate water and other scant resources intended for broader public distribution.²⁸

Public land has commonly been illegally regularised and sold. In the process, it has become the city’s most prized and contested commodity, with federal, provincial and local land-owning agencies, military cantonments, corporate entities and formal and informal developers competing to extract as much value as possible.²⁹ Given the fiscal stakes, disputes are settled by bribery and political, bureaucratic and police patronage, and even deadly force. To protect themselves and their investments, owners are often reluctant to rent to those of another ethnic, sectarian or religious group, thus resulting in exclusive urban enclaves.³⁰

The military is one of the biggest real-estate stakeholders; officers obtain valuable agricultural land for nominal sums and become “absentee landlords” as they engage in speculation, a litigation lawyer said.³¹ An eighth phase (residential project) of the military-run Defence Housing Authority (DHA) is currently being built with barbed wire and surveillance cameras. DHA intends to incorporate valuable, legally-protected mangrove forests along the Gizri Creek, with 13,000 acres allotted for two more phases.³² A senior academic and urban planner described housing developments like the DHA and private Bahria Town scheme as “the expropriation of resources by the elite ... super-imposed on rather than integrated” into Karachi’s body politic.³³

Public transport, which used to include affordable buses, trams and a circular railway that allowed easy travel, including to industrial areas, is now largely defunct; efforts to revive it, including 2012 plans for a mass transit system, have yet to bear fruit. Private transport has filled the vacuum. An umbrella entity, Transport Ittehad (Unity), protects transporters’ commercial interests, negotiating fares with the state. Given this virtual monopoly, fares have more than doubled since 2009. Control over transport became all the more lucrative after the 2001 U.S.-led intervention in Afghanistan, since the NATO supply route goes through Karachi’s port.³⁴

²⁷ Gayer, *Karachi: Ordered Disorder*, op. cit.

²⁸ Haseeb Asif, “What lies behind the gates of Pakistan’s elite communities?”, *Herald*, July 2016; “Bahria Town Karachi: greed unlimited”, *Dawn*, 18 April 2016.

²⁹ Hassan, Ahmed et al., *Karachi*, op. cit.

³⁰ Hasan, “Land contestation”, op. cit.

³¹ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, August 2016.

³² Crisis Group observations and interviews, retired and serving officials, litigators and urban planners, Karachi, July–August 2016. “Karachi: a goldmine for land ‘developers’”, *Dawn*, 18 April 2016. DHA is an autonomous real estate cooperative society, with real estate development rights and established during the Zia military regime in the 1980s, replacing the Pakistan Defense Officers’ Cooperative Housing Society. It is managed by a military-dominated governing body and executive board. The Clifton cantonment oversees its functioning. See Hassan, Ahmed et al., *Karachi*, op. cit.

³³ Crisis Group interview, Noman Ahmed, chairman, department of architecture and planning, NED University of Engineering and Technology, Karachi, August 2016.

³⁴ “This organisation [Transport Ittehad] protects the commercial interests of the transporters and through it they present their claims and guard their gains, and negotiate the rate of informal payments they have to make to a corrupt police force”. “Responding to the transport crisis in Karachi”, op. cit. Transport Ittehad was able to gain significant influence in related sectors such as informal

III. Ethno-political Conflict, Criminality and Jihadist Expansion

Though Mohajir-Sindhi violence had subsided considerably since the 1990s, other already high ethno-political violence, including between Mohajirs and particularly Pashtuns, but also the Baloch, rose sharply after the 2008 elections.³⁵ With it threatening to spiral out of control in June-July 2011, the PPP, MQM and ANP negotiated agreements abjuring violent politics, condemning targeted killings and adopting measures such as neighbourhood committees.³⁶ However, these failed to keep the peace. The ANP accused the MQM of continuing violence; MQM leaders said they could not restrain party activists from avenging ANP or ANP-backed attacks.³⁷

New entrants complicated Karachi's ethno-political conflict. After military operations beginning in 2009 in KPK's Swat region and FATA's South Waziristan agency, the predominately Pashtun Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP, Taliban Movement of Pakistan) established a Karachi base. Many TTP militants relocated and violently challenged the anti-militant ANP in Pashtun neighbourhoods such as SITE (Sindh Industrial Trading Estate), Qasba Colony and elsewhere. The People's Aman (Peace) Committee (PAC), a Baloch-dominated criminal gang, emerged in Lyari in 2008, supported by the PPP, particularly Sindh's then home minister, Zulfiqar Mirza, to counter MQM-backed Mohajir gangs that had earlier, with Musharraf regime support, undermined PPP influence in its traditional constituency. The new players disrupted Karachi's "ordered disorder".³⁸ "Before then, the frontiers [were] defined", said a Karachi journalist. "A party used to have its flag in an area, ... and that was large[ly] respected. But the TTP and PAC had no geographic limits".³⁹ Extortion, once mainly MQM-identified, multiplied and became increasingly violent.

The conflict's impact was also devastating for women, indirect victims who lost husbands, sons and other close male relatives who were often the main wage earners, thus incurring new financial and associated social pressures. In Lyari, women were also caught in the crossfire between gangs and subjected to violence to settle vendettas against male rivals. Gang takeovers of neighbourhoods and the mass flight of male relatives undermined female security, including increased risk of rape and other forms of violence, well documented in Lyari's Christian neighbourhood known as "Slaughter House".⁴⁰ Women seldom receive justice in such cases; police and courts

land development along the northern bypass, which links Karachi West to Malir cantonment in the east, where it meets the Super Highway to Hyderabad district. It bypasses the congested Karachi South and Central districts. Crisis Group interviews, senior Sindh officials, Karachi, August 2016. Subuk Hasnain, "Mass movement: Karachi's public transport woes", *Herald*, June 2016; also, KPTS website, www.sindh.gov.pk/dpt/Transport/kpts.html.

³⁵ By 2010, targeted and tit-for-tat killings of MQM and ANP workers soon outpaced those between other parties. Crisis Group Report, *Policing Urban Violence*, op. cit.

³⁶ "MQM, ANP agree to form peace bodies", *Dawn*, 14 June 2011.

³⁷ Crisis Group interviews, ANP, MQM leaders, Karachi, Islamabad, July-August 2016.

³⁸ Gayer, *Karachi*, op. cit. Crisis Group Report, *Policing Urban Violence*, op. cit.

³⁹ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, July 2016.

⁴⁰ Crisis Group interviews, human rights activists, Karachi, July-August 2016; telephone interviews, women's rights activists, October 2016; also, "Migrating out: Lyari forces its Christian residents to move out", *The Express Tribune*, 10 November 2013.

commonly fail to take up cases of sexual violence, instead blaming the victim.⁴¹ In some cases, women whose male relatives had been killed, arrested, or forced underground assumed responsibility to defend their households, even taking up arms.⁴²

By 2013, the TTP threat had grown considerably, with an estimated 8,000 members operating in the city. Forcibly acquiring land for supporters and sympathisers, they drove residents out of strongholds in Karachi West and Malir. TTP factions hired local criminals to help finance their activities, who in turn leveraged TTP links against rivals. Karachi thus changed from a city in which jihadist combatants mainly rested and recuperated from fighting elsewhere to one that also generated vital funding. TTP-run extortion rackets, for instance, targeted marble factory owners in strongholds such as Manghopir, while kidnapping for ransom and robberies generated additional revenue. The police were regularly attacked, bans were enforced on “immoral activities” and “peace committees” (mobile courts and *jirgas* – councils of elders) were established to win over constituents and consolidate local authority.⁴³

The TTP is the latest addition to the explosive jihadist mix. Pakistan’s most dangerous groups actively contest Karachi’s turf and resources. The anti-Shia Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and anti-India LeT/JD and Jaish-e-Mohammed have umbilical links with the city’s large, well-resourced madrasas. With its large Shia population, sectarian conflict nationwide typically echoes in Karachi. In 2012, as sectarian tensions spiked across Pakistan, there were over 100 sectarian killings in the city, up 350 per cent in a year. 2013 was equally bloody.⁴⁴

With constituency politics increasingly subsumed by gang and jihadist violence, the mainstream political players saw their authority eroded in key strongholds. By the 2013 elections, when the PAC even selected PPP electoral candidates in Lyari, an analyst noted, “the balance of power between the PPP leadership and [the PAC] had been reversed”.⁴⁵ The ANP was weakened even more, as TTP militants attacked and killed party workers and supporters, prompting many to flee; many homes in the

⁴¹ War Against Rape, a respected Karachi-based civil society organisation, has extensively documented such cases. www.war.org.pk. “Women’s Access to Justice in Pakistan”, working paper submitted to the Committee on Women’s Access to Justice at its 54th session, on behalf of the War Against Rape and Aurat Foundation, 2013. Also, Crisis Group Asia Report N°265, *Women, Violence and Conflict in Pakistan*, 8 April 2015.

⁴² Crisis Group telephone interview, Zohra Yusuf, chairperson, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), October 2016. “HRCP slams horrors in Karachi turf wars”, press release, 9 January 2014; “They’ are after the women of Lyari”, *The Friday Times*, 2-8 August 2012.

⁴³ Gayer, *Karachi*, op. cit.

⁴⁴ Estimates of Karachi’s Shia population range between 20 to 30 per cent. Attacks on Shias included one on 2 March 2013 in predominately Shia Abbas Town that killed 40; clashes 4-6 November, just before the start of Muharram, that claimed the lives of seventeen Shias and Sunnis; and at least thirteen killed in sectarian attacks on 3 December, including the deputy secretary general of the Shia party Majlis-e-Wahdutul Muslimeen (MWM). Sectarian outfits also targeted senior MQM members, killing two pro-Shia provincial lawmakers in 2010 and 2013. Crisis Group Reports, *Policing Urban Violence* and *Pakistan: Karachi’s Madrasas and Violent Extremism*, both op. cit. Also, Andreas Rieck, *The Shias of Pakistan: An Assertive and Beleaguered Minority* (New York, 2015), p. 78; and Nadeem F. Paracha, “Karachi: The past is another country”, *Dawn*, 25 August 2011.

⁴⁵ Gayer, *Karachi*, op. cit.

ANP's Qasba Colony stronghold are still abandoned. By the end of the 2013 campaign, the TTP had forced the ANP to close 70 per cent of its offices in the city.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Ibid. Crisis Group observations and interviews, civil society representatives and residents, Qasba Colony, Karachi, July-August 2016.

IV. The State's Response: The Rangers' Operations

A. *The Premise*

While sharply deteriorating security necessitated a robust law enforcement response, a brutal and unaccountable paramilitary operation was not the solution or the only alternative. Under an operationally autonomous but accountable leadership, the Sindh police would have been the appropriate institution to lead the effort to restore basic law and order. The provincial government's failure to depoliticise and empower the police and political parties' failure to restrain violent party activists shrank the space to formulate a credible response.

By late 2013, the Sindh government's inability to rein in crime – killings that August averaged around nine per day – accentuated by the continued politicisation of senior police appointments that undermined the force's morale and effectiveness, gave the military and Rangers an opportunity to intervene.⁴⁷ On 4 September, the federal cabinet approved a Rangers-led operation, ostensibly under Sindh government supervision, against violence and criminality in Karachi. The Rangers were to focus on four areas: terrorism, targeted killings, kidnapping for ransom and extortion.⁴⁸ Under the Protection of Pakistan Ordinance, 2013, made law under the Protection of Pakistan Act, 2014, and amendments to the 1997 Anti-Terrorism Act, the Rangers were authorised, with few constraints, to detain suspects for 90 days without charge and to shoot-to-kill suspected terrorists.⁴⁹

Four committees, including a citizen's body, were supposed to oversee facets of the operation. While these were either never formed or remain inactive, the Rangers' mandate has been extended several times, for periods ranging from three months to a year, most recently in January 2017. These repeated extensions undercut a basic premise for use of a paramilitary force to address law-and order challenges, namely a short timeframe with clearly defined objectives. This operation's duration not only appears open-ended, but there is also rising pressure on the provincial government to extend its jurisdiction beyond Karachi to the rest of Sindh province.⁵⁰

The results after more than three years are at best mixed. Street crime persists at its previously high rate, as acknowledged by Sindh's chief minister, who directed the police to prioritise eradicating it in January 2017.⁵¹ In July 2016, Sindh's counter-terrorism department (CTD) released data showing a rise in kidnapping cases and

⁴⁷ In the run-up to the May 2013 elections, Karachi saw the transfers and appointments of four police superintendents in two days. Inspector generals (IGs) for Karachi were also replaced in 2013 and 2014 on tenuous grounds. See Crisis Group Reports, *Policing Urban Violence* and *Revisiting Counter-Terrorism Strategies*, both op. cit.

⁴⁸ "Nisar says Karachi 'operation' to start in two days", *Dawn*, 5 September 2013.

⁴⁹ Protection of Pakistan Act (2014); and Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Act (2014), Act no. VI (2014). The Protection of Pakistan Act was signed into law in July 2014 to "provide for protection against waging of war or insurrection against Pakistan and the prevention of acts threatening the security of Pakistan". It granted wide powers and discretion to security agencies, including military and paramilitary forces. Crisis Group Report, *Revisiting Counter-Terrorism Strategies*, op. cit.

⁵⁰ "Centre, Sindh at loggerheads over Rangers' special powers", *Dawn*, 3 August 2016; "Rangers power extended for 90 days in Karachi", *The News*, 20 January 2017.

⁵¹ "CM Shah directs AD Khawaja to eradicate Karachi street crime on priority basis", *Dawn*, 2 January 2017.

gang rapes in Karachi and elsewhere in Sindh in the first half of the year compared to the same period in 2015. By several credible accounts, some crimes, including targeted killings and extortion, have dropped markedly. Yet, Karachi is still the most violent city in the country, with 476 terrorism and militancy-related deaths in 2016.⁵²

A senior police officer said the Rangers operation had “busted some of [the] myths about Karachi, such as ‘no-go areas’”, but he criticised the Rangers for the operation’s increasing politicisation and human rights abuses, concerns also voiced by political parties, the human rights community and civil society more generally.⁵³ “With coercive powers, arrests go up, encounter killings [staged by law-enforcement agencies] go up, and crime gets dispersed”, said another senior Sindh police officer. Police believe jihadist operatives and criminal gang members have gone underground to form sleeper cells, while better-known masterminds and facilitators fled to other provinces before the operation began.⁵⁴ Saleem Aleemuddin, joint director of the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP), who was injured and four of whose colleagues were killed by a January 2014 bomb, said, “we were able to move back to Qasba Colony in February ... because we heard the situation has improved. But we’re still tense, because we have no idea if the outfits after us have been dismantled or only temporarily displaced, or their supporters are still around”.⁵⁵

The overall decline of organised violence is not surprising; the army and Rangers operation in Karachi against MQM in the 1990s had the same results.⁵⁶ Its gains were not sustainable. It not only failed to address the underlying political dynamics, but it also fed those very ethnic tensions and resentments; it ultimately did not curb violence, as criminal, including extortionist, and jihadist networks reconstituted and multiplied.⁵⁷ History may now repeat itself.

The forces’ powers have expanded considerably, notably to detain suspects for 90 days, which a lawyer who has represented the Rangers in court described as “a crime

⁵² “Karachi still most violent city: report”, *The Express Tribune*, 7 January 2017; Hafiz Tunio, “Karachi law and order: Rangers to launch operation in two days”, *The Express Tribune*, 5 September 2013; “Killings drop but kidnappings, gang rape and riots on the rise”, *Dawn*, 28 July 2016.

⁵³ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, July 2016. According to one explanation of “no-go areas”: “Based on your ethnicity, sect or political leaning, there are certain areas you cannot enter, or would enter at your own risk, or areas that you would avoid for the fear of getting struck, mugged, or kidnapped for ransom”. “Karachi notebook: no more no-go areas”, *Dawn*, 19 April 2015. Also, “Human rights violations in Karachi”, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), 4 October 2016; “Karachi action mustn’t undermine due process, right to criticize institutions: HRCP”, 28 July 2015; “Pakistan: Independently investigate Aftab Ahmad’s death: Pakistan Rangers should be held accountable for abuses”, Human Rights Watch, 6 May 2016; “Rangers controversy”, editorial, *Daily Times*, 15 December 2015.

⁵⁴ Crisis Group interviews, police officials, Karachi, July–August 2016.

⁵⁵ Crisis Group interview, Qasba Colony, Karachi, 3 August 2016. The NGO-led OPP works on social development, health, housing, education and micro-credit in Orangi Town’s *kachi abadis*.

⁵⁶ Altaf Hussain, a leader and founding member of the All Pakistan Mohajir Students Organisation (APMSO) in Karachi, launched the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (Mohajir National Movement) in 1984; its name changed to Muttahida Qaumi Movement (United National Movement) in 1997. In the early 1990s, when the government moved against it in Karachi, Hussain sought exile in London and acquired UK citizenship. “Politics and exile: the story of Altaf Hussain”, *Dawn*, 3 June 2014.

⁵⁷ Crisis Group Reports, *Policing Urban Violence*; *The Militant Jihadi Challenge*, both op. cit.

against humanity”.⁵⁸ Instead of confining themselves to the four-point mandate, the Rangers are intruding into such areas as anti-corruption, using the justification that it is intrinsically tied to terrorism. A former director general of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), the law enforcement body with primary jurisdiction over corruption investigations and money laundering, asked: “What capacity do the Rangers have to investigate white collar crime?”⁵⁹ Such powers should be viewed in the context of a broader national shift toward an opaque, militarised justice system with military courts that contravene the constitutional right to fair trial. The operation should also be examined in light of the post-December 2014 counter-terrorism National Action Plan, which expanded the military’s role in formulating and implementing internal security policy at the expense not only of elected representatives and civilian institutions, but also of fundamental constitutional principles.⁶⁰

Gauging public sentiment is hard; those who support the Rangers’ mandate, such as the business community that is freed from extortion, can do so publicly without fear of reprisal, while those adversely affected by abuse of power are “too scared to mobilise”. Yet, with victims of abuses and/or their families filing court petitions directly or through the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCPC), the operation’s costs on Karachi’s polity and society are increasingly apparent.⁶¹

B. *Absence of Due Process*

As the operation’s scope has grown, so have human rights violations. Suspects are commonly not produced in court within the constitutionally-stipulated 24 hours. “Whoever the Rangers now arrest, they will typically keep for the 90 days”, said a senior lawyer and Supreme Court Bar Association ex-president.⁶² Total arrests are uncertain, since multiple agencies have arrest powers, many are released without charge, and there is no accounting of those illegally apprehended, whom security and law enforcement agencies deny holding. Estimates range from 6,000 to over 10,000.⁶³

While habeas corpus petitions often result in judges summoning Rangers or other security agency representatives, they deny knowledge, and the courts are unwilling to pursue matters further. Yet, judges have the authority to call officials to account for missing citizens, as they did in 2006-2007, when such cases in the superior courts implicated the military’s intelligence agencies in the enforced disappearances of hundreds, possibly thousands, in Balochistan, KPK (then the Northwest Frontier Province), FATA and elsewhere. Unwilling to accept denials of responsibility, judges demanded that security agencies establish missing persons’ whereabouts, whether or not they were in custody.⁶⁴ In Karachi, the general inertia of the judiciary, including

⁵⁸ Crisis Group interview, July 2016.

⁵⁹ Crisis Group interview, August 2016. “Billions of black money being used to fund terrorism in Karachi: Rangers chief”, *Dawn*, 12 June 2015.

⁶⁰ Crisis Group Report, *Revisiting Counter-Terrorism Strategies*, op. cit.

⁶¹ Crisis Group interview, Zohra Yusuf, HRCPC chairperson, Karachi, August 2016.

⁶² Crisis Group interview, Yasin Azad, Karachi, August 2016.

⁶³ “Rights meeting: Senate panel ‘dismayed’ by absence of top officials”, *The Express Tribune*, 24 September 2016; “Karachi operation: Rangers stand as an anti-terror bulwark”, *The Express Tribune*, 19 December 2015.

⁶⁴ Crisis Group Report, *Reforming Pakistan’s Judiciary*, op. cit.

the Sindh High Court (SHC), undermines prospects of holding Rangers personnel accountable, including for crimes as grave as extrajudicial killing.⁶⁵

The vast majority of detainees are eventually released, but with credible evidence of various degrees of torture and other ill-treatment.⁶⁶ This is so even in high profile cases such as that of Dr Asim Hussain, ex-petroleum minister and chair of the Dr Ziauddin Group of Hospitals. A close aide of President Asif Zardari in the 2008-2013 PPP government, he was arrested in August 2015 and charged with terrorist financing, corruption and providing medical services to terrorists. A health board established to assess his physical and mental condition determined that he suffered from extreme trauma, stress and fear. “If a major public figure like that can break down, imagine what it’s like for ordinary people”, said HRCP chairperson Zohra Yusuf.⁶⁷

Many women approach the courts and organisations like HRCP to register the arrest, disappearance or killing of male relatives. Yet, women often find it difficult to access formal legal channels, not least because of the high costs and their loss of the household’s main wage earner. The MQM, which gives them little financial help, should establish a party fund for the purpose. Rights activists also complain that it insists on having party representatives present in civil society consultations with such women, adding to the challenge of obtaining detailed, accurate information.⁶⁸

The bodies of at least 70 MQM male activists have been discovered since the start of the operation, and the party says over 125 men are missing.⁶⁹ “For the Rangers, it’s a numbers game: the more killed, the better, so they’ll target not just the suspect but also whatever companions he has around him”, said an experienced crime reporter. An MQM worker reportedly apprehended by the Rangers on 1 May 2016 was found dead two days later. Though the Rangers’ Sindh director general admitted that Rangers personnel had tortured him, and the then-army chief, General Raheel Sharif, pledged an investigation, there has been no progress thus far.⁷⁰

Human rights lawyers say inquiries into alleged custodial killings are hampered by convoluted, protracted procedures, including exhumations, post mortems and jurisdictional disputes between state institutions that “add up to a mockery of the justice system”. Many young Mohajir men have fled homes in MQM bastions like

⁶⁵ Senior police officials provided Crisis Group mobile phone video footage of several extrajudicial killings, Karachi, August 2016.

⁶⁶ According to Human Rights Watch, the Rangers “have been implicated in serious rights abuses, including torture and other ill-treatment of criminal suspects, extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances”. “Independently investigate Aftab Ahmad’s death”. Pakistan’s HRCP noted that “cases of extrajudicial killings and torture continue to be reported”. “Human rights violations”; also “Independently investigate Aftab Ahmad’s death”, both op. cit.

⁶⁷ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, August 2016.

⁶⁸ Crisis Group telephone interviews, Karachi-based human and women’s rights activists, October 2016.

⁶⁹ Crisis Group interviews, MQM leadership and HRCP, Karachi, July-August 2016. Crisis Group has received but not independently verified extensive documentation of missing persons from the MQM and human rights lawyers.

⁷⁰ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, August 2016. “DG Rangers admits deceased MQM worker was tortured during custody”, *Dawn*, 4 May 2016.

Azizabad, fearing arrest because of party association due to their ethnicity or relative's MQM affiliation. In some cases, they have relocated as far away as Islamabad.⁷¹

In the absence of an organised effort, like the MQM's, to record and present cases of affected party workers to courts or the public, there is little accounting of Pashtuns and Baloch who have been killed or who have disappeared in the operation. Collective punishment and guilt by association appear to have become standard practice. According to a rights activist:

If a Baloch youth with no criminal record is killed in Lyari, [the Rangers or police] will say he was a Lyari gang member. If a Pashtun is killed, they'll say he was Taliban. If it is a Seraiki-speaker [from southern Punjab], they'll say he belonged to Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. Every time, the story is similar: 'We showed up at this hideout, there was a shootout, and this many people were killed'.⁷²

Just as when gangs displaced families from Lyari and elsewhere, displacement caused by the Rangers also exposes women to sexual and other violence. Anecdotal accounts abound of harassment of women in neighbourhoods such as Lyari, where paramilitary units maintain a prominent presence; women there from the ethnic Katchi community complain of abrasiveness and provocation on their way to work from Rangers personnel.⁷³

The operation also appears to have encouraged police excesses. "If you're poor and suspected of being a criminal, [the police] will shoot you", said a crime branch officer.⁷⁴ Some police appear eager to curry favour with the Rangers and military. In an April 2015 press conference, a senior superintendent alleged that the MQM had been sending activists to India for training by the Indian intelligence agency, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), and recommended the party's banning. The same official said his force had killed 50 people in "encounters" between October 2014 and April 2015. Senior police have allegedly offered cash rewards to personnel involved in extrajudicial killings.⁷⁵ With the mushrooming of *kachi abadis* around graveyards, residents have become more aware of and affected by "encounter" killings. A resident of Zia Colony reportedly said:

Whenever the sirens of police mobile vehicles and ambulances are heard, we know that handcuffed militants have been brought to the graveyard. They will be killed and then taken by the ambulances to a hospital or morgue. Fifteen minutes after that, there will be tickers on news channels of an alleged encounter with

⁷¹ Crisis Group interviews, Karachi, August 2016; serving and retired Sindh officials and police officers, July-August 2016.

⁷² Crisis Group interview, Karachi, July 2016.

⁷³ Crisis Group telephone interview, Uzma Noorani, rights activist and founding member, Women's Action Forum, a prominent women's rights organisation, 7 October 2016. Noorani is also general secretary of Panah Shelter Home, which supports and shelters rape and domestic violence victims.

⁷⁴ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, August 2016. Crisis Group has received from Sindh police officials, MQM, and human rights advocates but not independently verified extensive documentation, including video footage, of extrajudicial/custodial killings.

⁷⁵ Maqbool Ahmed, "Operation overkill: how not to improve law and order in Karachi", *Herald*, October 2015.

militants, ... an intense battle and exchange of fire in which the militants were killed but no injuries were sustained by the police.⁷⁶

Another report described how “small villages and half-developed residential neighbourhoods” spread along the 57-km northern bypass, offer “ideal locations to law enforcers to kill alleged criminals without being watched by curious human beings”. It added: “That almost all these alleged encounters take place at night further diminishes the possibility of anyone having witnessed them first-hand”.⁷⁷

C. *Perils of Politicisation*

The choice and timing of arrests by the Rangers often reflect political rather than law-and-order concerns. During national by-elections and local polls in 2016, their personnel were reportedly inside polling stations to warn voters against supporting MQM candidates.⁷⁸ Yet, the MQM’s victories in those elections, including Waseem Akhtar’s as mayor, indicate that it has retained its support base despite, or possibly because of, the heavy-handed operation.

Akhtar was arrested in July 2016, a month before the mayoral election, and charged with helping Dr Hussain’s hospital treat terrorists and orchestrating the May 2007 political violence in Karachi in which more than 40 were killed.⁷⁹ Serving and retired police, while believing he should be investigated, described the timing as politically motivated.⁸⁰ The MQM leadership also accused the Rangers of harassing union councillors, who formed the electoral college for *tehsil* (town) chair and vice chairpersons, inducing them to defect to the Pak Sarzameen Party (PSP) of former MQM member and Karachi Mayor Mustafa Kamal. Scores of MQM members have reportedly joined the PSP after being released from detention.⁸¹

In August, the Rangers used the opportunity provided by Altaf Hussain’s incendiary speech – he called “Pakistan [a] cancer for [the] entire world ..., the epicentre of terrorism for the entire world” – to raid the MQM’s Nine Zero headquarters, seal other party offices and detain leaders and workers, including two legislators. A number of local party offices were demolished, ostensibly for encroaching on state or private property. After the military intensified pressure to remove Altaf from its leadership, the party, in an apparent bid to avoid a ban, first distanced itself from him, then reorganised itself under Senator Farooq Sattar. There are now two factions: MQM-London under the self-exiled Altaf and MQM-Pakistan led by Sattar.⁸²

⁷⁶ Ali Arqam, “Cops or criminals?”, *Newsline*, July 2016.

⁷⁷ Maqbool Ahmed, *op. cit.*

⁷⁸ Crisis Group interview, HRCF, Karachi, August 2016.

⁷⁹ On 16 November, Akhtar was released from prison on bail in the last of 39 cases lodged against him. “Karachi mayor released from jail after getting bail in last case”, *Dawn*, 17 November 2016; “Scuffles end euphoria over mayor’s release”, *The Express Tribune*, 17 November 2016.

⁸⁰ Crisis Group interviews, Karachi, August 2016.

⁸¹ Crisis Group interviews, MQM leaders, Karachi, July 2016. The PSP was established in March 2016, allegedly with military support. “Missing MQM workers are being found at PSP offices”, *The News*, 5 August 2016.

⁸² Altaf Hussain had also encouraged party activists to attack two media organisations, resulting in an attack on the office of the cable television channel, ARY News. He later apologised for his remarks. “What Altaf said”, *Dawn*, 23 August 2016; “I was under severe mental stress: Altaf apologis-

The Rangers have also continued, as in Dr Hussain's case, to target the PPP, Sindh's ruling party. In July 2016, they arrested a PPP sympathiser, Asad Kharal, in the Larkana district, where they have no policing jurisdiction. He was subsequently released, reportedly through the intervention of influential local figures, including the brother of PPP Sindh Home Minister Sohail Anwar Siyal. In response, Rangers and police surrounded the minister's residence and arrested scores of people connected to his brother in Larkana. The Rangers rearrested Kharal in Hyderabad, again outside their policing jurisdiction.⁸³ The case gave them a pretext to demand province-wide powers, arguing the need to be able to pursue suspects who fled Karachi. A senior lawyer countered: "Suspects can also flee to southern Punjab or KPK. Are you going to follow them there, too?"⁸⁴ The Sindh government's rejection of this demand has heightened tensions with the military and the paramilitary force.

Political parties are not the Rangers' only target. Civil society activists attribute harassment of the Fishermen Cooperative Society (FCS) and the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF), a prominent NGO, to their protests against intimidation of fishermen by police and Rangers and moves by the Karachi Cantonment Board to seize coastal lands. In June 2015, FCS's acting chair and two directors were arrested, accused of supporting Lyari gangs, terrorism and other criminal activities; in January 2016, the Rangers arrested two FCS and PFF officers, including PFF Secretary General Saeed Baloch; and in March 2016, they told an anti-terrorism court ex-FCS Chairman Nisar Morai was in 90-day preventive detention under the Anti-Terrorism Act.⁸⁵

The Rangers' calculated use of media also underscores the operation's politicised nature. Videotaped confessions of suspects, including Dr Hussain's apparently when in Rangers' custody, are regularly leaked to the media. Though not admissible in court, leaked confessions are aimed at conviction "in the court of public opinion", said a former Sindh police inspector general.⁸⁶ In August 2016, a National Assembly sub-committee directed Sindh's police inspector general to investigate such leaks, using Hussain's as a test case, and to report within three weeks. The police failed to do so, saying the Rangers and the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) refused to cooperate.⁸⁷ The Sindh government formally complained about news channels that aired

es to military for anti-Pakistan remarks", *Dawn*, 23 August 2016; "Key MQM leaders rounded up, party offices sealed, bulldozed", *Dawn*, 26 August 2016; "MQM distances itself from Altaf Hussain", *The News*, 23 August 2016; "Government warns MQM to distance itself from Altaf Hussain or suffer consequences", *Dawn*, 27 August 2016.

⁸³ The Rangers, in plain clothes, who arrested Kharal, were detained by police for kidnapping, but released after senior officials reached the police station. "Mistaken for kidnappers: Police 'arrest' ... Rangers men to rescue Larkana clerk", *The Express Tribune*, 14 July 2016.

⁸⁴ Crisis Group interview, Yasin Azad, former Supreme Court Bar Association president, Karachi, August 2016; "Rangers arrest Asad Kharal from Hyderabad", *The News*, 22 July 2016; "PPP-Rangers ties hit new low over arrest", *Dawn*, 14 July 2016.

⁸⁵ Crisis Group interviews, Karachi, July-August 2016. "PFF asks Rangers to review its general secretary's arrest", *The News*, 18 January 2016; "Rangers detain ex-chief of fishermen cooperative for 90 days", *Dawn*, 17 March 2016.

⁸⁶ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, August 2016.

⁸⁷ "Rangers, NAB not cooperating with police over Dr. Asim video, committee told", *Dawn*, 30 August 2016. NAB also had Hussain in its custody for a period.

the videos to the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA). “The media trial is one of the tools of this operation”, MQM’s Sattar said.⁸⁸

D. *Corruption Allegations*

There are widespread allegations of Ranger corruption, from bribery and extortion to control over and extraction of valuable resources. According to PPP Senator Taj Haider, “70,000 people were officially arrested in [the second half of 2015]. Most have been released. No release comes without a price”.⁸⁹ During Ramadan in 2016, according to locals, some 500-600 youths were apprehended; half were released after paying heavy bribes, but those who could not afford to do so remained in custody.⁹⁰ A prominent academic said the Rangers were de facto above the law: “The MQM’s power to extort has been taken, but has it been replaced? The Rangers, unlike the MQM, cannot really be tried”.⁹¹ There are also widespread reports that police benefit from the Rangers’ operation. In some cases, for example in a Baldia town market, vendors reportedly pay much more to the police than previously to MQM extortionists and to more individuals.⁹² A journalist covering the area said, “what used to be a monthly rate has become a weekly rate”.⁹³

More significant than petty bribery and extortion are institutional demands on Karachi and Sindh resources. A former senior home ministry official, still serving when the operation began, said the Rangers “keep blackmailing the government for bigger budgets, higher salaries, more vehicles, better schools and health care for their families”. A journalist added: “The Rangers have increased their stakes in the more lucrative items like real estate and water”.⁹⁴ They have taken over heritage sites such as the Jinnah Courts, where they began building a temporary headquarters in 2015 without a Sindh culture department committee’s approval. Another heritage site, the Meetha Ram Hostel, first occupied in 1992, has officially become a “sub-jail” for those they deem too dangerous to mix with regular prisoners. In November 2015, they moved personnel into another historic structure, the Radio Pakistan building, avowedly to monitor security during Muharram, the Shia month of mourning, but they have since established an apparently long-term presence.⁹⁵

⁸⁸ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, July 2016. PEMRA was established by the Musharraf regime in 2002 to regulate private television and radio outlets.

⁸⁹ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, August 2016.

⁹⁰ Crisis Group interviews, local civil society representatives and other residents, Orangi Town, Karachi, August 2016.

⁹¹ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, July 2016.

⁹² Recipients are said to include the station house office (SHO), traffic police, superintendent of police and others. Crisis Group interviews, vendors, Baldia Town, Karachi, July 2016; Arqam, “Cops or Criminals”, op. cit.

⁹³ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, July 2016.

⁹⁴ Crisis Group interviews, Karachi, July 2016.

⁹⁵ Sindh’s then secretary for culture, reportedly transferred for resisting the plan, later said the Rangers’ “modus operandi” was to “occupy a heritage building on the pretext of controlling the law and order situation but eventually move in. They don’t have the legal authority to move inside these buildings ... but who can question them?” Built in 1932-1933, the Jinnah Court is protected under the Sindh Cultural Heritage Act (1994). “Laying waste to a heritage site – Meetha Ram Hostel”, *Dawn*, 9 July 2016; “Historic Radio Pakistan building, change of guard?”, *Dawn*, 6 November

First given control in 1999 as part of a “water crisis management plan” of the nine hydrants maintained by the Karachi Water and Sewage Board (KWSB), the Rangers continue to control much of the city’s supply. The hydrants are meant to provide a free supply to water-deficient areas, with the rest sold to businesses and other consumers at fixed rates via tankers. The Rangers charge the tanker suppliers a fixed-per-gallon sum higher for industrial than residential use. Allegedly, the suppliers, in collusion with some Rangers, siphon off over 40 per cent to sell at inflated rates.⁹⁶

E. *Selective Targeting: Jihadist Networks*

The Rangers’ operation has targeted some al-Qaeda-linked sectarian jihadists and included the capture of LeJ provincial chief Naeem Bukhari. There have also been some raids in Ittehad Town, known as a LeJ safe haven.⁹⁷ However, prominent jihadists such as Aurangzeb Farooqi, leader of Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ, the renamed Sunni extremist Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, SSP), who regularly incites violence against Shias, and has even been charged with murdering Shias, remain free.⁹⁸ A leading academic and civil society activist asked: “What signal does it send when you say you’ve arrested [Karachi mayor] Waseem Akhtar but not Aurangzeb Farooqi?” A major monthly publication noted, “Areas around Gulshan-e-Bihar, Islam Chowk and Iqbal Market are infested with ASWJ flags and graffiti. Attempts by the MQM workers to remove these ... led to armed encounters and retaliatory attacks resulting in killings on both sides, with the MQM bearing the brunt”.⁹⁹

The return of sectarian violence in Karachi shows how sectarian jihadists, facing partial action at best, can reorganise and renew attacks against minority communities. In early October 2016 at least one child was killed and seven women wounded at a Liaqatabad Shia mosque; in the last week of October, five were killed and several wounded in an attack on a Shia religious gathering in Nazimabad. In apparent retaliation, six were killed, including two ASWJ prayer leaders, in the Patel Para area and North Nazimabad on 4 November. An editorial in a major daily noted:

2015; “‘Illegal construction’ under way at Jinnah Courts”, *Dawn*, 24 May 2015; “Meetha Ram Hostel to house ‘dangerous’ prisoners”, *Dawn*, 16 April 2015.

⁹⁶ Crisis Group Report, *Policing Urban Violence*, op. cit.

⁹⁷ “‘Airport-like terrorism plot foiled’, 11 suspects held in Karachi”, *Dawn*, 22 January 2016; “Five LeJ suspects arrested in Karachi”, *Dawn*, 29 December 2014.

⁹⁸ As Shia-Sunni tensions escalated in Karachi, Farooqi said his task was the “Sunni awakening ... I will make Sunnis so powerful against Shias that no Sunni will even want to shake hands with one They will die on their own; we won’t even have to kill them”. “Insight: Spiral of Karachi killings widens Pakistan’s sectarian divide”, Reuters, 24 February 2013. Banned in January 2002, the SSP changed its name to Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ), though Farooqi acknowledged that his organisation was still the SSP. “Only the name was banned”, he said. “Escalation”, *The Economist*, 1 December 2012.

⁹⁹ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, August 2016; Ali Arqam, “Virus of the mind”, *Newsline*, May 2016.

The state's response to ... sectarian militancy has been dismal ... "banned" outfits have operated with ease, [highlighting need to] end ... recurring cycles of sectarian violence The state must permanently dismantle outfits that provide the ideological and material support for violence.¹⁰⁰

Well-informed sources maintain that many jihadist masterminds had fled Karachi by September 2013, anticipating the Rangers' operation, but may have returned, given Rangers' inaction. Elected representatives, senior officials, journalists and civil society activists say the Rangers have spared many areas in Karachi and its outskirts of the city, known as hubs of "good" jihadists like LeT/JD and Jaish-e-Mohammed. "There are pockets all along the Super Highway of 'good Taliban'", said a senior PPP leader. FIF, LeT/JD's charity front, still runs its ambulance service in Gulshan-i-Iqbal. "Any time Pakistan-India or Kashmir tensions flare, these groups mobilise in the heart of the city", said a recently retired senior provincial official. "You can't treat [LeT and Jaish-e-Mohammed] as your friends in one part of the country and your enemies elsewhere". A senior police officer, implicitly referring to difficulty in addressing state-supported jihadists, said, "we tend to look at law and order challenges in isolation; we can't. We have to also look at [them] in the context of our foreign policy choices".¹⁰¹

Prominent pro-jihadist madrasas continue to operate freely, including the Jamia Uloom Islamia in Binori Town, a fountainhead of Deobandi militancy countrywide that maintains close ties to Jaish-e-Mohammed; the SITE-based Jamia Binoria; and the Jamia Darul Uloom madrasa in Korangi, whose leaders, the Usmani brothers, have links to jihadist organisations.¹⁰² In May 2016, the Sindh Rangers' director general visited the latter, meeting administrators and scholars, including the Usmani brothers. According to a senior international police officer who works closely with Karachi law enforcement agencies, "this was an important signal [to the madrasa]. The message was, 'We won't touch you guys'".¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ "Karachi sectarian attacks", editorial, *Dawn*, 6 November 2016; "Two prayer leaders among six killed in sectarian attacks within an hour", *The News*, 5 November 2016; "Five killed, several injured in sectarian attack on Nazimabad majlis", *The Express Tribune*, 29 October 2016.

¹⁰¹ Crisis Group interviews, Karachi, July-August 2016. Pakistan's relations with India have deteriorated since the January 2016 attack, allegedly by Jaish-e-Mohammed, on an airbase in India's Punjab state; and the July 2016 killing of a Kashmiri militant commander in Indian-administered Kashmir by Indian soldiers, sparking ongoing violent confrontations between protestors and security forces. In January 2017, LeT/JD chief Hafiz Saeed was put under house arrest, with no charges filed, similar to the action taken in 2008, when he was held for a year. If banned, the LeT/JD reportedly intends to operate under yet another name, Tehreek-e-Azadi Jammu and Kashmir (Kashmir Freedom Movement). Saeed's detention, along with four others, reportedly came in response to concerns from the Asia Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG) about LeT/JD's unchecked activities and finances, which Pakistan formally responded to on 31 January. APG, a 41-member international body, monitors enforcement of international standards against money laundering and terrorist financing. "Act against JuD or face sanctions, U.S. tells Pakistan", *The News*, 30 January 2017.

¹⁰² Crisis Group interviews, senior police officers, Karachi, July-August 2016. Also, Crisis Group report, *Karachi's Madrasas*, op. cit.

¹⁰³ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, May 2016. While there was limited newspaper reporting of this event, some private cable television channels covered it, including the Karachi-based Abb Takk news channel. <http://abttakk.tv/en/130936-2dg-rangers-sindh-major-gen-bilal-visits-darul-uloom-karachi-120516>.

In some neighbourhoods, such as Qasba Colony, where madrasa and mosque leaders exercise enormous influence, pro-jihadist seminaries and mosques continue to operate. A well-informed observer said, “the Friday sermons alone could be the basis for a crackdown”. Complaints to police or other officials seldom yield sustained action. Residents’ complaints about mosque and madrasa encroachment on public lands, including parks, are similarly ignored.¹⁰⁴ Regulating the madrasa sector and comprehensive action against those with jihadist links would be fundamental to sustained progress against jihadist violence, radicalisation and recruitment in Karachi.

¹⁰⁴ He added that local enterprises such as hotels and small businesses practically require prior approval, “virtually NOCs [no objection certificates]” from these preachers to operate. Crisis Group interview, Karachi, August 2016

V. Reversing the Decline

A. Political Reconciliation

Comprehensive reforms to reverse Karachi's decline will require, first, a comprehensive and sustained dialogue between the main political players, the PPP and MQM, but also the ANP, which have an interest in recovering political and governing space ceded to the military establishment. The technical fixes explored below are unachievable without a basic reconciliation between the three parties, driven by self-interest. There are precedents, most notably the Charter of Democracy through which the PPP and PML-N, historically bitter national rivals, established in 2006 – a period of military rule that threatened their cohesion, if not their survival – and have since observed basic rules of the democratic game in Islamabad. In Karachi, the PPP, MQM and ANP leaderships must also rein in violent party activists and ensure that lower cadres do not subvert their accord, something they failed to do after the June-July 2011 agreements to renounce violent politics, discussed above. Institutionalised regular inter-party talks would also help build trust.

As the party in office in Sindh, the PPP must seize the initiative. Soon after assuming office in July 2016, Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah ordered police to release six MQM workers and reportedly warned the force against detaining innocent people.¹⁰⁵ Such gestures could help bridge the PPP-MQM divide, while also heralding the provincial government's commitment to rule of law. However, the government's 18 January extension of the Rangers' mandate, apparently to ease military pressure on the PPP and its leadership, undermines the prospects of a reconciliation that is essential if the province and its capital are to stabilise.¹⁰⁶

The PPP and MQM and also the ANP should learn from earlier mistakes and abandon an approach that undermines not only civilian authority, but also their standing with constituents. "The political parties aren't looking at this in terms of the big picture. They're thinking about what they can get out of this", said a former cabinet-rank adviser to the Sindh government.¹⁰⁷ All three have at times supported the Rangers operation for short-term political gain, opposing it only when it has adversely affected their parties and allies. The MQM, now on the receiving end of Rangers abuses, even held a "Solidarity Rally with Defenders of Pakistan against Taliban" in Karachi in February 2014. The central ANP leadership is severely critical of the decision to empower the Rangers, but its Sindh president, Shahi Syed, advocates a continued operation "until the last terrorist".¹⁰⁸

Sindh's political stakeholders should abjure politics of expediency that only heighten the risk of a destabilising confrontation. Restoring peace in Pakistan's largest city depends on the major parties, particularly the MQM and PPP, reestablishing the basic rules of the game: respect for each other's mandate, observing separation of provin-

¹⁰⁵ "Six Muttahida workers released after CM's warning", *Dawn*, 19 August 2016.

¹⁰⁶ "PPP not to take extreme step over Rangers extension", *The News*, 27 December 2015; "Policy of cooperation: Sindh grants one-year extension to Rangers", *The Express Tribune*, 18 July 2015.

¹⁰⁷ Crisis Group interview, Kaiser Bengali, Karachi, August 2016.

¹⁰⁸ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, August 2016; "MQM shows solidarity with armed forces", *The Express Tribune*, 24 February 2014.

cial and municipal functions via credible, accountable devolution; and ensuring equitable provincial and local governance free of patronage and exclusion.

B. Addressing the Drivers of Instability

The numbers game of those arrested and killed and even the reduction of targeted killings and other organised criminal activity constitute too narrow a barometer with which to assess success or failure in addressing the drivers of Karachi's myriad conflicts. Labour movement leader Karamat Ali asked: "If 400 fewer people a month are getting killed, that's good; but have the lives of the millions who live in Karachi improved?" PPP Senator Taj Haider identified two main, related challenges: managing the extensive migration and providing job opportunities, both of which "no paramilitary operation can solve".¹⁰⁹ Though alienation of unemployed youths does not necessarily lead to jihadist recruitment on ideological grounds, well-funded jihadist organisations in Karachi easily find recruits among young men who have no other way to make a living. For many with few other prospects, jihad is a job.¹¹⁰

Karachi's capacity to absorb the growing labour force, even with high infrastructure growth and construction, is changing fast. Mechanisation and automation are reducing demand for labour in factories and such activities as road building. Many factories have closed because of years of power outages that impeded them from meeting export order deadlines, with the business moving to competitors in Bangladesh, Vietnam and elsewhere. Many producers have shifted factories to lower-wage countries such as Sri Lanka; others now use contract workers rather than permanent hires.¹¹¹

Services are also increasingly shifting to the informal sector, which maintains a high demand for low-skilled workers but pays lower salaries with fewer entitlements and offers significantly less job security. Better labour laws are certainly needed, but local skills and training are not meeting changing demands and must be addressed. While there are some donor-funded non-governmental initiatives to fill this gap, they are "but a drop in the ocean".¹¹² State-led efforts could include reviving two moribund government-run polytechnics and adding additional ones, as well as giving the private sector incentives to create vocational training institutions. These should emphasise technical skills, including operating automated production lines in the heavy machinery, steel, chemicals and other key industries and in high-value-added service industries like computer technology and business process outsourcing.

To ensure that Karachi's unemployed and underemployed do not succumb to the lure of groups that advocate violence, the state must resume its role as a service provider and facilitator rather than a largely absentee regulator. The provincial government should prioritise raising and reallocating resources to reverse the decay of state

¹⁰⁹ Crisis Group interviews, Karachi, August 2016.

¹¹⁰ Crisis Group interviews, law-enforcement officials, civil society activists, Karachi, July, August 2016. "Profiling the Violence in Karachi", Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies, July-September 2009; "Jihadi encroachment threatens Karachi", *LJWorld*, 8 May 2009.

¹¹¹ "Half a million jobs lost as textile crisis hits Pakistan's economy", Bloomberg, 21 September 2016; "Impacts of economic crises and reform on the informal textile industry in Karachi", working paper, International Institute for Environment and Development, 2015.

¹¹² Crisis Group interview, urban planner Arif Hassan, Karachi, July 2016.

welfare institutions and to reorient them toward serving low-income groups. For this to happen, the PPP and MQM will need to favour equitable service delivery and governance, both municipal and provincial, over the politics of patronage.

Besides reviving public transport and breaking up the transport mafia's monopoly, steps should be taken to provide affordable housing to Karachi's lower-income groups. Civil society initiatives like the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) in the congested Orangi settlement, Karachi's largest *katchi abadi*, and government schemes such as the Khuda Ki Basti (God's Settlements) project of the Hyderabad Development Authority (HDA) could help. The latter scheme was based on "land delivery and development models that could overcome the constraints faced by public sector policies in serving the shelter needs of the lower-income groups ...".¹¹³ HDA willingness to relax convoluted rules and regulations and overcome government agency prejudices against the urban poor was a significant factor in its success. To provide low-income groups affordable housing and shelter on a citywide scale, the provincial government should revitalise the Karachi Development Authority (KDA) and coordinate it with other government departments, entrepreneurs and civil society actors.

C. Restoring the Rule of Law

Since the 2008 democratic transition, the political leadership has acted to reinforce and expand legal protections for citizens, including giving constitutional cover to the right to fair trial.¹¹⁴ But several measures have also been introduced at the federal level, on counter-terrorism grounds and often under military pressure, that dilute this right. These include amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Act to allow 90-day remands without charge, the Protection of Pakistan Act (POPA, which expired in July 2016 and was not renewed) and military courts, set up under the 21st constitutional amendment (January 2015), the tenure of which expired at the end of 2016.¹¹⁵

The federal government and parliament have not extended these special measures, but on 9 January, the government initiated parliamentary consultations toward reviving the military courts. The parliamentary opposition is resisting – and should continue to resist – that effort.¹¹⁶ Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's national government, too, should acknowledge that the military court system, which was reluctantly created through the 21st constitutional amendment after parliament succumbed to military pressure following the December 2014 Peshawar Army School attack, will not pay counter-terrorism dividends. By undermining due process and violating the constitutional right to fair trial, military courts are fuelling alienation that will only benefit jihadist spoilers.¹¹⁷ As a first step, the federal government and parliament

¹¹³ Hyderabad is Sindh's second largest city. Initially focused on sanitation, OPP was expanded to include provision of low-cost housing, education, health services and access to credit. Akbar Zaidi, "From the lane to the city: the impact of Orangi Pilot Project's low-cost sanitation model", Water Aid, June 2001; Arif Hassan, "Evaluation of the HDA's *Khuda Ki Basti* incremental housing scheme", commissioned by the House Building Finance Corporation, 22 July 1990. The OPP also works on sanitation in the Orangi settlement.

¹¹⁴ This was included in the Constitution (Eighteenth Amendment) Act (2010).

¹¹⁵ Crisis Group Report, *Revisiting Counter-Terrorism Strategies*, op. cit.

¹¹⁶ "Opp tells govt to clarify why it wants military courts back", *The Daily Times*, 11 January 2017.

¹¹⁷ Crisis Group Report, *Revisiting Counter-Terrorism Strategies*, op. cit.

should not extend these special measures but commit instead to strengthening rather than bypassing regular rule-of-law agencies and institutions.

Karachi's police force is woefully under-resourced. Stations in neighbourhoods of high militant, sectarian and criminal violence such as Pirabad and Orangi are some of the worst off. Officers are frequently transferred, often within weeks or months, including those involved in investigating jihadist and criminal networks. A May 2016 Sindh apex meeting, presided over by the chief minister, approved recruitment of an additional 20,000 police, including 8,000 for Karachi, but the army is to train them. PPP Senator Haider believed that the additional numbers in Karachi "would make us self-sufficient and reduce dependence on the Rangers".¹¹⁸ Yet, a more militarised police would likely be counterproductive and could emulate Rangers reliance on brute and lethal force, as has happened in Punjab.¹¹⁹

Better performance, moreover, depends not only on more police on the streets or more stations, but also on fundamental reorientation toward investigation that reduces physical deployment and results in the trained detective's ascendancy over the watchman. Technological enhancement is also needed, including by establishing, training and properly resourcing specialists who could, for example, oversee CCTV footage and keep databases. Other specialists should be trained to analyse the collated data. A modern criminal justice system, including a better resourced and trained prosecution service and adequate protection of witnesses, investigators, prosecutors and judges, is essential to sustained, credible action against criminal and jihadist leaders, operatives and organisations that ends not with arrests and raids but court convictions.¹²⁰

Depoliticisation of the police is equally urgent. The Sindh government should acknowledge that a deeply politicised force will remain incapable of enforcing the state's writ, leaving the military and Rangers to present themselves as the only viable law-enforcement alternative. As a first step, a new police order from the provincial government should replace the 1861 Police Act, using the 2002 Police Order as a template, to guarantee operational autonomy and robust internal and external community-led accountability.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, August 2016. "Sindh police to hire 20,000 army-trained cops", *The Express Tribune*, 12 May 2016. Apex committees are provincial bodies, established under the National Action Plan (but with no statutory mandate), to oversee counter-terrorism policy implementation. Each is headed by the provincial chief minister and includes provincial bureaucrats, senior military officials and representatives from military and civilian intelligence agencies. See Crisis Group Report, *Revisiting Counter-Terrorism Strategies*, op. cit.

¹¹⁹ Crisis Group Report, *Pakistan's Jihadist Heartland*, op. cit.

¹²⁰ See, Crisis Group Reports, *Revisiting Counter-Terrorism Strategies*; *Policing Urban Violence*; *Reforming Pakistan's Criminal Justice System*; and *Reforming Pakistan's Police*, all op. cit.

¹²¹ The 1861 act, based on the Irish Constabulary model, turned the police in British India into a coercive arm of the state under the bureaucracy's control. Police Order 2002 envisioned an autonomous force, independent of bureaucratic/political interference, and answerable to elected and community representatives. Many key provisions were never enforced and/or were diluted through 2004 amendments by General Musharraf's rubber stamp parliament. This police order's validity expired on 31 December 2009, giving provincial governments the authority to create their own policing systems. The Sindh government revived the 1861 act in 2011. Crisis Group Reports, *Policing Urban Violence*; and *Reforming Pakistan's Police*, both op. cit.

The judiciary's role in reining in law enforcement excesses is just as crucial. Judges have taken occasional action, such as an April 2016 Sindh High Court (SHC) order for police to register a case for a "staged encounter" against Malir's senior superintendent of police, widely accused of extrajudicial killings.¹²² However, most retired judges, lawyers and rights activists believe that Sindh's higher judiciary is unlikely to be proactive against human rights violations.¹²³ Referring to the June 2016 kidnapping of the SHC chief justice's advocate son, a human rights lawyer said, "when Awais [Shah] disappeared, we told the chief justice, 'Now you understand how serious this is'. But we should be concerned about all such instances, not just when it's a high-profile case".¹²⁴

"The judiciary is responsible for the militarisation of justice", said a retired senior judge, referring to the Supreme Court's August 2015 split decision validating the 21st amendment and its military court system.¹²⁵ "But the politicians are primarily responsible", he added. "The mere passing of the amendment was a slap in the face of the judiciary".¹²⁶ The amendment's two-year sunset clause implied that the military courts were a stopgap to address a national security crisis. Yet, neither the federal nor Sindh provincial government has used the intervening period to improve the criminal justice system.

Karachi accounts for 80 per cent of the backlog in Sindh courts. The 58 additional courts set up since 2015 lack adequate facilities.¹²⁷ As with the police, however, resolving the backlog depends not on bricks and mortar, but on ensuring that judges are well trained and responsive, guarantee citizens' right to a fair trial and deliver justice to victims and their families. It is urgent to begin working toward those objectives instead of reverting to a system – military courts – that has undermined rather than improved the rule of law. Ultimately, the judicial accountability buck stops at the SHC, which must more robustly uphold citizens' rights and liberties and monitor and oversee lower-court performance.

¹²² "SHC orders FIR against SSP RAO Anwar over 'staged encounter'", *Dawn*, 16 April 2016.

¹²³ Crisis Group interviews, Karachi, August 2016.

¹²⁴ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, August 2016. Shah was freed in July 2016.

¹²⁵ The decision is at www.supremecourt.gov.pk/web/user_files/File/Const.P.12of2010.pdf.

¹²⁶ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, August 2016.

¹²⁷ Crisis Group interviews, lawyers, retired and serving judges, Karachi, July 2016; "58 new courts planned, says SHC judge", *Dawn*, 8 March 2015.

VI. Conclusion

Though Karachi has long been the engine of Pakistan's economic growth, the state has not developed an administrative structure to govern a modern metropolis. Service delivery has instead generally yielded to ethno-political rivalries, and the links between local, provincial and federal authority continue to fray. The Rangers operation is incapable of delivering the necessary political solutions to the city's challenges, and politicisation and abuse of power are further aggravating tensions.

Among Karachi's most significant long-term governance challenges are the inter-linked issues of a rapidly growing population – due to both internal growth and migration, including of Pashtuns, Sindhis and Southern Punjabi Seraiki speakers – and the Sindh government's inability to provide basic goods, services and security. Whether these demographic shifts will contribute to the economy or widen political divisions depends on the state's role and the political players' choices.

Municipal, provincial and federal institutions will have to assume a more direct and vigorous role in levelling the playing field. Rather than subjecting Karachi to a highly distorted market, they must commit to an equitable distribution of basic resources such as land, water and transport, while clamping down on the mafias that exploit them. Creating job opportunities and access to justice is also essential if Karachi's disenfranchised youth is to be prevented from succumbing to the lure of criminal gangs and sectarian and jihadist spoilers.

While Sindh's superior judiciary should be proactive in ensuring justice is done and abusers are held to account, Karachi's main political stakeholders, the PPP and MQM, are central to defusing growing tensions, preventing conflict and creating the conditions in which institutional reforms can be debated, agreed on and implemented. They need to overcome decades of often violent hostility and opt for political compromises and workable solutions that protect and benefit citizens and stabilise the city. Otherwise, they risk losing yet more ground to the military, and the law-and-order crisis will likely worsen. The debate on extending the Rangers' mandate will begin again in April, after the expiry of the current 90-day term. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's federal government should realise that retaining the force in Karachi at the cost of Sindh's regular law-enforcement apparatus would fail to stabilise Pakistan's economic hub and could further undermine civilian authority in the midst of a fragile democratic transition.

Karachi/Islamabad/Brussels, 15 February 2017

Appendix A: Map of Pakistan



Based on UN Map No. 4181 Rev. 1 (January 2004), "North-West Frontier" has been changed to "Khyber Pakhtunkhwa".

Appendix B: Map of Karachi



Appendix C: Glossary

ANP – Awami National Party, a secular Pashtun-dominated party that won Sindh provincial assembly seats from Karachi for the first time in 2008.

ASWJ – Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat, the renamed Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), an extremist Deobandi group, the parent organisation of the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (see below).

CTD – Counter-Terrorism Department, the lead investigation and civilian counter-terrorism provincial-level agency, earlier named Criminal Investigation Department.

DHA – Defense Housing Authority, an autonomous body, managed by a military-dominated governing body, that controls and manages land in cantonment areas, including some of Karachi's most affluent neighbourhoods.

FATA – Federally Administered Tribal Areas, comprising seven administrative districts, or agencies, and six Frontier Regions bordering on south-eastern Afghanistan.

FIA – Federal Investigation Agency.

FIF – Falah-i-Insaniyat Foundation, a charity front of the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (see below).

FCS – Fishermen Cooperative Society.

HAD – Hyderabad Development Authority.

HRCP – The independent non-governmental Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.

ISI – Inter-Services Intelligence directorate, the military's main intelligence agency.

JD – Jamaat-ud-Dawa, the renamed Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (see below).

Katchi abadi – Squatter settlement.

KDA – Karachi Development Authority.

KECS – Karachi Electric Supply Company.

KMC – Karachi Municipal Corporation.

KPT – Karachi Port Trust.

KPK – Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, formerly known as the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP).

LeJ – Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, an extremist Deobandi organisation, responsible for major sectarian killings and other terrorist violence, headquartered in Punjab but with a countrywide network.

LeT – Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, anti-India jihadi group led by Hafez Saeed, banned and renamed Jamaat-ud-Dawa in 2002, responsible for the November 2008 Mumbai attacks.

MQM – Muttahida Qaumi Movement, Karachi's most powerful political party, previously the Mohajir Quami Movement.

Mohajir – Urdu-speaking migrants and their descendants are known as Mohajirs (literal translation: refugees).

NAB – National Accountability Bureau.

NAP – National Action Plan, to counter terrorism and extremism, formulated in December 2014 in response to the December attack on Peshawar's Army Public School.

OPP – Orangi Pilot Project, an NGO-led program working on the delivery of social development, health, housing, education and micro-credit in Orangi Town's katchi abadis.

PAC – People's Aman (Peace) Committee, a Baloch-dominated criminal gang that emerged in Karachi's Lyari neighbourhood in 2008.

PFF – Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum.

PML-N – Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, led by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, currently heading a majority government at the centre and in Punjab.

PPP – Pakistan Peoples Party, founded by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1967, heads the Sindh provincial government.

PSP – Pak Sarzameen Party, a Karachi-based political party established in March 2016 by former MQM senior member and Karachi Mayor Mustafa Kamal.

PTI – Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf.

SHC – Sindh High Court.

SSP – Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, a radical Deobandi group and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi's parent organisation; renamed Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat.

TTP – Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (Taliban Movement of Pakistan), also known as the Pakistani Taliban.

Appendix D: About the International Crisis Group

The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 120 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries or regions at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international, regional and national decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a monthly early warning bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in up to 70 situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

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Appendix E: Reports and Briefings on Asia since 2014

Special Reports

Exploiting Disorder: al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, Special Report, 14 March 2016 (also available in Arabic).

Seizing the Moment: From Early Warning to Early Action, Special Report N°2, 22 June 2016.

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Risks of Intelligence Pathologies in South Korea, Asia Report N°259, 5 August 2014.

Stirring up the South China Sea (III): A Fleeting Opportunity for Calm, Asia Report N°267, 7 May 2015 (also available in Chinese).

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East China Sea: Preventing Clashes from Becoming Crises, Asia Report N°280, 30 June 2016.

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Policing Urban Violence in Pakistan, Asia Report N°255, 23 January 2014.

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Myanmar: The Politics of Rakhine State, Asia Report N°261, 22 October 2014 (also available in Burmese).

A Coup Ordained? Thailand's Prospects for Stability, Asia Report N°263, 3 December 2014.

Myanmar's Electoral Landscape, Asia Report N°266, 28 April 2015 (also available in Burmese).

Southern Thailand: Dialogue in Doubt, Asia Report N°270, 8 July 2015.

Myanmar's Peace Process: A Nationwide Ceasefire Remains Elusive, Asia Briefing N°146, 16 September 2015 (also available in Burmese).

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Thailand's Lengthening Roadmap to Elections, Asia Report N°274, 10 December 2015.

The Philippines: Renewing Prospects for Peace in Mindanao, Asia Report N°281, 6 July 2016.

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Myanmar's Peace Process: Getting to a Political Dialogue, Asia Briefing N°149, 19 October 2016 (also available in Burmese).

Myanmar: A New Muslim Insurgency in Rakhine State, Asia Report N°283, 15 December 2016 (also available in Burmese).

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