



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

Pakistan: Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 26 May 2010

Updated information relating to persons targeted by the Taliban in Pakistan

An *Institute for War & Peace Reporting* article comments on the use of the term “Taleban” in regard to militant groups in Pakistan as follows:

“At the moment, various militant groups operate in FATA. The TTP are present there, but so are at least two other major Taleban groups under Mullah Nazir and Hafiz Gul Bahadur. The Taleban name is also applied to other groups. To the north, in the Swat valley of Pakistan's North West Frontier Province, NWFP, thousands of Pashtun militants under Maulana Fazlullah were attacked by the Pakistan army in the summer of 2009. To the south, in the Punjab, Sunni Muslim extremist – but non-Pashtun – groups like Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, SSP, have been called the Punjabi Taleban. Their targets include the secular government and Shia Muslims throughout the country. Calling all these groups Taleban would imply some form of coordination between them. But Dr Maleeha Lodhi, Pakistan's former ambassador to Britain and the US, argues that it would be a mistake to group the different militant bands in Pakistan together. ‘If we conflate the threat, we overlook the fact that these groups - militant groups generally in Pakistan (not just the Pakistani Taleban) - are different in their origin, outlook, reach, capacity, ethnic identity, as well as their goals and motivations,’ she said.” (Institute for War & Peace Reporting (22 February 2010) *Pakistani Taleban Bruised But Unbowed*)

A *BBC News* report states:

“One year on from the launch of the massive army offensive against Taliban militants around Pakistan's Swat valley, peace still eludes local residents. This is especially the case for people on the government-backed peace committees which have been set up across the valley. ‘The Taliban killed my uncle,’ says Sabih-ur-Rahman. His uncle was the head of one such committee near the town of Mingora. Mr Rahman has now taken on that dangerous mantle. The aim of the peace committees is to help locals ensure that their neighbourhoods are secure. They also provide information to the army in case of militant activity. As such they are on the front line - and primary targets for the Taliban.” (BBC News (30 April 2010) *Militants disrupt peace in Swat valley*)

A report from the *Critical Threats Project*, in a section headed “Disturbing the Peace: Recent Incidents of Violence”, states:

“Rare incidents of violence in the scenic Swat valley have punctuated the past few weeks. The region has been largely peaceful following the conclusion of military operations in Swat and the Taliban have been unable to exert the control they exercised in the past. However, during April, seven people were reportedly

assassinated in incidents of 'target killings,' as they are known in Pakistan. Those killed were largely members of 'village defense committees,' organizations created by locals in towns and villages to oppose the Taliban and cooperate with security forces in rooting out militants and their supporters. A suicide bomber managed to detonate his vest in a separate incident, killing three people in Mingora, the district headquarters, on May 1." (Critical Threats Project (American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research) (25 May 2010) *Paradise Regained: Swat One Year On*)

An article from *The Independent* states:

"The Taliban had gone but nobody believes they had gone very far. 'People don't want to co-operate with the army, because they think the Taliban will find out and take revenge,' said one man from a nearby village. Probably they will never come back in full force, but they show on a daily basis that they are still a force to be feared. When one village, called Shah Hassan, asked the local Taliban to leave, they retaliated by sending a suicide bomber into a crowd of young men playing volley ball. He detonated his explosives and killed 100 people." (The Independent (10 May 2010) *Revenger's tragedy: The forgotten conflict in Pakistan*)

An article from the US magazine *National Interest Online* states:

"What can be said with certainty is that Swat has not been pacified. A degree of security has been established only in Mingora and areas south of the city (accounting for perhaps a fifth of the district), and suicide bombs and murders of pro-government political leaders persist. The north of the valley is still characterized by serious violence and instability, and many refugees who fled last year have failed many times to return to their homes. The Taliban organization has been disrupted but hardly eliminated. While many Taliban fighters have been killed, many others—including most of their leadership—simply fled the army onslaught to nearby hills, distant cities, or to Afghanistan, where they network with other extremists. Now, they are coming back." (National Interest Online (18 May 2010) *Counterinsurgency Gone Bad*)

A *Reuters AlertNet* report states:

"A spate of killings of tribal elders in Pakistan's Swat valley in recent days has raised fears that Taliban militants are returning to their former stronghold. A year ago, the Pakistani army mounted a major offensive in Swat after militants, buoyed by a peace agreement with authorities, began expanding beyond the valley, sending shock waves across the country and abroad. The militants have largely been driven out the scenic valley, a former Taliban bastion where they killed opponents and security personnel with impunity. The majority of the tens of thousands of people displaced by the offensive have returned to their homes. But the killings of at least six pro-government elders over the past week have rekindled fears among residents that the Taliban are regrouping." (Reuters AlertNet (23 April 2010) *Target killings rekindle Taliban fear in Pakistan's Swat*)

A *Reuters* report states:

“Police in Swat, which has a population of about 1.3 million, have scant resources. Pakistan's sluggish economy is already stretched, so large amounts of state funding needed for fuel and other basic items are unlikely soon. Those challenges are common in Pakistan, a nuclear-armed U.S. ally. Since Swat, Pakistan's military launched a major offensive in South Waziristan but the Taliban keep bouncing back with bombings that have killed hundreds. The entire Swat Valley relies on just eight armored personnel carriers and at least 17 more are needed, if police and soldiers are to be less vulnerable to bombings and ambushes by militants who can attack and escape through peach orchards or over mountains. The run-down, blue camouflage vehicles are rarely seen around villages, where wanted posters of bearded Taliban leaders at checkpoints revive memories of public beheadings and floggings of those seen as sympathetic to the government, or deemed immoral. One was notorious for chopping up people.”(Reuters (22 March 2010) *In Pakistan's Swat, Taliban instil fear after defeat*)

A *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* report on the targeting of police officers states:

“Two suspected suicide bombers attacked police in northwestern Pakistan today, killing 15 people and wounding about 20, including a town police chief, a doctor and police said. The bombing in Bannu town, 260 kilometers southwest of Islamabad and near the North Waziristan militant enclave on the Afghan border, was the second attack on police in as many days. The violence has come as the government says it believes its biggest militant enemy, Pakistani Taliban leader Hakimullah Mehsud, is dead. The first bomb went off inside a police compound with the second, minutes later, just outside, police said. ‘Seven police are among the dead,’ said a Bannu police officer. Town police chief Iqbal Marwat, was among the wounded, police said. A doctor at Bannu's main hospital said 15 people had been killed and about 20 wounded people had been brought in. The Pakistani Taliban, allies of the Afghan Taliban, have lost much ground in military offensives over the past year but they have responded with numerous bomb attacks, many of them aimed at the security forces.” (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (11 February 2010) *Police Targeted In Bombings In Northwest Pakistan*)

A *Christian Science Monitor* article on a recent bombing in the city of Dera Ismail Khan states:

“A bomb blast aimed at a police van in the Pakistani city of Dera Ismail Khan on Tuesday killed 12 people, furthering a string of attacks in the northwest near where the Army is pursuing the Taliban. Some 10,000 troops are conducting a major operation in Orakzai tribal agency as part of a year of offensives in which the military has gained ground but failed to capture key leaders or prevent retaliatory bombings. While attacks have ebbed recently in Pakistan's biggest cities, they continue apace in the northwestern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Monday's bombing killed up to four policemen, including senior officer Iqbal Khan, along with women and children. A Taliban spokesman told Agence France-Presse that the group had intended to kill Mr. Khan, who was ‘so active

against the Taliban.” (Christian Science Monitor (18 May 2010) *Pakistan Taliban claim retaliatory bombing*)

A *BBC News* report states:

“Once again the Pakistani Taliban have begun to murder local leaders, intimidate the population, pose a risk to the security forces, prevent development projects and threaten wider violence. A suicide bomber killed five people in the Swat valley on 1 May, while in April at least six prominent tribal elders were killed outside their homes in the district capital, Mingora, and other towns. Heavily-armed militants drive through villages on motor-bikes to intimidate the population, burn down girls schools and threaten anyone co-operating with the army - often in plain sight of police or army sentries.” (BBC News (10 May 2010) *Pakistan faces Taliban resurgence*)

An *Amnesty International* report on the killing of anti-Taliban politicians states:

“Five anti-Taliban local political and tribal leaders in Swat have been killed in targeted attacks in the last few weeks, media reports say. “The people of Pakistan’s northwest are caught between the Taliban’s systematic abuses, and heavy-handed government military operations that have displaced millions, sparked hundreds of covert extrajudicial executions in Swat, and which have ultimately failed to secure human rights for the area’s civilians.” said Sam Zarifi, Amnesty International’s Asia-Pacific Director. Last year alone, 40 targeted attacks on tribal elders and local political figures hostile to the Taliban in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and North West Frontier Province were publicly reported in the media. Over the last five years, the Taliban have targeted hundreds of tribal leaders and forced hundreds more to flee.” (Amnesty International (26 April 2010) *Killings of anti-Taliban politicians in Pakistan signal further abuses*)

A *Voice of America* report on the assassination of an influential politician states:

“Gunmen in northwest Pakistan have killed an influential former lawmaker who helped broker peace deals between the government and Taliban militants. A local police officer said Maulana Mirajuddin was shot while on his way home from morning prayers Thursday in the town of Tank, which borders South Waziristan. Two gunmen rode up beside Mirajuddin on a motorcycle and opened fire on him. Mirajuddin was hit by several bullets and died on his way to the hospital. He had served both as a member of parliament and a senior leader of a pro-Taliban Islamic group (Jamiatul Ulema-e-Islam). Mirajuddin was instrumental in brokering a peace deal between the government and the Pakistani Taliban in 2005 and another cease-fire in 2007 with former Pakistani Taliban chief Baitullah Mehsud. Mehsud was killed in a U.S. missile attack last year. No one has claimed responsibility for Mirajuddin's killing. Militants have killed hundreds of tribal elders and government officials in Pakistan's lawless tribal belt along the Afghan border to intimidate others from helping the state.” (Voice of America (20 May 2010) *Gunmen Kill 'Peace Broker' in NW Pakistan*)

A report from the Pakistani news agency *Right Vision News* refers to attacks against leaders of the Awami National Party (ANP) as follows:

“Khalid Zaheer said on April 27 the alleged militants attacked the car in which his family members were travelling in Mingora city. ‘Luckily, my family members remained unhurt but the driver was killed,’ he said. Taliban in Swat used to attack their opponents and their houses to punish people for opposing them. Such attacks were common after July 2007 and before the 2009 Operation Rah-e-Rast. Khalid is, however, complaining of attacks on their houses and family members after the military operation. Khalid said they recently received threatening calls and letters from the militants. Asked as to why Taliban wanted to target his family, he said they had political affiliation with the ruling ANP. Khalid said he was district councillor of ANP Swat chapter. He said they were also active in peace jirgas and it earned them Taliban wrath. The Taliban targeted the ANP leaders and workers and killed over 300 activists according to party leaders. The Taliban hold the ANP responsible for the military operation against them.” (Right Vision News (14 May 2010) *Pakistan: Fresh Taliban threats force Swat family to shift to Nowshera*)

A *Voice of America* report states:

“The so-called Pakistani Taliban largely has limited its attacks in recent months to military outposts and police checkpoints. But Marvin Weinbaum with the Middle East Institute here in Washington says that he expects the militants to increase their attacks on civilian targets, especially foreigners within Pakistan. ‘They will look for “soft targets.” Naturally, they want to give the impression that they are in control, that they have not at all been defeated in these recent campaigns that have been mounted [and] that the [suspected U.S.] drone attacks have not put them out of business,’ said Marvin Weinbaum.” (Voice of America (5 April 2010) *Analysts: Taliban to Attack More 'Soft Targets' in Pakistan*)

A *BBC News* report on attacks against NGO aid workers states:

“Attacks on aid workers and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are not uncommon in Pakistan. In February 2008, British aid agency Plan International suspended its operations there after three of its workers were killed in an attack on its office in Mansehra. Correspondents say Mansehra, in North West Frontier Province (NWFP), had served as a base for militants operating in Afghanistan and Kashmir. Last month two simultaneous suicide attacks on police targets in Mansehra left one police officer dead and several other people injured. Militant groups and religious parties in Pakistan have often accused NGOs of spreading ‘vulgarity’ in society. This is because NGOs mostly employ women workers and organise mixed social gatherings in line with their professed policy of gender equality, observers say.” (BBC News (10 March 2010) *Pakistan attack kills aid workers*)

An *Inter Press Service* report states:

“The latest in the series of attacks on the offices of NGOs occurred on Mar. 10, when armed men shot at the U.S.-based charity World Vision premises in a

remote village in Mansehra district. Six persons, including two women, were killed in the attack. World Vision condemned the attack as 'brutal and senseless', and indefinitely suspended all of its operations in Pakistan, where the charity has about 300 staff. It has been operating in Mansehra since the 2005 earthquake. This comes after the United Nations withdrew its foreign staff from the NWFP in view of the deteriorating law and order situation on Nov. 2 last year. It is widely believed that the reason for the March attack was the militants' view that civil society groups – which mushroomed in the years after the 2001 ouster of the Taliban in Afghanistan in response to needs for basic services – were 'puppets' of the U.S. government that employ women staff to promote indecency. A local official quoted one of the injured World Vision workers in hospital as saying of the assailants, who spoke Urdu, Hindko and Pashto and were therefore from different ethnic groups: 'They rounded up the aid workers while shouting at them that they had been warned to stop spreading obscenity.' While none of Taliban groups – whether in Pakistan or in neighbouring Afghanistan have openly claimed responsibility for the attack, Waqar Ayub, commissioner of the Hazara division, which includes Mansehra district, said in an interview that it was the handiwork of Taliban." (Inter Press Service (18 March 2010) *Pakistan: Attacks Bring Humanitarian Work to Virtual Halt*)

An *IRIN News* report refers to fears expressed by women living in the Swat Valley district as follows:

"Girls in Swat District, northwestern Pakistan, have gone back to school, and most women who had been prevented from working have returned to work, but people are still fearful. 'We worry the Taliban will return and the persecution will start again. In every neighbourhood there are people who are linked to the militants and who keep an eye on the activities of us women,' Sumira Bibi, 20, who works at a cosmetics factory, told IRIN in Mingora, Swat's main town. According to the government's National Commission on the Status of Women, there were 1,000-1,200 women factory workers in Mingora before the Taliban takeover in 2009. It is unknown how many have returned to work. Tens of thousands of civilians were displaced from Swat in the spring and summer of 2009 due to intense fighting between government forces and Taliban militants. Most returned after the army regained control in July." (IRIN News (2 March 2010) *Pakistan: Swat women fear Taliban return*)

An *IRIN News* report on the targeting of schools by alleged Taliban militants states:

"Attacks by militants on schools across northwestern Pakistan are continuing despite army operations in the area which began in May 2009 in Swat District. Since late 2009, at least 10 schools have been targeted by Taliban militants in various parts of North West Frontier Province (NWFP), according to media reports. Four children were killed in a September 2009 attack in Orakzai Agency allegedly in a bid to dissuade parents from sending children to school. In the most recent attack on 18 January 2010 militants blew up a boys' primary school in the village of Ashraf Kalay in Khyber Agency, also near the Afghan border. 'We are still scared to send our children to school. Some have not been going for over a year,' Hazar Khankhel, 40, a father of four told IRIN from the town of Kalaya in

Orakzai Agency, NWFP, near the Afghan border. His children had missed important exams, but he said: 'We are simply too scared as life is more important even than education.'" (IRIN News (20 January 2010) *Pakistan: Militants still targeting schools in northwest*)

An *Associated Press* report on the killing of two alleged spies states:

"Pakistani Taliban shot and killed two men Wednesday whom they accused of spying for the United States, while a bomb ripped through a NATO oil tanker near the Afghan border and killed a passer-by, officials and residents said. The slain men were from Miran Shah, the main town in the North Waziristan tribal region which is effectively under militant control. The bodies were dumped in an open area in the town. Local resident Ahsan Ullah said notes attached to the bodies warned others to learn from the fate of the so-called American spies. Two Pakistani intelligence officials confirmed the deaths and the content of the notes. They spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not allowed to release information to the media. The Pakistani Taliban have killed dozens of people in recent years in similar fashion." (Associated Press (12 May 2010) *Taliban kill 2 alleged US spies in NW Pakistan*)

An *Agence France Presse* report on the execution of two alleged spies states:

"Taliban militants strapped bombs to two men they accused of spying for the United States, blowing them up at a public execution, security officials said Friday. The Taliban frequently kidnap and kill tribesmen in Pakistan's lawless tribal belt shadowing the Afghan border, but traditionally slit their throats or shoot them. Locals said it was the first such killing with bombs. The incident took place in the Degan area of North Waziristan, a district that has attracted increasing US attention as a nexus of Al-Qaeda-linked and Taliban militants, following a failed bomb plot in New York. 'Masked Taliban strapped improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to the bodies of two alleged spies and blew them up in public,' local police official Khalil Khan told AFP. The Taliban threatened anyone 'spying' for the United States with the same fate and called on locals to witness the public execution late Thursday in an announcement made through a local mosque. A local intelligence official confirmed the executions." (Agence France Presse (21 May 2010) *Taliban blow up 'spies' in Pakistan: officials*)

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

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