

Country Guidance: Pakistan



Country Guidance: Pakistan

Common analysis and guidance note

October 2026



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List of abbreviations and glossary

Term	Definition
AJK	Azad Jammu and Kashmir
AQIS	Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent
ANP	Awami National Party
ASWJ	Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat
ATA	Anti-Terrorism Act
BHUs	Basic Health Units
BLA	Balochistan Liberation Army
BLA-A	Balochistan Liberation Army Azad
BLF	Balochistan Liberation Front
BNA	Baloch National Army
BNP	Balochistan National Party
BRAS	Baloch Raji Aajoi Sangar
CDF	Chief of Defence Forces
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
COI	Country of origin information
CPEC	China–Pakistan Economic Corridor
CSOs	Civil society organisations
CTD	Counter Terrorism Departments
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
EU	European Union
EU+ countries	Member States of the European Union and associated countries
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
Fatwa	Non-binding religious opinion issued by an Islamic scholar
FC	Frontier Corps
FIA	The Federal Investigative Agency
GB	Gilgit-Baltistan
Hadd (plural: hudud)	A category of crime under Islamic Law. Punishment for crimes against God prescribed in the Quran, sometimes punishable by death
Haram	Anything prohibited by the Islamic law, referring to actions, behaviours, or other matters that are forbidden and considered sinful. Such prohibitions are based on the Quran and the Sunnah (the teachings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad)
Hazaragi	A dialect of Afghan Dari language spoken mainly by the Hazara people of Afghanistan and Pakistan
HGB	Hafiz Gul Bahadur





Term	Definition
Hindko	An Indo-Aryan language group spoken in Pakistan, mainly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (especially Hazara and Peshawar divisions) and parts of northern Punjab
HuM	Harakat ul-Mujahideen
ICT	Islamabad Capital Territory
IED	Improvised explosive device
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
ISKP	Islamic State Khorasan Province
ISPP	Islamic State Pakistan Province
JeM	Jaish-e Mohammed
Jirga	Tribal assembly
Katchi abadis	Informal settlements
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
LeJ	Lashkar-e Jhangvi
LeT	Lashkar-e- Taiba
Madrasa	Islamic religious school
Member States	Member States of the European Union
MQM-L	Muttahida Qaumi Movement - London
MQM-P	Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan
PECA	Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act
PML-N	Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz)
PPC	Pakistan Penal Code
PPP	Pakistan People's Party
PTI	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf
PTM	Pashtun Tahafuz Movement
QR	Qualification Regulation - Regulation (EU) 2024/1347 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection and for the content of the protection granted, amending Council Directive 2003/109/EC and repealing Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council
Refugee Convention	The 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1967 Protocol (referred to in EU asylum legislation and by the CJEU as 'the Geneva Convention')
Riots	Violent demonstrations, often involving a spontaneous action by unorganised, unaffiliated members of society
Sharia	The religious law of Islam; Islamic canonical law
SOGIESC	Sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, or sex characteristics





Term	Definition
SRA	Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army
SSP	Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan
TLP	Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan
TTP	Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



Introduction

The country guidance documents provide country-specific common analysis and guidance in relation to the assessment criteria established in the Qualification Regulation (QR) ⁽¹⁾, which repealed the recast Qualification Directive (QD) ⁽²⁾ with its entry into application on 12 June 2026. They are developed by the EUAA together with a network of senior-level policy officials from EU+ countries and represent their joint assessment of the situation in main countries of origin, in accordance with current EU legislation and jurisprudence of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU). The European Commission and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also provide valuable input in this process.

The aim of the country guidance documents is to assist decision-makers and policy-makers in their daily work and to foster convergence in the assessment of applications for international protection and the type of protection granted in the context of the Common European Asylum System.

The development, review and update of country guidance is regulated under [Article 11 of the EUAA Regulation](#) ⁽³⁾.



In accordance with Article 11(3) EUAA Regulation, Member States have the obligation to take into account the common analysis and guidance notes when examining applications for international protection, without prejudice to their competence to decide on individual applications.



For more details on the process of producing country guidance documents and the exact role of stakeholders involved, see 'EUAA, [Country Guidance: Methodology](#), November 2024'.

This document encompasses the development, review and update of country guidance and regulates the work of the EUAA Country Guidance Network and all related processes.

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- ⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2024/1347 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection and for the content of the protection granted, amending Council Directive 2003/109/EC and repealing Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council.
- ⁽²⁾ Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (recast).
- ⁽³⁾ Regulation (EU) 2021/2303 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2021 on the European Union Agency for Asylum and repealing Regulation (EU) No 439/2010.



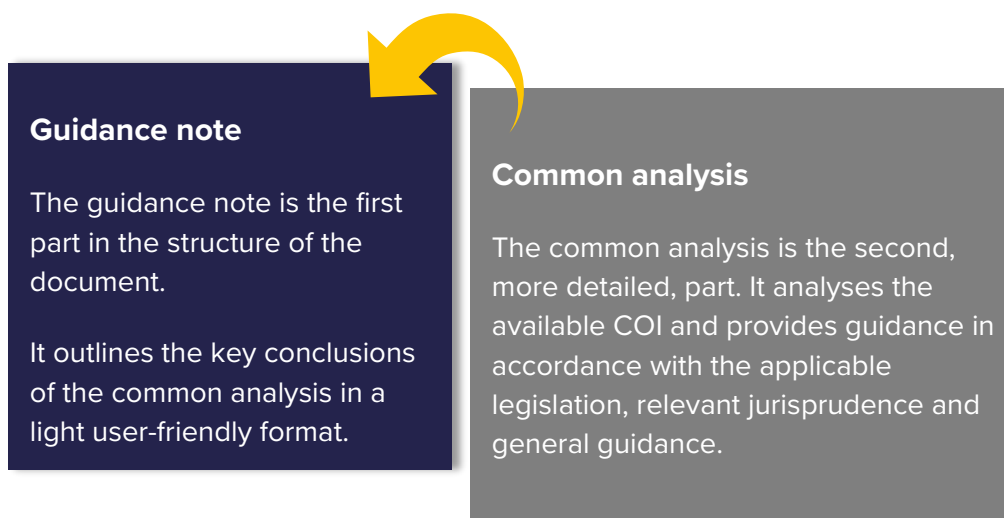
This common analysis is mainly based on country of origin information (COI) covering the period November 2024 – April 2026. Some additional information on major political, human rights and security developments covering the period April – July 2026 has also been reflected. Each section of the country guidance documents also clearly states the timing of its last update.

The analysis and guidance within this document should be considered valid as long as current events and developments in the country fall within the trends and patterns described within the COI on which the assessment at hand is based on.

The analysis and guidance provided within this document are not exhaustive.

Common analysis, guidance note and methodological approach

The country guidance document consists of two components: the guidance note and the common analysis. These two parts focus on the situation in the country of origin and provide analysis and guidance on the assessment of relevant international protection needs.



The Country Guidance documents should be read in conjunction with the separate document 'EUAA, [Country Guidance: explained](#), February 2026'.

This document outlines the general guidance relied upon in this analysis, as well as the methodological framework, approach and indicators used to assess the different elements of qualification for international protection.

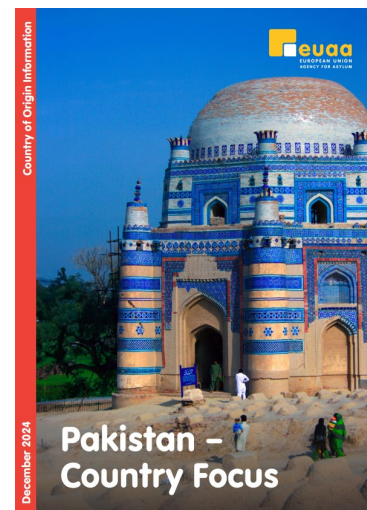
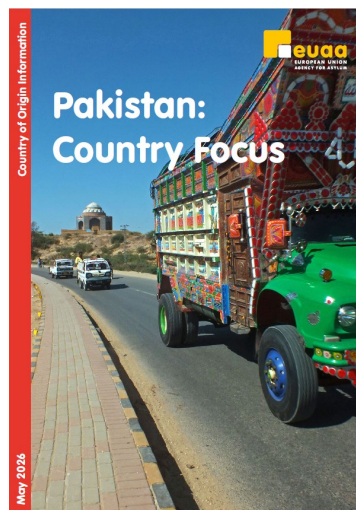


Scope of this development

This development focuses on the international protection needs of the profiles of applicants for international protection most frequently encountered in the caseload of EU+ countries. It covers the situation of individuals perceived by the Pakistani authorities as criticising them; education personnel and individuals involved in polio vaccination campaigns; ethnic and religious minorities; individuals considered as blasphemers, apostates, atheists, converts, and individuals (perceived as) transgressing other Islamic norms such as those involved in interfaith marriages; women and girls; children and persons with diverse SOGIESC. Additionally, this development covers the international protection needs of Pakistani applicants under the meaning of Article 15 QR, as well as the potential availability of an internal protection alternative. The main actors in Pakistan are covered by the sections on actors of persecution or serious harm and actors of protection. Finally, the present development also addresses general exclusion considerations to be taken into account when assessing the international protection needs of Pakistani applicants.

This development is mainly based on the following EUAA COI products:

	
COI QUERY	
Country of Origin	Pakistan
Title	Major political, human rights and security developments
Reference period	24 April to 21 July 2026. Information outside the reference period has been included where relevant or necessary, including district-level information for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)
Topics	1. Political and human rights developments 2. Attacks on polio vaccination personnel 3. Sons and women subjected to arranged or forced marriage 4. Consequences of refusal to enter arranged and forced marriage 5. Acts against persons transgressing Islamic norms by non-state actors 6. Recent security developments 7. Status Pakistanis within EU+ (distinction-level situation overview)
Date of completion	21 July 2026
Query Code	Q25-2026
Contributing EU+ COI units (if applicable)	N/A



EUAA COI Query

'Pakistan: Major political, human rights and security developments'

21 July 2026.

Available in [PDF](#).

EUAA COI Report

'Pakistan: Country Focus',
May 2026.

Available in [PDF](#) and [online](#).

EUAA COI Report

'Pakistan: Country Focus',
December 2024

Available in [PDF](#).

[Annex: Country of origin information references](#) provides further details and links to all COI documents used as a basis for the analysis within this document. References within this document are to the respective sections of these COI documents.



While the country guidance is fundamentally based on COI, it is not COI itself.

For additional information regarding the relationship between country of origin information and country guidance see 'EUAA, [Using country guidance](#)' in [Country Guidance: Explained](#), February 2026'.





Guidance note

Last update: October 2026

The guidance note on Pakistan is produced by the EUAA together with EU+ countries ⁽⁴⁾ in accordance with Article 11 of the EUAA Regulation ⁽⁵⁾. It is based on and summarises the conclusions of the comprehensive common analysis. The aim of the guidance note and the common analysis is to assist EU+ countries in the examination of applications for international protection, thereby fostering convergence of asylum practices and decisions across the EU.

This guidance note is part of the ‘Country Guidance: Pakistan’ and should be read in conjunction with the [Common analysis](#).

Among the main [Actors of persecution or serious harm](#) who are reported to commit serious human rights violations, [state actors](#) include the Pakistani armed forces, Intelligence services, paramilitary groups and the police. They are nationwide present, with dense deployment in conflict-affected areas. Also reported to commit serious human rights violations, [non-state actors](#) include regionally anchored armed groups and the society at large, community members, and even family members.

Among the most commonly encountered profiles of applicants for international protection, the following would in general have a well-founded fear of persecution and would **highly likely qualify for refugee status**:

- Leaders and prominent members of the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM - see [Human rights defenders and activists](#))
- Leaders and prominent members of groups advocating for Baloch rights (see [Human rights defenders and activists](#))
- [Journalists and other media workers](#) (seen as) critical to the Pakistan armed forces
- Persons formally charged with blasphemy (see [Individuals \(perceived as\) transgressing Islamic norms](#))
- [Persons with diverse SOGIESC](#)

Further guidance is provided on the **risk-impacting circumstances** which may affect the probability of granting refugee status for the following profiles:

- PTI members and supporters (see [PTI and MQM-L members and supporters](#))

⁽⁴⁾ The assessment and guidance reflect the conclusions of the EUAA Country Guidance Network, which consists of EU Member States, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland. The guidance note has been endorsed by the EUAA Management Board.

⁽⁵⁾ Regulation (EU) 2021/2303 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2021 on the European Union Agency for Asylum and repealing Regulation (EU) No 439/2010.





- [Protesters](#)
- [Human rights defenders and activists](#) others than leaders and prominent members of PTM and groups advocating for Baloch rights
- [Journalists and other media workers](#) other than those (seen as) critical to the Pakistan armed forces
- [Education personnel](#)
- [Individuals involved in polio vaccination campaigns](#)
- [Pashtuns](#)
- [Baloch people](#)
- [Ahmadis](#)
- [Christians](#)
- [Hindus](#)
- [Shia Muslims](#) including [Hazaras](#)
- [Individuals \(perceived as\) transgressing Islamic norms](#) other than those formally charged with blasphemy
- [Women and girls](#)
- [Children](#)

For persons under the following profiles the threshold of persecution would be reached in exceptional cases:

- MQM-L members or supporters (see [PTI and MQM-L members and supporters](#))

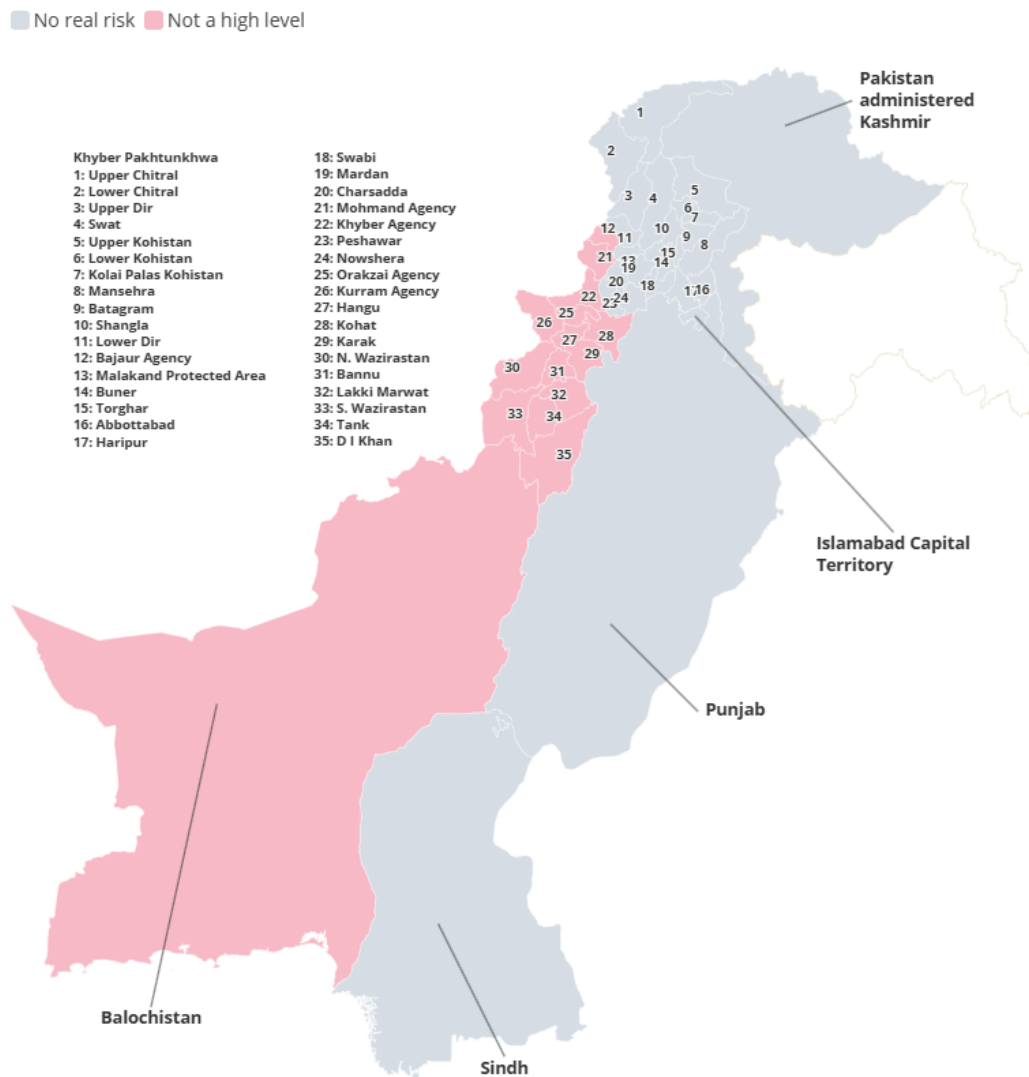
If an applicant is not considered eligible for refugee status, the assessment should proceed with the examination of **subsidiary protection**.

With regard to [Article 15\(a\) QR: death penalty or execution](#), while no executions were reported since 2019, if there is real risk of execution, and no nexus to a reason for persecution can be substantiated, subsidiary protection under Article 15(a) QR shall be granted.

[Article 15\(b\) QR: torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment](#) may be applicable, when no nexus to a reason for persecution can be substantiated, to cases of [Arbitrary arrests, illegal detention and prison conditions](#), [Trafficking in human beings](#) and [Violence in relation to land disputes](#).

With regard to subsidiary protection under [Article 15\(c\) QR](#), the guidance provides an assessment of the level of indiscriminate violence as displayed in the map below. Notably, it is assessed that indiscriminate violence takes place in Balochistan and South and West Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), however not at a high level. In the provinces of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), North and East Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) including Peshawar, Pakistan Administered Kashmir, Punjab, and Sindh, there is no real risk for a civilian to be personally affected within the meaning of Article 15(c) QR.





While the Pakistani state is generally able to provide protection across most of its territory, its willingness to do so can be undermined by several factors (see [Actors of protection](#)).

It is further assessed that [Internal protection alternative](#) may be applicable in Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore, depending on the profile and individual circumstances of the applicant. This conclusion is without prejudice to the possibility to apply IPA to other locations in Pakistan.

Finally, [Exclusion](#) considerations may be relevant in a number of cases concerning applicants from Pakistan, such as (former) members of the Pakistani state armed forces, including the Pakistani army, police, rangers and/or other state supported armed militias; (former) members of Islamist, terrorist and/or insurgent groups, such as LeT, TTP and affiliated groups, and BLA; (former) members of groups known for sectarian violence such as the Sipah-e Sahaba Pakistan (SSP); (former) members of trafficking networks; individuals involved in mob attacks; individuals involved in riots and perpetrators of forced marriage, child marriage or forced conversion.



Common analysis



1. General situation in Pakistan

Last update: October 2026

The information below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#), 1.; [Country Focus 2026](#), 2.1., 6.1.7.; [Country Focus 2024](#), 2.1.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.



Since the downfall of Imran Khan's PTI-led cabinet in 2022, Pakistan experiences significant political turmoil centred on the attempts of the other two largest parties, PML-N and PPP, to gain and consolidate power, the push towards a stronger influence of the Army on political life, and, ultimately, the buildup of a system designed to prevent PTI from coming back to power despite its popularity.

Pakistan's new political trajectory began with the removal of Prime Minister Imran Khan, founder and leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), through a parliamentary vote of no confidence in April 2022. He was replaced by Shehbaz Sharif of the Pakistan Muslim League–Nawaz (PML-N), followed by a caretaker administration ahead of the elections. During this transition, the military remained a central political actor.

A major escalation followed Khan's arrest on corruption charges in May 2023. It triggered nationwide protests, some of which became violent and involved attacks on military and government installations. The state response included mass arrests, the use of force against demonstrators, and military proceedings against civilians. Khan later received sentences in cases concerning corruption, state secrets, and marriage-law related matters. Although some convictions were later overturned or suspended, he reportedly remained detained based on new charges. The wider context also reflected reported pressure on PTI members and supporters through arrests, prosecutions, and ongoing political restrictions.

Ahead of the February 2024 elections, PTI faced significant legal and political constraints. Nevertheless, PTI-linked candidates won the largest number of seats, although not enough to form a government. A coalition led by the PML-N and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) was formed, with Shehbaz Sharif returning as prime minister and Asif Ali Zardari becoming president. PTI's position weakened in 2025: although the Supreme Court initially ruled in PTI's favour regarding reserved seats for women and minorities, subsequent judicial and political developments reallocated these seats in a manner that strengthened the governing coalition.

Political space narrowed during 2024–2026. Major PTI protests in Islamabad in November 2024 led to thousands of arrests, casualties, and internet shutdowns, while further opposition protests occurred in February 2026. Numerous PTI supporters were detained ahead of protests demanding the release of Imran Khan. Some PTI leaders were subjected to custodial torture. In May 2025, the Supreme Court authorised military trials for civilians linked to the May 2023 unrest, raising concerns regarding fair trial guarantees. In November 2025, constitutional amendments expanded the authority of the army chief and transferred constitutional powers from the Supreme Court to a Federal Constitutional Court. During the same period, the Punjab Assembly adopted a resolution seeking a ban on PTI and Imran



Khan, while the PTM (Pashtun Tahafuz Movement) and the TLP (Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan) were banned.

The economic situation worsened following the COVID 19 pandemic and at times led to protests, some of them having been met with violence by the Pakistani authorities.



2. Regional context

Last update: October 2026

The information below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [Country Focus 2026, 2.2.](#); [Country Focus 2024, 2.2.](#); Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.



Pakistan's regional context is marked by persistent instability on its frontiers. Relations with Afghanistan are increasingly conflictual, driven by border disputes, militancy, deportations and cross-border strikes. Relations with India remain adversarial, centred on Kashmir and renewed military escalation in 2025. By contrast, ties with Iran are comparatively stable, despite episodic security tensions, and are sustained through diplomatic and economic cooperation.

Relations with Afghanistan

Pakistan's expectation that its support for the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in 2021 would produce a government aligned with Islamabad did not materialise. Relations between the two countries had deteriorated markedly by 2024–2026. The principal bilateral dispute remains the Durand Line, the border drawn during the colonial period between Afghanistan and British India, which Afghanistan has historically not recognised. This issue intersects with disputes over border management, cross-border movement, and the status of Pashtun populations across the frontier.

Pakistan accuses the Afghan Taliban of allowing Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) to operate from Afghan territory, alleging that such groups are responsible for attacks inside Pakistan. Afghan authorities deny these allegations and, in turn, accuse Pakistan of supporting Islamic State-linked militants. Bilateral relations are further strained by Pakistani trade restrictions, tighter border controls, and the large-scale deportation of Afghan nationals, including undocumented persons and categories of formerly protected residents. Tensions also increased in connection with Pakistan's plans for, and subsequent implementation of, cross-border military operations.

The situation escalated into direct military confrontation. From October 2025 onwards, Afghan Taliban forces and Pakistani troops reportedly engaged in repeated border clashes, while Pakistani airstrikes targeted locations inside Afghanistan, including Kabul. These developments reportedly caused military and civilian casualties. Border closures further disrupted trade and wider economic relations. Although temporary ceasefires were reported following heavy fighting along the border in October 2025 and in March 2026 following airstrikes especially by Pakistan, tensions along the Afghanistan–Pakistan border persist.

Relations with India

Relations between Pakistan and India remain adversarial and primarily security-driven, centred on the unresolved dispute over Jammu and Kashmir. Long-standing tensions derive from the



1947 partition of British India, subsequent wars and military confrontations over Kashmir, and reciprocal allegations regarding support for militant actors. India accuses Pakistan of supporting jihadist groups operating in Indian-administered Kashmir, while Pakistan accuses India of supporting insurgent and separatist violence, including in Balochistan.

Bilateral relations had already deteriorated following the 2019 Kashmir crisis, which followed the Pulwama attack, and India's subsequent airstrikes in Pakistan. A 2021 ceasefire contributed to a reduction in cross-border firing and to a relative improvement in the security situation. However, the relationship remained fragile, and political normalisation did not follow. A further major crisis emerged in April 2025 after an attack on tourists in Pahalgam, in Indian-administered Kashmir. India responded by suspending a key water-sharing treaty, halting trade, suspending most visas, and deporting Pakistani nationals. Pakistan adopted reciprocal measures, including visa restrictions, closure of its airspace to Indian aircraft, and a trade ban. Four days of shelling and aerial military operations followed before a ceasefire was reached, reportedly restoring the previous military status quo. Despite that ceasefire, bilateral tensions remain high, with continued military exercises, missile tests, and mutual accusations regarding nuclear security and regional stability.

Relations with Iran

Compared with its relations with Afghanistan and India, Pakistan's relations with Iran remain more stable, notwithstanding recurring security tensions. The bilateral relationship continues to be underpinned by cultural and religious links, economic cooperation, and pilgrimage routes used by Pakistani Shia Muslims. At the same time, both countries continue to face shared challenges linked to cross-border militant activity, Baloch insurgent presence on both sides of the border, and insecurity in frontier areas.

In January 2024, tensions briefly escalated when Iran launched missile strikes inside Pakistan against the Baloch militant group Jaish al-Adl, after which Pakistan retaliated by striking targets associated with the Balochistan Liberation Army and the Balochistan Liberation Front inside Iran. Diplomatic relations were subsequently restored, ambassadors returned to their posts, and bilateral engagement resumed. Cooperation reportedly deepened further in 2025, including the signing of 12 agreements covering trade, transport, science and technology, agriculture, and tourism, alongside a stated objective of increasing annual bilateral trade to USD 10 billion. Following the 2026 Iran–US/Israel conflict, Pakistan has adopted a cautious but broadly supportive position toward Iran while also seeking to present itself as a possible intermediary between Tehran and Washington.



3. Actors of persecution or serious harm



For general guidance on the country guidance approach to this section, see ‘EUAA, [Actors of persecution or serious harm](#) in [Country Guidance: explained](#), February 2026’.

In Pakistan, a wide range of different actors can be considered as actors of persecution or serious harm. Applicants might be at risk of persecution or serious harm by more than one actor. The following sections highlight the main actors of persecution and serious harm as well as their areas of activity in a non-exhaustive manner.

3.1. Areas of control and influence

Last update: October 2026

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#), 6., 7.; [Country Focus 2026](#), 3.; [Country Focus 2024](#), 3.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

[State actors](#) — including the Pakistan Army, Frontier Corps and police — exercise nationwide presence, with particularly dense deployment in conflict-affected areas. Their operational focus is strongest in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), especially the southern belt and former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), as well as in Balochistan, where military and paramilitary forces conduct counterinsurgency operations, maintain checkpoints and border control, and carry out drone strikes and large-scale security campaigns.

The **[Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan \(TTP\) and affiliated groups](#)** maintain their core areas of influence in southern KP and former FATA, where they operate entrenched networks, exercise shadow governance in parts of North Waziristan, and conduct frequent attacks. Their presence has expanded to most districts of KP, with growing reach into urban centres such as Peshawar and parts of Malakand.

[Islamic State Khorasan Province \(ISKP\) and Pakistan Province \(ISPP\)](#) operate primarily through cells in KP urban hubs (notably Peshawar) and adjacent regions, carrying out high-profile attacks, often overlapping geographically with TTP activity.

[Lashkar-e-Taiba \(LeT\)](#) maintains a more structured, network-based presence, with influence extending beyond KP into Punjab and urban areas, often less visible but organisationally developed.

[Balochistan nationalist groups](#) are mainly active in Balochistan province, particularly in insurgency-affected districts, where they challenge state control and target infrastructure and security forces.



Other armed groups such as **Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP)** / **Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ)** and **Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ)** operate through networks across KP and parts of Punjab, with concentrations in sectarian hotspots such as Dera Ismail Khan and Kurram, conducting targeted violence rather than territorial control.

3.2. State actors

Last update: October 2026

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [Country Focus 2026](#), [2.1](#), [3.1.2](#), [3.1.8](#), [4.2.1](#), [4.2.2](#), [6.1](#), [6.1.1](#), [6.1.7](#), [6.1.9](#); [Country Focus 2024](#), [3.1.1](#), [3.1.2](#), [3.1.3](#), [3.1.4](#), [3.1.5](#), [3.1.6](#), [3.1.7](#), [6.4.2](#), [6.8](#); Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

3.2.1. The Pakistan armed forces

Pakistan's armed forces are the country's largest military institution, with an overall basin of about 1.71 million and roughly 650 000 – 660 000 active-duty members, including around 550 000 in the army. They consist of the army, navy and air force, each headed by its own chief of staff.

Since the 27th Constitutional Amendment of November 2025, the serving army chief — currently General Asim Munir — automatically also holds the post of Chief of Defence Forces (CDF), granting him primacy and direct operational authority over the heads of the navy and air force. The reform also strengthened the army chief's institutional position within the state structure. The military is capable of operating throughout Pakistan. Counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations are concentrated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

In these areas, the army has been accused of serious human rights abuses against civilians, including extrajudicial killings, torture, enforced disappearances, and arbitrary detention. Reports also refer to targeted actions against activists and critical voices, as well as violent repression of protests, including the use of lethal force against demonstrators.

Additionally, in May 2025, the Supreme Court of Pakistan validated the conduct of military trials for civilians accused of involvement in the May 2023 unrest. As military court proceedings are conducted by serving military officers, and the military is therefore directly involved in the adjudication process, any allegations of due process violations, as well as any rights abuses associated with the conduct of such trials and the sentences imposed, may engage the responsibility of military authorities.

3.2.2. The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA)

Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) deals with complex criminal cases requiring a federal response, particularly those spanning provinces or involving an international dimension. Its mandate includes terrorism, espionage, trafficking in human beings, irregular migration, corruption, blasphemy-related offences, cybercrime and cyberterrorism. In recent years, FIA and other Pakistani authorities have significantly enhanced their surveillance



capabilities and extended their control over online and social media content. FIA officials, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the armed forces have repeatedly relied on offences relating to ‘hate speech’, defamation and ‘cyber terrorism’ under the 2016 Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) to target activists, journalists and other critics, as well as members of the political opposition. FIA officials have also reportedly been involved in the arrest, detention and ill-treatment of media workers and, at times, their relatives.

3.2.3. Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)

The Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) is Pakistan’s main and largest intelligence agency and is widely regarded as highly influential in state policy and security matters. It is a military-run body headed by a three-star army general, while its board and core staff are mainly composed of military officers, with civilian personnel in support roles. The agency has internal and external wings, as well as specialised sections, and is involved in both foreign intelligence and domestic surveillance. The ISI and the armed forces reportedly monitor phone calls, text messages and internet activity. Mass-surveillance has been linked to the repression of dissent, including extrajudicial killings and disappearances, particularly in Balochistan.

3.2.4. Paramilitary groups and pro-government militias

Pakistan’s paramilitary forces consist mainly of the Frontier Corps (FC) and the Rangers. Both are formally affiliated with the Ministry of Interior but also form part of the army’s reserve forces and are overseen by army officers.

The FC primarily operates in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan, where it patrols border areas, secures checkpoints, crossing points and trade routes, and supports civilian authorities in internal security operations. It has also been linked to extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, particularly in Balochistan. The Rangers are tasked with maintaining law and order in urban centres and border areas and are also deployed for counterterrorism operations and security during major public events. The rangers took part in the violent suppression of protests in the Pakistan Administered Kashmir in May 2024.

Pro-government militias, often described as ‘peace militias’ in KP or ‘death squads’ in Balochistan, reportedly operate with support from security forces, including the FC. They have been accused of targeting suspected Baloch nationalists and of carrying out extrajudicial killings, torture, enforced disappearance, abduction, arbitrary detention, landmine attacks and forced land occupation, often with impunity.

3.2.5. The Pakistani police

Pakistan’s police consist of federal and provincial police organisations operating under separate administrative structures. Police structures are organised hierarchically, with district police officers reporting through regional and provincial chains of command headed by an Inspector General of Police. In addition to regular police forces, specialised bodies such as Counter Terrorism Departments (CTDs) operate within the provincial systems.



In the former FATA, civilian policing had traditionally been carried out by the Levies and Khasadars paramilitary forces. Following the merger of FATA with KP, both forces were gradually absorbed into the provincial police structure, although reports indicated that inadequate training and continuing tribal loyalties remained significant concerns. In 2025, the Frontier Constabulary, formerly a KP-recruited paramilitary force tasked with border law and order, was transformed into the nationwide Federal Constabulary, now operating across Pakistan, including in operations against criminal gangs and smugglers.

Police forces in Pakistan have been widely criticised for systemic abuses and human rights violations. Extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances were reported. Torture was frequently used, mainly during arrests and interrogations, particularly to extract confessions, as well as arbitrary detention, including cases attributed to CTDs in Balochistan. Alleged bias and arbitrariness in handling criminal complaints, discouragement of crime registration, and inadequacies in preventing and responding to crimes were also noted. Sources also highlighted severe deficiencies in police training, contributing to an institutional reliance on force as a default response mechanism.



State actors have been held responsible for extrajudicial killings, torture, physical violence, enforced disappearances and arrests targeting ethnic minorities, including [Pashtuns](#) and [Baloch people](#). The use of force by state actors has also been reported in particular against [Ahmadis](#), as well as against [women](#), and [Persons with diverse SOGIESC](#). State actors have allegedly further committed a range of human rights violations against [human rights defenders and activists](#), [protesters](#), [journalists](#), including extrajudicial killings, physical violence, enforced disappearances, and arbitrary arrests. [Members of the PTI](#) have reportedly been subjected to custodial torture, arrests, and preventive detention. There have been instances of persons accused of blasphemy serving life sentences or being detained on blasphemy charges, during which they have been subjected to duress and faced obstacles in accessing legal assistance (see [Individuals \(perceived as\) transgressing Islamic norms](#)). Corrupt government officials at times support criminal groups and networks involved in [Trafficking in human beings](#).

3.3. Non-state actors

Last update: October 2026

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#), 1.; [Country Focus 2026](#), 3.1., 3.2., 4.2.1., 4.2.5., 6.1.2., 6.1.9., 6.1.10.; [Country Focus 2024](#), 1.2., 1.3., 3.2.7., 3.2.12., 4.2.6.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Numerous armed groups cooperate or compete with one another, merge, or emerge as splinter factions. Those non-state armed groups are present and scattered across the country, while not controlling any contiguous territory over the long term.



3.3.1. Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and affiliated groups

Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is an umbrella organisation of militant groups established with the approbation of Taliban leaders from the former FATA, that aim to overthrow the Pakistani government and establish a state based on Islamic rule. The group is considered the most lethal insurgent group in Pakistan, incorporating over 70 militant factions into its coalition, and an estimated number of 6 000 fighters. It benefits from significant operational and logistical support from Afghanistan's Taliban *de facto* authorities.

It operates mainly in KP near the Afghan border. Its core operational areas remained the former tribal districts of KP and adjacent border districts. TTP also expanded its activities to north-western and southern districts of KP, particularly Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, and Lakki Marwat, maintaining persistent operational intensity. Some operations further extended into South Punjab and parts of Balochistan. Although TTP has not yet established a strong operational presence outside KP, it has strengthened its footprint through alliances with local militant factions in Punjab and Karachi. It additionally attempted to establish quasi-governance systems and shadow administrations across the former tribal districts, southern KP, parts of Punjab, and Balochistan.

TTP shifted away from indiscriminate attacks on civilians, perpetrating attacks on security forces, infrastructure, and individuals perceived to be linked to the state, such as 'military-owned businesses', individuals working in the legal and judicial sectors, schools and teachers (see [Education personnel](#)), and Pashtun individuals involved in tribal assemblies or local peacebuilding. TTP has also killed many leaders of the Awami National Party (see [Pashtuns](#)). The group has been highly active. Some attacks caused large numbers of casualties and involved the use of sniper rifles, night-vision goggles, and drones.

In areas under its influence, the establishment of checkpoints, and shadow governance structures contributed to intimidation and weakening of state authority.

TTP maintains links with several allied and associated militant groups, including Jamaat-ul Ahrar (JuA), factions associated with the so-called Punjabi Taliban (such as Jaish-e Muhammad (JeM) and Harakat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM), the Haqqani Network, the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), and at the tactical level, ISKP. Although many Punjabi Taliban factions became dormant or merged with Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) after 2014, TTP reportedly sought to revive these structures in Punjab and Karachi in support of a broader nationwide insurgency strategy. At the same time, while TTP and Hafiz Gul Bahadur (HGB) are ideologically affiliated, TTP faces growing rivalry from HGB because of their tribal difference and geographical origin, HGB being mainly based in North Waziristan. For more information on HGB, see [Other armed groups](#).

3.3.2. Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) and Pakistan Province (ISPP)

Islamic State activity in Pakistan is mainly represented by two branches: Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) and Islamic State Pakistan Province (ISPP). ISKP adheres to a Salafist-jihadist ideology and operates primarily in Afghanistan, while also maintaining a



presence in Pakistan, especially in KP and Balochistan, and to a lesser extent in Punjab. Estimates of the group's size range from around 2 000 to 6 000 fighters. Although its operational footprint remains more limited than that of groups such as TTP, the organisation continues to pose an unpredictable security challenge because of its decentralised network structure and evolving operational tactics. ISKP also maintains sympathisers in major urban centres including Islamabad, Lahore, and Sialkot district in Punjab.

ISPP formally split from ISKP in 2019 and operates exclusively within Pakistan, primarily in Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and Pakistan Administered Kashmir, while maintaining a more limited presence in KP. In Balochistan, the activities of ISKP and ISPP are reportedly difficult to distinguish. Although ISPP is generally associated with smaller-scale attacks (including acts of sectarian violence), it claims several major deadly attacks in Balochistan and in Islamabad. Since 2019, ISPP carried out around 100 attacks, mostly in Balochistan.

Both organisations contribute to insecurity through attacks motivated by sectarian ideology and through violence directed at ethnic and religious minorities, as well as political opponents, such as the Balochistan National Party (BNP) (see [Pashtuns](#), [Baloch people](#) and [Shia Muslims](#) including [Hazaras](#)). The groups frequently use improvised explosive devices (IED), suicide attacks, and targeted assassinations, causing casualties among both civilians and state personnel.

3.3.3. Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)

Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) is a Salafist militant organisation that seeks Pakistani control over Kashmir and to establish Islamic rule across the Indian subcontinent. The group's headquarters are located in Muridke, Punjab Province, and it is estimated to have several thousand members. LeT has cooperated with groups such as JeM and HuM and has also supported al-Qaeda.

While there has been uncertainty regarding the operativity of the group, LeT is reportedly linked to the April 2025 deadly attack in Pahalgam in India, who, in retaliation, launched missile strikes against alleged LeT headquarters in Muridke. Unlike anti-state militant groups operating inside Pakistan, LeT reportedly refrains from conducting attacks within Pakistan, publicly condemns anti-state militancy, and assists efforts to counter militant groups.

3.3.4. Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP)

Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) is a hardline Sunni Islamist political party known for its strong anti-blasphemy platform and capacity to mobilise large street protests. TLP supporters are linked to intimidation and violence against [Religious minorities](#), particularly [Ahmadis](#), and [Individuals \(perceived as\) transgressing Islamic norms](#), and to unrest involving road blockades and clashes with police. In October 2025, following violent protests in Punjab, the federal government banned TLP under anti-terrorism legislation, sealed its offices and froze its assets.

In July 2026, police in Hyderabad (Sindh Province) registered anti-terrorism cases against 41 workers and leaders of the banned TLP, alleging that they had continued organising and recruiting for the party despite the federal ban.



3.3.5. Balochistan nationalist groups

Baloch nationalist groups continue to operate mainly across Balochistan province, with coordinated attacks also in Sindh province (see also [Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army](#) under [Other armed groups](#)). The separatist insurgency is driven by local perceptions of political marginalisation, economic exploitation of natural resources, and opposition to projects linked to the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Estimates of the group’s size range from around 4 000 to 5 000 militants, consisting of factions. Baloch separatist groups primarily target security forces, infrastructure, foreign investments, non-Baloch workers and settlers, including ethnic Punjabis. The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) are prominent Balochistan nationalist groups.

The BLA, banned in Pakistan since 2006, is considered the largest and most active militant organisation in Balochistan. It seeks independence from Pakistan and accuses the government of exploiting the province’s resources and committing human rights violations against [Baloch people](#). The organisation also expanded the role of women within militant operations, including participation in suicide attacks. The group operates through decentralised cells across Balochistan and increasingly uses sophisticated weaponry. It relies on hit-and-run tactics, such as suicide attacks (including suicide car bombings), IED attacks, ambushes, and blockades. Its activities mainly include attacks against security forces, Chinese citizens and investments, off-duty security personnel, and civilians travelling to Punjab. In March 2025, the BLA hijacked the Jaffar Express train with more than 400 passengers, including at least 100 members of the security forces, on board, travelling from Quetta to Peshawar, indicating an increase in the group’s operational capabilities. The BLA-A, a faction of the BLA, traditionally weaker and less active, shows signs of renewed activity through suicide bombing, low-profile bombings, ambushes, as well as executions of alleged state collaborators and security force personnel.

The BLF is mainly active in central and southern Balochistan, including the Makran division and Awaran district. It focuses on guerrilla warfare and has expanded to include suicide attacks and the involvement of women fighters.

Another significant group, the Baloch National Army (BNA), emerged in 2022 and temporarily became the third strongest militant organisation in Balochistan. However, following the arrest of its leadership and surrender of its commanders in 2023, the organisation largely ceased to exist, and its members were recruited by the BLA and the BLF.

3.3.6. Other armed groups

Alongside major militant organisations such as TTP and ISKP, several sectarian, ideological, and/or regionally focused armed groups continue to operate across Pakistan. Their activities are characterised by sectarian violence, targeted killings, attacks on civilians, and cooperation or overlap with broader militant networks.

Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) is a Sunni Deobandi anti-Shia organisation founded in Punjab with the aim of targeting the country’s Shia population. The group had between 3 000 and 6 000 members mainly operating in Punjab, Karachi, and the former FATA. It targets Shia



community members and Shia places of worship. After having been banned by the Pakistani government, SSP continues to operate under the name Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ) and has used the names SSP and its separate armed wing, LeJ, when claiming militant activities.

Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ), a separate armed wing of SSP, that previously carried out high-profile attacks against the Shia community, has been significantly weakened in recent years. The group has shifted its focus to smaller-scale targeted killings and sporadic attacks in Punjab, Sindh, and KP. LeJ has been characterised as a fragmented organisation with limited operational capabilities, comprising a few hundred members. The group has allegedly operated in Quetta (Balochistan), Karachi (Sindh), parts of Punjab (including Lahore), and in KP's Kurram and Peshawar districts.

Hafiz Gul Bahadur (HGB) is an independent militant umbrella organisation based mainly in North Waziristan. It competes with TTP over territorial control, authority, and resources in the Waziristan region. HGB carried out numerous attacks against security forces, including ambushes, IED attacks, and suicide bombings, mainly in North Waziristan, and emerged as a growing security threat.

Sindhi nationalist militant groups include the **Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army (SRA)** which has operated mainly in Karachi and interior Sindh, where they reportedly target civilians perceived to have links to Pakistani security and intelligence agencies, including individuals of Punjabi ethnicity. SRA, together with other groups such as the BLA and the BLF, is part of the Baloch Raji Aajoi Sangar (BRAS) organisation, which acts as a platform for Baloch and Sindhi militant groups to coordinate attacks in Balochistan and Sindh.

In addition to sectarian groups, there are also organised crime groups operating in the country, involved in activities such as trafficking in human beings, forced labour, sexual exploitation, and drug trafficking.

3.3.7. Other non-state actors

The society at large, community members, and even family members can also be considered actors of persecution or serious harm. Members of [Religious minorities](#) and [Individuals \(perceived as\) transgressing Islamic norms](#) accused of blasphemy may face attacks by mobs and/or extrajudicial killing. Women and girls from religious minorities may be subjected to forced conversion to Islam and forced marriage, committed primarily by Muslim men (see [Women and girls](#) and [Children](#)). Family members and the society at large may commit domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, forced and child marriage, and honour crimes. Violence by family members or other members of the community against [Persons with diverse SOGIESC](#) or due to land disputes continues to occur (see [Violence in relation to land disputes](#)). [Trafficking in human beings](#) is perpetrated by criminal groups and networks.



For further information on human rights violations committed by different State and non-state actors and their relevance as potential exclusion grounds, see [8. Exclusion](#).



4. Refugee status

This chapter provides analysis and guidance on the potential international protection needs of selected profiles of applicants. These profiles were selected based on their relevance in the caseload of EU+ countries. The list of profiles addressed in this chapter is non-exhaustive and the fact that a certain profile is included or not is without prejudice to the determination of their protection needs. Furthermore, the order of listed profiles does not reflect any ranking of the potential level of risk of persecution.

While the conclusions under this common analysis provide general guidance, the protection needs of each applicant should be **examined individually**.

The considerations under each profile should, furthermore, be viewed without prejudice to the credibility assessment of the applicant's claims. This common analysis deals solely with issues of risk analysis and qualification.

For each profile, the guidance responds to the following questions:

Step 1: Do the reported acts qualify as persecution?
This part provides examples of acts reported to be committed against individuals belonging to the profile as well as guidance on whether such acts would reach the level of persecution according to Article 9 QR.
Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?
This part assesses how likely it is for applicants within the profile to have a well-founded fear of persecution. Further guidance is provided with regard to the circumstances which should be taken into account in the individual assessment, addressing also how they would impact the risk.
Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?
This part provides guidance on whether in case of substantiated well-founded fear of persecution, this would be connected to a reason falling within the provision of Article 10 QR (nexus).

Relevant COI is also included in the analysis to substantiate the assessment provided. Links to the relevant EUAA COI reports and/or queries are also added.



For more guidance on how to read the following subsections, see 'EUAA, [Refugee status](#) in [Country Guidance: explained](#), February 2026'.



4.1. Persons (perceived to be) opposing the Government

4.1.1. PTI and MQM-L members and supporters

Last update: October 2026

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [Country Focus 2026](#), 2.1.1., 6.1.7.; [Country Focus 2024](#), 2.1., 6.1.7., 6.4.1.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Pakistan's political landscape is characterised by numerous parties, often with regionally or ethnically concentrated support, but effective power remains strongly influenced by the military, which shapes political outcomes and governance. Since 2024, the federal government has been led by a coalition dominated by the PML-N and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), alongside smaller allies.

The opposition remains largely marginalised. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of former Prime Minister Imran Khan was prevented from directly taking part in general elections.

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) has historically been a party representing the interests of the Muhajirs, and its support is concentrated primarily in the city of Karachi and other cities in the province of Sindh. In 2016, the MQM split into the MQM-L, whose leadership is based in London, and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), which aims to mainstream the party and gain a share of political power. The situation of MQM-P is not addressed under this profile since this party is supportive of the current government in Pakistan.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Acts to which members or supporters of the PTI and the MQM-L could be subjected are of such a severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More specifically, PTI members have reportedly been subjected to custodial torture, preventive detention and arrests by [state actors](#). Some party members were accused of rebellion and terrorism, as well as of inciting violence against the state. PTI supporters have also been arrested in the context of protests (see [Protesters](#)). Military courts were reportedly used in some cases for trials related to PTI. Allowing military courts to adjudicate cases of civilians is contrary to the principles of fair trial.

Limited reports describe MQM-L party members having been imprisoned for sedition and anti-terrorism charges. Others have been arrested at party gatherings, some of them having been subsequently charged, and later acquitted.



Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for **PTI members and supporters** to face persecution should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:

- **Visibility and nature of activities:** visibility to the authorities is a critical factor impacting the risk of persecution. Due to their activities, some individuals such as leaders either at the national or provincial level are more visible than others and, as such, face a high risk. Family members of such leaders may also face a high risk. Conversely, ordinary rank and file party members or supporters who do not have other risk-enhancing circumstances will generally not face a risk of persecution.
- **Being known to the authorities:** individuals who have been identified by state authorities as active participants in protests, or against whom state authorities have initiated legal proceedings for their participation in the protests, face a high risk. See also [Protesters](#).

Given that acts of persecution against **MQM-L members or supporters** seldom occur, **well-founded fear of persecution would only be substantiated in exceptional cases**. Therefore, each case must be assessed individually taking into consideration the most recent information available and risk-impacting circumstances such as the applicant's level of visibility, their role within the party, participation in party gatherings, or otherwise being known to the authorities.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile this is highly likely to be for reasons of **political opinion**, as the persecution is directly connected to the expression of political views that are perceived by state authorities as challenging their control over power.

4.1.2. Protesters

Last update: October 2026

This profile covers the situation of protesters as persons who publicly advocate for a given issue by standing in public spaces, taking part in demonstrations, shouting, carrying signs, etc⁽⁶⁾. This profile also addresses the phenomenon of riots as violent demonstrations, often involving a spontaneous action by unorganised, unaffiliated members of society.

This profile should be read in conjunction with [4.1.3. Human rights defenders and activists](#).

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#), 1.; [Country Focus 2026](#), 4.2.6., 6.1.1., 6.1.7.; [Country Focus 2024](#), 6.4.1.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

⁽⁶⁾ Adaptation based on Cambridge Dictionary.

While the Constitution guarantees the right to peaceful assembly, in practice protests are frequently subject to restrictions. Protests occur nationwide, often mobilising large crowds and, at times, escalating into violent unrest, including attacks on police vehicles, ambulances, and schools.

Particularly significant were the nationwide protests following the arrest of Imran Khan in May 2023, which triggered widespread mobilisation across major urban centres. Subsequent protests, led primarily by PTI supporters (see [PTI and MQM-L members and supporters](#)) as well as other political and ethnic groups, also took place regularly. Protests continue to take place in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, for example following the designation in June 2026 of the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) as a proscribed organisation under the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Anti-Terrorism Act, 2014.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Acts to which protesters could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. Protests are regularly met with violence by law enforcement agencies. More specifically, reports describe extrajudicial killings, torture, ill-treatment, enforced disappearances, excessive use of force, arbitrary arrest – including mass arrest – and detention, as well as indiscriminate violence by security forces, even against peaceful protesters.

In itself, the authorities' response to acts committed during riots (such as attacks on police vehicles, ambulances, and schools), when conducted in accordance with international legal standards, does not amount to persecution. However, other acts to which individuals who committed violent acts during riots could be exposed are of such a severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More specifically, rioters have been subjected to custodial torture.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for protesters to face persecution should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:

- **Political background:** those who protest on behalf of the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) or Baloch parties face a particularly high risk. Additionally, as PTI is the main opposition party, those who protests on behalf of the party face a higher risk than those protesting without any visible affiliation. See also [PTI and MQM-L members and supporters](#), and [Human rights defenders and activists](#).
- **Topics:** protesters speaking out against human rights violations (such as against enforced disappearances in Balochistan), against military operations by the authorities (such as security operations in KP and Balochistan), and/or for separatism (such as in Balochistan), face a high risk.
- **Visibility:** visibility to the authorities is a critical factor impacting the risk of persecution. Protesters who are visible and identifiable to the authorities during protests (such as

the leaders of the protests) or who are known to be involved in organising protests face a high risk.

- **Frequency of participation in demonstrations:** the frequency with which an individual participates in protests directly influences the risk of persecution. While not all protesters are arrested, those who are involved in several demonstrations face a higher risk of being identified and targeted.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile this is highly likely to be for reasons of **political opinion**, as the persecution is directly connected to the expression of political views that are perceived by state authorities as challenging their control over power.

Short of a nexus, the cases of individuals subjected to the authorities' response to acts committed during riots (such as attacks on police vehicles, ambulances, and schools) should be examined under [Article 15\(b\) QR: torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment](#).

4.1.3. Human rights defenders and activists

Last update: October 2026

A human rights defender is a person who, individually or in association with others, acts to promote or protect human rights in a structured and long-term commitment. Examples of human rights defenders include lawyers, members of human rights NGOs, academics, and trade unionists ⁽⁷⁾. A human rights activist is a person who believes strongly in political or social change based on the respect of human rights, such as the abolishment of the death penalty, and takes part in activities in a structured and long-term commitment to try to make this happen ⁽⁸⁾. Such activities include protests, strikes, boycotts, online campaigns, volunteer activities, etc. ⁽⁹⁾.

Human rights activism also covers, for example, advocacy for the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, persons with diverse SOGIESC, as well as women's rights. Human rights lawyers act to protect human rights and advocate for the rights of their clients, including against ill-treatment by the authorities.

This profile should be read in conjunction with [4.1.2. Protesters](#).

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#), 1.; [Country Focus 2026](#), 6.1.7.; [Country Focus 2024](#), 6.4.2.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

⁽⁷⁾ European Union External Action Service, [Human rights defenders](#), consulted 4 August 2026.

⁽⁸⁾ Adaptation based on Cambridge Dictionary.

⁽⁹⁾ Liberties, Democracy and Justice, '[What is Activism: Definition, Types, Role, Examples, Importance](#)', consulted 4 August 2026.



Despite government regulations that have rendered many civil society organisations (CSOs) in Pakistan dormant, the country still retains a sizeable not-for-profit sector employing thousands of people. The sector has expanded in recent years in both reach and functions. Efforts to secure accountability for abuses against human rights defenders and activists have made little headway before the courts or in parliament, while restrictions on CSOs, peaceful assembly, and digital spaces remain substantial nationwide. On 5 March 2024, the CIVICUS Monitor added Pakistan to its watchlist of countries experiencing rapid declines in civic freedoms.

Pashtun parties and movements such as the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) advocate for Pashtun rights and criticise the military operations in KP. On 6 October 2024, the Pakistani government listed PTM as a proscribed organisation under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

While there are some organisations actively supporting SOGIESC rights in Pakistan, including by providing them with legal aid, progress has been slow and met with significant societal resistance.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which human rights defenders and activists could be subjected are of such a severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More specifically, reports describe extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, attacks, and arbitrary detention against activists and other critical voices by the military, intelligence agencies, other [state authorities](#) and [non-state actors](#).

In August 2024, a leader of PTM, Ali Wazir, was arrested in Islamabad on fabricated charges and detained until December 2024. The torture and killing of a prominent Pashtun activist and leader of PTM, Hazrat Naeem (known as Gilaman Wazir), were also reported. The PTM remained banned as per the Peshawar High Court order issued in February 2026.

There have been instances of detention, arrest, and repeated First Information Reports (FIRs) against human rights lawyers. In some cases, individuals have been arrested and sentenced to up to 17 years' imprisonment under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA).

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts that human rights defenders and activists could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures should also be considered. More specifically, human rights defenders and activists face harassment, mass surveillance, censorship, travel bans, and other threats.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

A well-founded fear of persecution would in general be substantiated for leaders and prominent members of PTM and groups advocating for Baloch rights, considering the severe repression by the Pakistani authorities against the movements.

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for **other human rights defenders and activists** to face persecution should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:





- **Topics:** human rights defenders and activists speaking out against human rights violations (such as against enforced disappearances in Balochistan), against military operations by the authorities (such as security operations in KP and Balochistan), for separatism (such as in Balochistan), and/or reporting on ongoing protests (for example protests in Pakistan-administered Kashmir) face a high risk. Activists working on SOGIESC rights are exposed to a high risk as they can be seen ‘as promoting same-sex relationships’. See also [Individuals \(perceived as\) transgressing Islamic norms](#) and [Persons with diverse SOGIESC](#).
- **Geographical area of activity:** human rights defenders and activists from conflict-affected areas, particularly certain parts of KP (especially the former FATA) and Balochistan, face a higher risk as extremist groups operate in such areas.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile this is highly likely to be for reasons of **political opinion**, especially if the Pakistani authorities can link their activities to advocacy for ethnic minority rights. In such a situation, it is not important whether the activities are aimed solely at providing social assistance as the Pakistani authorities may view these activities as opposition to the current government. Persecution may also be for reasons of **religion**, as advocating for SOGIESC rights is seen by extremist groups as anti-Islamic.

4.2. Journalists and other media workers

Last update: October 2026

A journalist is a professional who is involved in the process of gathering, assessing, creating, and broadcasting news and information in newspapers, magazines, on the internet, on the radio, or television. Other media workers include a wide range of roles such as producers, directors, technicians, and many others who are involved in the creation and dissemination of media content.

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#), 1.; [Country Focus 2026](#), 3.1.9., 6.1.7.; [Country Focus 2024](#), 4.2.4., 5.4., 6., 6.4.3.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

While press freedom is constitutionally protected in Pakistan, the breadth of permissible restrictions and the post-January 2025 Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) amendments substantially expand the authorities’ capacity to police online and offline expression. In 2025, Pakistan fell six places, from 152nd in 2024 to 158th according to World Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders (RSF).





Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which journalists and other media workers could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More specifically, journalists and other media workers have been subjected to serious human rights violations by both [state actors](#) and [non-state actors](#) such as extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, physical violence, abductions, as well as arbitrary arrests and unfounded charges. Some journalists have been sentenced to life imprisonment by the anti-terrorism court, with some individuals being convicted *in absentia*.

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts that journalists and other media workers could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should also be considered. More specifically, they have been facing police searches, assaults, intimidation, harassment (including online harassment), censorship, financial pressure, exile and travel bans. Regulatory control is used to manage content more broadly and discipline critical voices.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

Journalists who engage in critical reporting on the army activities (including military operations, corruption cases, management of economic activities, etc.) are particularly targeted. Therefore, **for journalists and other media workers (seen as) critical to the Pakistan armed forces, well-founded fear of persecution would in general be substantiated.**

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for **other journalists and media workers** to face persecution should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:

- **Topics they report on:** those journalists and other media workers critically reporting on state institutions other than the army, those reporting on human rights abuses, and those reporting on ongoing protests (for example protests in Pakistan-administered Kashmir) face a higher risk than those reporting on topics perceived as noncritical by the authorities.
- **Geographical area of activities:** journalists and other media workers face a higher risk in conflict-affected areas, such as parts of KP and Balochistan, because of extremist groups' operations and Pakistani authorities' engagement in mass-surveillance.
- **Visibility:** the reach of the journalists or other media worker both on social media and in person is a critical factor impacting the risk of persecution. Due to their activities, some media workers are more visible than others and thus exposed to a higher risk. For example, a cameraman is more visible than a person working in post-production.
- **Being known to the authorities:** previous threats, harassment, surveillance, summons, FIRs, PECA-related proceedings, arrests, travel bans, or other measures increase the risk.



Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile, this is highly likely to be for reasons of **political opinion**, as, for instance, reporting on topics that are critical to the authorities is viewed as the expression of a political stance.

4.3. Education personnel

Last update: October 2026

This profile refers to individuals involved in the educational process in schools (e.g. teachers, supporting staff), including **madrassas**.

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#), 7.; [Country Focus 2026](#), 6.1.8.; [Country Focus 2024](#), 1., 2.1., 2.2.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

In Pakistan, attacks on schools in conflict-affected areas are not merely incidental to insecurity but form part of a deliberate strategy by extremist groups to erode state presence, weaken community resilience and obstruct access to education.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Acts to which education personnel could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More specifically, education personnel have been subjected to serious human rights violation by extremist groups such as [Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan \(TTP\)](#), including extra-judicial killings, enforced disappearances, and hostage taking. Moreover, attacks (including drone attacks) on schools and other educational institutions resulted at times in the death of the personnel. Since 2007, the TTP's campaign against education has destroyed more than 1 000 schools and killed over 300 teachers.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for education personnel to face persecution should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:

- **Geographical area of activity:** personnel delivering education in areas of [Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan \(TTP\) and affiliated groups](#) operations, namely parts of KP and Northern Balochistan, face a higher risk. In these areas, schools have repeatedly been closed, damaged or attacked, and education personnel work in an environment shaped by militant violence, displacement, and state security operations.
- **Gender of the students:** as education provided to girls is seen differently by extremist groups than education provided to boys, education personnel working in girls' schools other than **madrassas** face a higher risk than those working in boys' schools.

- **Occupation:** teachers face a higher risk than the supporting staff (such as administrative staff) as they actively deliver the curriculum that can be seen as problematic by extremist groups.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile, this is highly likely to be for reasons of **political opinion**, as education personnel are seen as agents of the State. Persecution may also be for reasons of **religion**, as, for instance, delivering education to girls can be seen by extremist groups as going against the role they impose to women and girls in the society.

4.4. Individuals involved in polio vaccination campaigns

Last update: October 2026

This profile refers to individuals taking part in polio vaccination campaigns such as those administering the vaccine, the physicians and the administrative staff supporting the vaccination, as well as security officers assigned to provide protection to vaccination teams.

This profile should be read in conjunction with [Individuals \(perceived as\) transgressing Islamic norms](#).

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI report: [COI Update 2026](#), 2.; [Country Focus 2026](#), 6.1.8.; [Country Focus 2024](#), 4.2.2., 7.3.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Armed attacks targeting polio vaccination campaigns significantly increased in 2024.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which individuals involved in polio vaccination activities could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution, such as killings, abductions and injuries. Most of these attacks resulted in casualties among police officers assigned to protect vaccination teams, and occasionally also caused the death or injury of polio and health workers, as well as civilians.

Vaccination campaigns face attacks mainly by militant groups, including particularly [Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan \(TTP\) and affiliated groups](#). In some cases, the identified perpetrators were individuals not clearly affiliated with any specific group.

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts to which individuals involved in polio vaccination activities could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should also be considered. More precisely, health workers and

accompanying security forces have reportedly been injured, threatened, harassed, ridiculed, and taunted.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for individuals involved in polio vaccination activities to face persecution should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:

- **Geographical area of activity:** the risk is higher for individuals involved in polio vaccination campaigns taking place in areas where [Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan \(TTP\) and affiliated groups](#) operate, namely parts of KP and Northern Balochistan.
- **Location:** the risk is higher for individuals involved in polio vaccination campaigns taking place in schools or nearby schools. See also [Education personnel](#).
- **Occupation:** as attacks resulted mostly in casualties amongst security personnel, individuals providing security to polio vaccination campaigns face a higher risk than health workers such as those administering the vaccine.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant falling under this profile, this is highly likely to be for **political opinion**, since extremist groups see polio vaccination campaigns as a Western influence, espionage, plot and, additionally, they seek to weaken authorities' impact on local communities. Persecution may also be for reasons of **religion**, as polio vaccines are seen by extremist groups as a Western plot to sterilise Muslim children and are religiously prohibited due to alleged pig-derived ingredients.

4.5. Ethnic minorities

4.5.1. Pashtuns

Last update: October 2026

For the situation of PTM members and supporters, see [Human rights defenders and activists](#), and [Protesters](#).

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [Country Focus 2026, 1.2., 6.1., 6.1.1.\(a\), 6.1.2.\(d\)](#); Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Pashtuns are an ethnolinguistic group in Pakistan, primarily residing in KP and Northern Balochistan, with communities in Punjab and Sindh. They account for approximately 45 million people and represent about 15.4 % of the total population.

Pashtuns in Pakistan primarily live by a social code, known as ***Pashtunwali***, which governs both ethical behaviour and custom. They are said to be considered 'second-class citizens' by

the Pakistan Army which is largely dominated by the Punjabi ethnic group. Pashtuns accuse the Pakistani security forces in KP of committing serious human rights violations under the pretext of anti-militancy operations. Despite the ban, the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) together with political leaders call for the withdrawal of Taliban as well as security forces from the region.

The Awami National Party (ANP), a Pashtun nationalist political party, is geographically anchored in KP.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which Pashtuns could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More precisely, they have been subjected to extrajudicial killings including through air strikes, torture, enforced disappearances, physical violence, and arbitrary detentions by the state and its proxies. Reports mention a rise in extrajudicial killings of Pashtuns in KP for several years including hundreds of targeted killings, torture and killing of a prominent Pashtun activist, and enforced disappearances in the context of army operations. Additionally, Pashtun perceived as aligned with the state face threats by TTP and ISKP.

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts to which Pashtuns could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should also be considered. More precisely, Pashtuns have reportedly faced harassment and surveillance by state actors. Others faced property seizure and forced displacement from their home.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for Pashtuns to face persecution should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:

- **Occupation:** journalists, students, human rights defenders, and political activists engaged in rights-based advocacy or criticism of state policies face a high risk, since there are reports of such individuals being targeted by the Pakistani authorities.
- **Political background:** the ANP members face a higher risk from militant groups including the TTP which has killed many of its leaders.
- **Home area:** the risk of being targeted by state actors is higher for Pashtuns living in areas of [Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan \(TTP\) and affiliated groups](#) operations, namely parts of KP and Northern Balochistan.
- **Community based activities:** tribal elders, community leaders and other individuals involved in *jirga* (tribal assembly) or local peacebuilding face a higher risk due to threats from groups such as [TTP](#) and [ISKP](#).

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile, this is highly likely to be for reasons of **political opinion** as, for example, the Pakistani authorities see right-based advocacy or criticism of state policies as the expression of a political opinion.

Also, Pashtuns taking part in local peace building activities are perceived by some non-state armed groups as opposing them.

4.5.2. Baloch people

Last update: October 2026

For the situation of members and supporters of movements advocating for Baloch rights, see [Human rights defenders and activists](#), and [Protesters](#).

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#), 1.; [Country Focus 2026](#), 6.1.1. (b), 6.1.2. (f); [Country Focus 2024](#), 4.2.3.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Baloch people, also known as **Baluchi**, constitute a group of tribes residing primarily in Balochistan province, and partly in Iran and Afghanistan. They are mostly Sunni Muslims, but between 500 000 and 800 000 among them, mainly located in the southern Makran coastal region, adhere to Zikrist practice. Baloch people retain a strong tribal culture. Since Balochistan's incorporation into Pakistan in 1948, various groups have pursued self-determination through political, diplomatic, and, in some cases, armed means, including the insurgent activities of the [Balochistan nationalist groups](#).

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which Baloch people could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More precisely, Baloch people have been subjected to executions, enforced disappearances possibly linked to extrajudicial killing, physical violence including torture, arbitrary arrests and detentions. Collective punishment and gender-based violence against Baloch women and girls were also reported. See also [Women and girls](#).

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts to which Baloch people could be subjected and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should also be considered. Reports describe that 32 Baloch individuals, including activists, have been placed on a terrorist watchlist under the Anti-Terrorism Act. They have been subjected to severe restrictions, including heavy surveillance, severe limits on their freedom of movement and ability to take part in public life, restrictions on travel outside designated areas without express permission from local police, and powers granted to authorities to investigate and freeze their financial assets or those of their immediate family members.

Zikris have been subjected to threats, **fatwas**, attacks on prayer sites, and restrictions on public religious expression, and are treated as second-class citizens or rebels by extremist groups including [ISKAP](#).

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for Baloch people to face persecution should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:



- **Occupation:** journalists, students, human rights defenders, and political activists engaged in rights-based advocacy or criticism of state policies face a high risk, since there are reports describing targeting by the Pakistani authorities.
- **Community based activities:** tribal elders, community leaders, and other individuals involved in local peacebuilding face a higher risk as they face threats from groups such as [BLF](#) and [BLA](#) who perceive them as aligned with the State.
- **Religious background:** Zikrist Baloch people face increased risk from extremist groups such as [ISKP](#).
- **Political background:** BNP members may face a risk from extremist groups including [ISPP](#) which considers that 'their nationalist and democratic style of politics' violates Islamic law.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile, this is highly likely to be for reasons of **political opinion** as Baloch people taking part to some activities are perceived by the Pakistani authorities and some non-state armed groups as opposing them, respectively. Persecution may also be for reasons of **religion**, notably in the case of Zikris considered apostates by ISKP.

4.5.3. Hazaras

Last update: October 2026

This profile provides background information on the situation of Pakistani of Hazara ethnicity, speaking their distinctive **hazaragi** language. It does not refer to the situation of people from or residing in the Hazara administrative division in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), a collection of ethnic groups speaking **hindko**.

The core of Hazara community is located in Quetta, the capital of Balochistan, especially in the neighbourhoods of Hazara Town and Mariabad. The overall number of Hazara people in Pakistan totals about 500 000. Some Hazaras who are entitled to Pakistani citizenship by birth have not managed to obtain it (EUAA COI product: [Country Focus 2026](#), [6.1.1.](#)).

As Hazara people are predominantly Shia Muslims, refer to [4.6.4. Shia Muslims](#) for the risk-assessment of Hazaras.

4.6. Religious minorities



It is recalled, as per Article 10(3) QR, that an applicant cannot be expected to adapt his or her behaviour, convictions or identity, or to abstain from certain practices,



where such behaviour, convictions or practices are inherent to his or her identity, to avoid the risk of persecution in his or her country of origin.

4.6.1. Ahmadis

Last update: October 2026

This profile should be read in conjunction with [Individuals \(perceived as\) transgressing Islamic norms](#).

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#), 5.; [Country Focus 2026](#), 6.1.2.; [Country Focus 2024](#), 6.2.4.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Ahmadis, or members of the **Ahmadiyya** community, are the followers of the messianic teachings of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. Despite Ahmadis' self-identification as Muslims, they are not considered as such by the other branches and sects of Islam or the authorities. Ahmadis are perceived as 'blasphemous unbelievers' in Pakistan because they also recognise as a prophet Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, and as such, it contradicts Mohammad being the final prophet for Muslims.

They are located primarily in Punjab, especially in the town of Chenab Nagar (previously known as Rabwah) where they constitute 95 % of the population. The actual number of Ahmadis is highly uncertain, due to their frequent preference for hiding their faith, but it is believed to be comprised between 160 000 and 600 000.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which Ahmadis could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More specifically, members of the **Ahmadiyya** community have been killed, including by firearms, in the context of attacks on worshippers in mosques and in houses, abducted, injured, and arbitrarily arrested. Ahmadis are constitutionally considered non-Muslims. Legal provisions force them to publicly deny their Muslim faith as they cannot, for example, call themselves Muslims or call their places of worship 'mosques'. They are forbidden from using features that can be associated with Islam.

Detention for three-year term for distributing altered translations of the Quran, as well as blasphemy accusations and charges, have also taken place. For consequences on blasphemy accusations, refer to [Individuals \(perceived as\) transgressing Islamic norms](#).

The attacks against members of the **Ahmadiyya** community have been carried out by Islamic extremists such as [Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan \(TTP\) and affiliated groups](#), political religious groups or groups reportedly connected to local religious and political actors, mob groups, [Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan \(TLP\)](#), and Pakistani authorities.

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts that Ahmadis could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should also be considered.

More specifically, **Ahmadiyya** places of worship have been subjected to destruction, vandalism, desecration, and sealing or seizure. There have also been several cases of damage to and desecration of graves, as well as disruption of funerals and attacks on cemeteries. The community is also subjected to societal threats, hate speech, discrimination, as well as systemic and structural barriers to participation in public and political life. For instance, Ahmadis have been prevented from using public graveyards and excluded from inheriting property from a Muslim relative under **Sharia**, Muslim personal law, and the Constitution. Textbooks either ignore or insult them. Ahmadis must hide their beliefs to go to school, get jobs, or even get identity documents.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for Ahmadis to face persecution should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances** ⁽¹⁰⁾, such as:

- **Visibility and nature of the religious practice:** Ahmadis publicly exposing their faith by, for example, attending places of worships and/or cemeteries, and/or disseminating Ahmadi materials about their faith are at particular risk of persecution.
- **Position within the community:** applicants with a specific profile in the **Ahmadiyya** community such as being a leader of the community or acting as a representative of the community are also at particular risk since those elements substantiate the public expression of the faith.
- **Home area:** considering the lower number of attacks against Ahmadis in Chenab Nagar than in other parts of the country and the fact that their community constitutes the majority in this area, Ahmadis would face a lower risk of persecution in Chenab Nagar.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile, this is highly likely to be for reasons of **religion**, as they are considered non-Muslims and 'blasphemous unbelievers' by [state](#) and [non-state actors](#) of persecution.

4.6.2. Christians

Last update: October 2026

This profile should be read in conjunction with [Individuals \(perceived as\) transgressing Islamic norms](#).

⁽¹⁰⁾ ECtHR, judgment of 12 February 2026, [F.T. v Belgium](#), No.58765/21, Fifth Section Committee, para. 11: '*Si l'examen des récents rapports internationaux et nationaux disponibles, y compris les informations fournies par les parties, confirme la discrimination et la violence auxquelles les personnes de confession ahmadie doivent régulièrement faire face au Pakistan, y compris par les autorités, et confirme la situation particulièrement sensible des femmes de confession ahmadie, il en ressort également que la seule appartenance à la confession ahmadie ne suffit pas à établir un risque réel de persécution.*' Summary available in the [EUAA Case Law Database](#).

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#), 3.; [Country Focus 2026](#), 6.1.2., 6.1.3.; [Country Focus 2024](#), 6.2.2., 6.8.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Christians in Pakistan account for about 3 million, the majority living in Punjab and Islamabad, with smaller groups in Sindh, Balochistan and KP.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which Christians could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More specifically, Christians have been subjected to killings, trafficking in human beings, sexual violence, forced marriages, abductions, forced conversions to Islam, and attacks on Christian villages, by mob groups and unidentified individuals.

Christians in Pakistan have also reportedly faced blasphemy accusations, sometimes leading to killings and imprisonment. See also [Individuals \(perceived as\) transgressing Islamic norms](#).

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts that Christians could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should also be considered.

More specifically, they have faced destruction of places of worship and homes, forced eviction, land grabbing, and intimidation, including in the context of mob violence. They have also been subjected to ongoing threats, violence, and socio-economic marginalisation (including loss of employment) which in some cases resulted in displacement. At times, they have also been prevented from performing funeral rites.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for Christians to face persecution should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:

- **Visibility and nature of the religious practice:** Christians publicly participating in Christian ceremonies, thereby publicly adopting non-Muslim behaviour, face a higher risk. The nature, the repetitiveness and the visibility of the non-Muslim practice, should be taken into account.
- **Gender:** Christian women and girls are at higher risk of abductions, forced conversions to Islam and forced marriages. See also [Women and girls](#).
- **Socio-economic situation of the family:** belonging to lower societal classes increases the risk of being subjected to work exploitation and forced conversion to Islam.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile, this is highly likely to be for reasons of **religion** as they are non-Muslims and may be considered blasphemers. For Christian women and girls, persecution may also be for reasons of **membership of a particular social group** due to their innate characteristic (as a woman) and distinct identity in Pakistan as indicated by the social, moral, and legal norms affecting specifically Pakistani women.



4.6.3. Hindus

Last update: October 2026

This profile should be read in conjunction with [Individuals \(perceived as\) transgressing Islamic norms](#).

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#), 3.; [Country Focus 2026](#), 6.1.2., 6.1.3.; [Country Focus 2024](#), 6.2.1., 6.8.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

There are approximately 4 million Hindus in Pakistan primarily located in Sindh. Hindus are perceived as **kafirs** (infidels) in Pakistan and the term Hindu is often used as an insult in political discourse, everyday interactions, and school settings. Incidents against Hindus have reportedly contributed to an exodus of Hindus to India that reached over 500 000 people by August 2024.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which Hindus could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More specifically, Hindus have faced trafficking in human beings, kidnappings for ransom, abductions, bonded labour, violent attacks, blasphemy accusations (see also [Individuals \(perceived as\) transgressing Islamic norms](#)), as well as forced conversions to Islam. Hindu women and girls have been reportedly picked up from the streets by armed groups, harassed or abducted, and in some cases forcibly married to Muslim men, and converted to Islam.

The actors responsible for attacks and violence against Hindus include Islamist groups and Muslim individuals, as well as mobs, armed groups, and organised criminal gangs (see [Non-state actors](#)).

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts that Hindus could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should be also considered. More specifically, they have been subjected to land seizures, destruction of Hindu places of worship, digital extortion, threats, online hate speech and incitement to violence, harassment, economic and social exclusion, institutionalised inequality, and systematic discrimination, including by being frequently prevented from exercising their funeral rites.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for Hindus to face persecution should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:

- **Visibility and nature of the religious practice:** Hindus publicly participating in Hindu ceremonies, thereby publicly adopting non-Muslim behaviour, face a higher risk. The nature, the repetitiveness and the visibility of the non-Muslim practice, should be taken into account.



- **Gender:** Hindu women and girls are at higher risk of abduction, forced conversion to Islam and forced marriage. At times, they have been subjected to forced conversion to Islam through marriage. See also [Women and girls](#).
- **Socio-economic situation of the family:** belonging to lower societal classes increases the risk of being subjected to work exploitation and forced conversion to Islam.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile, this is highly likely to be for reasons of **religion** as they are perceived as **kafirs** (infidels). For Hindu women and girls, persecution may also be for reasons of **membership of a particular social group** due to their innate characteristic (as a woman) and distinct identity in Pakistan as indicated by the social, moral, and legal norms affecting specifically Pakistani women.

4.6.4. Shia Muslims

Last update: October 2026

This profile should be read in conjunction with [Individuals \(perceived as\) transgressing Islamic norms](#).

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#), 3.; [Country Focus 2026](#), 6.1.2.; [Country Focus 2024](#), 6.2.3.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

The belief of Shia Muslims (often known as **Ahl-e Teshih**) diverges from the Sunni majority with respect to the succession lineage of the Prophet Mohammed. Shias account for approximately 10 % to 15 % of the total population of the country. They retain a minority status almost everywhere in Pakistan, with the notable exceptions of Gilgit-Baltistan and Kurram District of KP. Shia Islam is also the religion of the vast majority of Hazaras of Afghan origin.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Acts to which Shia Muslims could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More precisely, Shia Muslims have been subjected to sectarian violence including killings, with methods such as suicide bombings, roadside explosions, targeted shootings, and improvised explosive devices in busy marketplaces.

Shia Muslims are vulnerable to blasphemy accusations (see also [Individuals \(perceived as\) transgressing Islamic norms](#)).

The actors responsible for attacks and violence against Shia Muslims include sectarian groups, such as ISKP and ISPP (see [Islamic State Khorasan Province \(ISKP\) and Pakistan Province \(ISPP\)](#)). Some militant groups (such as SSP and LeJ, see [non-state actors](#)) even include the extermination of Shia among their goals, and actively pursue it through armed attacks against Shia places of gathering and worship.



Incidents reported against Shia Muslims include attacks on Shia convoys and places of worship, resulting in dozens of deaths and numerous injuries. One attack was claimed by the ISKP accusing Shia Muslims of being ‘infidels’.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for Shia Muslims to face persecution should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:

- **Ethnic background:** Shias Muslims of Hazara ethnicity face a particularly high risk of persecution from Sunni extremist groups as their distinct physical features make them easily identifiable.
- **Home area:** the risk of targeting by Sunni extremist groups is higher in areas of [ISKP](#) operations, as well as in Kurram District (KP).
- **Visibility and nature of the religious practice:** Shias publicly participating in Shia ceremonies, that are in themselves different from Sunni ones, face a higher risk. The nature, the repetitiveness and the visibility of the religious practice should be taken into account.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where a well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile, this is highly likely to be for reasons of **religion** as Shia Muslims have been violently targeted by sectarian groups, who consider them as ‘infidels’. For Shias of Hazara ethnicity, it may also be for reasons of **race (ethnicity)**, since they are easily identifiable due to their distinct features specific to their ethnic group.

4.7. Individuals (perceived as) transgressing Islamic norms

Last update: October 2026

This profile covers the situation of individuals whose actions, behaviours, or practices are seen as **transgressing Islamic norms or laws**. It addresses the situation of persons considered to have spoken sacrilegiously about God or sacred things (**blasphemy**), as well as persons who have or are considered to have abandoned or renounced the religious belief or principles of Islam (**apostasy**). It also includes individuals who disbelieve or lack belief in the existence of God (**atheists**) and **converts** from Islam. It also addresses other behaviours such as, but not limited to, interfaith marriages. Administering polio vaccines can also be seen as transgressing Islamic norms (see [Individuals involved in polio vaccination campaigns](#)).

The perception of practices as a transgression of Islamic norms depends on several factors, such as local context, actors involved and their interpretation of these norms.



The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#), 5.; [Country Focus 2026](#), 5.4., 6.1.1., 6.1.2., 6.1.3., 6.1.10.; [Country Focus 2024](#), 5.5.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

In Pakistan, apostasy, atheism and expressions perceived as critical of Islam are often considered blasphemous, with boundaries between these concepts frequently blurred in their interpretation and application. In some cases, the conduct may be criminalised under the Pakistan Penal Code.

This profile should be read in conjunction with [Religious minorities](#). It may also overlap with [Women and girls](#) and [Persons with diverse SOGIESC](#), as behaviours of individuals under both these profiles can be perceived as transgressing Islamic norms.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which individuals under this profile could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution.

More precisely, the Pakistan Penal Code provides for life imprisonment and the death penalty for persons formally charged with **blasphemy**. The expansion of cybercrime legislation has seen individuals prosecuted for alleged blasphemy on social media. Although the death penalty has not been carried out in practice, there have been instances of individuals spending years on death row, serving life sentences, or being imprisoned on blasphemy charges. Individuals who have been arrested by private entities collaborating with state authorities have been subjected to torture both during apprehension and immediately afterwards. Prosecution for acts which are not considered criminal according to international standards (e.g. blasphemy) would amount to persecution.

There are also reports of public mobilisation, violence against individuals considered blasphemous, which at times was triggered by 'punitive' **fatwas** (non-binding religious opinion issued by an Islamic scholar endorsing punishment or violence).

While **apostasy** and **atheism** are not explicitly criminalised under statutory law, apostates and atheists can be prosecuted under Pakistan's blasphemy laws. Furthermore, apostasy is punishable by death under **hudud** crimes according to the **Sharia** law and most schools of Islamic jurisprudence. Comments on atheism, whether online or offline, may be perceived as blasphemous, and may lead to abduction, physical violence, or threats.

Consumption of alcohol by Muslims is prohibited under Pakistani law, with punishment including imprisonment for up to seven days. The consumption of alcohol is considered as **haram** in Islam.

[Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan \(TTP\) and affiliated groups](#) may target anyone they consider transgressing Islamic obligations, such as consumers of alcohol and other intoxicants, those who believe in democracy and secularism, and those using cryptocurrency.

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts that individuals under this profile could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should also

be considered. More specifically, individuals accused of and arrested for blasphemy have been subjected to duress to obtain statements and have faced systematic obstruction to legal aid. Individuals considered blasphemers and their families have faced harassment, intimidation, economic boycotts, unlawful evictions and land grabs by fundamentalist individuals and organisations. Atheists have often faced stigmatisation. Persons in an interfaith marriage also frequently face social stigma, family disputes, legal delays, and religious restrictions.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

The mere fact for an individual of transgressing Islamic norms, or being perceived as such, does not in itself establish a risk of persecution.

A well-founded fear of persecution would in general be substantiated for individuals formally charged with blasphemy, given the criminalisation of such acts and the severity of the punishments. This also includes, in practice, cases where charges of blasphemy are linked to apostasy and atheism.

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable likelihood of persecution for **individuals perceived to have committed blasphemy, to be apostates and/or atheists, or otherwise to have transgressed Islamic norms,** should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances,** such as:

- **Visibility and nature of the transgression:** the nature and visibility of the alleged transgressing behaviour is the crucial factor. The risk increases where the conversion or apostasy has become known, where the individual engages in missionary or other public religious activities, or where there are blasphemy allegations. Public, repeated, online or widely circulated conduct would significantly increase the level of risk, as it may trigger the involvement of authorities, religious actors, family members or the wider community.
- **Fatwa:** the issuance of a punitive **fatwa** for blasphemy is an indication that an individual has been seen as transgressing Islamic norms, and as such, it may increase the risk of persecution particularly when **fatwas** identify an individual by name.
- **Religious background:** persons from religious minorities (such as [Hindus](#) and [Christians](#)), as well as persons perceived as having abandoned Islam (i.e. apostates) may face an increased risk of blasphemy accusations and unlawful evictions.
- **Perceptions of religious codes in the family and/or the community:** individuals belonging to a family and/or a community that adheres to conservative religious norms face a higher risk of persecution. This factor may have a strong impact where family and/or community members are likely to report, threaten, punish, ostracise or otherwise expose the applicant because of the perceived transgression.
- **Gender:** being a woman or a girl increases the risk since they are subjected to stricter rules than men to comply with Islamic and family obligations. See [Women and girls](#).
- **Home area:** individuals from areas of [Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan \(TTP\) and affiliated groups](#) operations face a higher risk.

- **Socio-economic situation:** this factor may increase the level of risk where it exposes the applicant to exploitation, extortion, pressure to reach informal settlements (such as the pressure exercised by the ‘blasphemy businesses’), inability to access legal assistance, or reduced capacity to mitigate the consequences of an accusation.

It is recalled as per Article 10(3) QR that an applicant cannot be expected to adapt his or her behaviour, convictions or identity, or to abstain from certain practices, where such behaviour, convictions or practices are inherent to his or her identity, to avoid the risk of persecution in his or her country of origin.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where a well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile, this is highly likely to be for reasons of **religion** due to the (perceived) transgression of Islamic norms or the alleged blasphemy used to discriminate against religious minorities.

4.8. Women and girls

Last update: October 2026

This profile addresses the situation of women (above 18 years old) and girls (below 18 years old) in Pakistan.

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#), 3., 4.; [Country Focus 2026](#), 6.1.1., 6.1.2., 6.1.4., 6.1.5., 6.1.7.; [Country Focus 2024](#), 6.5.1.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Women’s rights, including the prohibition of discrimination based on sex, are constitutionally guaranteed. Nevertheless, violence against women and girls remains a serious problem in Pakistan.

See also [Individuals \(perceived as\) transgressing Islamic norms](#) as some behaviours of women and girls can be perceived as transgressing such norms.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which women and girls could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More precisely, reported forms of gender-based violence include, but are not limited to killings, sexual violence, including rape, trafficking in human beings, abduction, domestic violence, forced and child marriage, and forced conversion. Refusal to enter an arranged marriage, having been raped or sexually assaulted, dressing in ways deemed inappropriate, or behaving in ways seen as disobedient have frequently led to honour-related killings. Other forms of honour-related violence include disfigurement of women by burning, cutting off nose or ears, or throwing acid in the face.

In cases of gender-based violence, perpetrators include individuals known to survivors, including husbands, as well as strangers and police. In some cases, women who marry by

choice ('love marriage') have been accused of having an 'immoral relationship' by local tribal leaders and/or relatives, and have, at times, have been subjected to honour killings.

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts that women and girls could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of measures, should also be considered. More specifically, women and girls face harassment, legal and economic discrimination, as well as in accessing education.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable likelihood for women and girls to face persecution should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:

- **Religious background:** [Hindu](#), [Christian](#) and Sikh women and girls face a higher risk of kidnapping, forced conversion to Islam, and of forced marriage.
- **Age:** girls aged 14–18 years, or even sometimes younger, face a higher risk of forced conversion through marriage.
- **Political background:** women engaged in politics and activism may be at higher risk as they have been detained and subjected to enforced disappearance and harassment. See also [Persons \(perceived to be\) opposing the Government](#).
- **Socio-economic status:** girls from poor families and/or living in informal or poor urban settlements are at increased risk of child marriage and trafficking.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where a well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile, this is highly likely to be for reasons of **membership of a particular social group** ⁽¹⁾ due to their innate characteristic (as a woman) and distinct identity in Pakistan as indicated by the social, moral, and legal norms affecting specifically Pakistani women. Persecution may also be for reasons of **religion** for individuals from religious minority, especially in the context of forced marriage/conversion, or for women who are perceived as not complying with religious gender norms or practices. For women engaged in politics and/or activism, the **political opinion** ground may also be substantiated.

4.9. Children

Last update: October 2026

⁽¹⁾ CJEU, judgment of 16 January 2024 [Intervjuirashht organ na Darzhavna agentsia za bezhantsite pri Ministerskia savet v WS](#), case C-621/21, para. 81. Summary available in the [EUAA Case Law Database](#).

This profile refers to Pakistani citizens under the age of 18. This section covers certain child-specific circumstances of increased vulnerability and risks that children in Pakistan may be exposed to.

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#), 3., 4.; [Country Focus 2026](#), 6.1.2., 6.1.4., 6.1.5.; [Country Focus 2024](#), 6.6.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Children in Pakistan comprise nearly half of the total population, with an estimated number of 100 million children. Children's rights are enshrined in the constitution which also prohibits child labour, stating that 'no child below the age of fourteen shall be engaged in any factory or mine or any other hazardous employment'. Nevertheless, they have been exposed to various forms of violence by various actors.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Being a child is to be taken into account in the assessment on whether an act reaches the threshold of persecution.

Some acts to which children could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More specifically, children in Pakistan are exposed to different forms of violence and exploitation, including killings, sexual abuse, trafficking in human beings, child marriage, child labour, disappearances and abductions.

Trafficking of children has been carried out mainly for the purpose of child sex and forced labour.

Not all forms of **child labour** would amount to persecution. An assessment should be made in light of the nature of the work and the age of the child. However, work that is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children would be considered sufficiently severe to reach the threshold of persecution ⁽¹²⁾. In Pakistan, child labour has been characterised by hazardous working conditions in workshops, kilns, tanneries, and domestic settings. Organised crime groups have forced children to beg.

For **child marriage** and gender-based violence, including sexual violence, see also [Women and girls](#).

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable likelihood for children to face persecution should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:

- **Gender:** girls face a particularly high risk of child marriage. Additionally, girls going to schools other than **madrassas** are at higher risk of attacks from extremist groups such as [Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan \(TTP\) and affiliated groups](#).

⁽¹²⁾ [Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention](#), C182, 17 June 1999.

- **Age:** children within the age range 6–15-year-old are the most vulnerable age group for sexual violence.
- **Religious background:** [Hindu](#), [Christian](#) and Sikh girls face a higher risk of kidnapping, forced conversion to Islam, and forced marriage.
- **Socio-economic status:** displaced children and children living in informal or poor urban settlements are particularly at risk of exploitation, child labour, child marriage and trafficking. Street children ⁽¹³⁾ are at a higher risk of abuse, child labour, exploitation, trafficking, and arbitrary arrest.
- **Access to education:** a lack of education reinforces a child's vulnerability to various forms of persecution, including child labour, economic exploitation, trafficking, and child marriage ⁽¹⁴⁾. The majority of out-of-school children are girls.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where a well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile, the individual circumstances of the child need to be taken into account to determine whether a convention nexus to a reason for persecution can be substantiated. Persecution for this profile may be for reasons of **membership of a particular social group**, especially when this profile overlaps with other profiles (e.g. in relation to gender-based violence, see [also Women and girls](#)). For girls forcibly converted to Islam, including through forced marriage, **religion** grounds may also be substantiated.

4.10. Persons with diverse SOGIESC

Last update: October 2026

This profile refers to persons who are perceived as not conforming to state, religious and/or social norms because of their sexual orientations, gender identities and/or expressions, or sex characteristics, including the treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans (including '**Khawaja Siras**' or '**hijras**'), intersex or queer, also commonly referred to as LGBTIQ persons.

For the situation of SOGIESC rights defenders and activists, see [Human rights defenders and activists](#).

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [Country Focus 2026, 6.1.6.](#); [Country Focus 2024, 6.7.](#); Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

⁽¹³⁾ 'Children in street situations (CISS) are defined as children whose world and livelihood depends upon what they can obtain in the streets. CISS include those who accompany their peers, siblings, or family members in the streets.', UNICEF, [Children in Street Situations](#), consulted on 23 July 2026.

⁽¹⁴⁾ UN Economic and Social Council, [General Comment No. 14 Plans of Action for Primary Education \(Art. 14 of the Covenant\)](#), 10 May 1999, para. 4.

Although transgender persons benefit from some degree of protection under the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2018, it has only been partially implemented to date. The transgender community continues to face societal stigma and violence.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which persons with diverse SOGIESC could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More precisely, consensual same-sex sexual relations are a criminal offense in Pakistan, punishable by imprisonment ranging from two years to life, fines, or both. Transgender individuals are subjected to (honour) killings and forced expulsion by political and community figures. Sexual minorities, transgender and other gender-diverse people face systemic violence at the hands of both state actors and the society at large.

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts that persons with diverse SOGIESC could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should also be considered. More specifically, sexual minorities face systemic discrimination and harassment. Transgender women experience online hate, and transgender persons face stigma and harassment, including in educational settings by peers and teachers. Transgender individuals often experience discrimination in access to employment, which forces some of them into sex work, to resort to begging or to perform as dancers at events that place them at greater risk of abuse.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

A well-founded fear of persecution would in general be substantiated for persons with diverse SOGIESC, given the systemic violence they face.

It is recalled as per Article 10(3) QR that an applicant cannot be expected to adapt his or her behaviour, convictions or identity, or to abstain from certain practices, where such behaviour, convictions or practices are inherent to his or her identity, to avoid the risk of persecution in his or her country of origin.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Persecution of individuals under this profile is highly likely to be for reasons of **membership of a particular social group** ⁽¹⁵⁾, based on a shared characteristic or belief that is so fundamental to the identity of the applicant, that they should not be forced to renounce it, and based on their distinct identity in Pakistan, as shown by the criminalisation ⁽¹⁶⁾ and/or the social stigma. Persecution of individuals under this profile may also be for reasons of **religion**, for example,

⁽¹⁵⁾ Art. 10(1) QR: *'Depending on the circumstances in the country of origin, the concept of membership of a particular social group as referred to in point (d) of the first subparagraph shall include membership of a group based on a common characteristic of sexual orientation. Gender related aspects, including gender identity and gender expression, shall be given due consideration for the purposes of determining membership of a particular social group or identifying a characteristic of such a group'*, [Regulation \(EU\) 2024/1347](#).

⁽¹⁶⁾ The existence of criminal laws, which specifically target homosexuals, supports the finding that those persons must be regarded as forming a particular social group. CJEU, judgement of 7 November 2013, [Minister voor Immigratie en Asiel v X and Y and Z](#), Joined Cases C-199/12 to C-201/12, Fourth Chamber, paras. 48-49. Summary available in the [EUAA Case Law Database](#).



due to the fact that politicians and religious leaders consider homosexuality, gender non-conformity, or diverse sexual identities to be ‘un-Islamic’.



5. Subsidiary protection

This chapter addresses the EU-regulated status of subsidiary protection. Where the applicant has not been found to qualify as a refugee, they may be eligible for subsidiary protection in accordance with Article 15 QR.



The CJEU ruled in 2023 on **the importance of the personal circumstances when determining if an applicant is eligible for subsidiary protection, before identifying the type of serious harm**, notably ⁽¹⁷⁾:

‘Article 15 of Directive 2011/95/EU [...] must be interpreted as meaning that in order to determine whether an applicant for international protection is eligible for subsidiary protection, **the competent national authority must examine all the relevant factors**, relating both to the individual position and personal circumstances of the applicant and to the general situation in the country of origin, **before identifying the type of serious harm** that those factors may potentially substantiate.’

Therefore, where refugee status is not granted, **personal circumstances** (e.g. age, gender, professional and economic background, home area, potential vulnerabilities) **are still to be taken into account in the assessment of Article 15 QR**.



For further information on the **individual position and personal circumstances of the applicant** which may be relevant to consider in the assessment of a **real risk of serious harm under Article 15 QR**, see relevant sections below.

5.1. Article 15(a) QR: death penalty or execution

Last update: October 2026



For general guidance on the country guidance approach to this section, see ‘EUAA, [Article 15\(a\) QD/QR: death penalty or execution](#) in [Country Guidance: explained](#), February 2026’.

⁽¹⁷⁾ CJEU, judgment of 9 November 2023, [X and Y v Staatssecretaris van Veiligheid en Justitie](#), C-125/22, Fourth Chamber, operative part (Court’s ruling). Summary available in the [EUAA Case Law Database](#).



The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [Country Focus 2026, 1.2., 1.3., 4.1.1., 5.4., 5.8.](#); [Country Focus 2024, 5.7.](#); Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

The capital punishment can be imposed for over 30 distinct crimes, according to Pakistan legal system. Under the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), the death penalty may be imposed for murder and blasphemy and is further specified for certain acts, including kidnapping for ransom or hostage-taking, under the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA). In 2025, a significant increase in death sentences was reported, with at least 225 issued, compared to 174 in 2024. However, a **de facto** moratorium on the implementation of the death penalty has been in place since 2019, with no executions reported since then.

[State actors](#) are familiar with the practice of extrajudicial killings. For example, 'fake encounters' by the Pakistani police is a recurrent phenomenon. Execution could also be the outcome of initiatives by several [non-state actors](#), such as TTP, ISKP and ISPP, SSP and LeJ, as well as mob groups.



As indicated under [4. Refugee status](#), some profiles of applicants from Pakistan may be at risk of death penalty or execution (e.g. [4.1.3. Human rights defenders and activists](#), [4.6. Religious minorities](#), [4.7. Individuals \(perceived as\) transgressing Islamic norms](#), [4.10. Persons with diverse SOGIESC](#)), and if such risk is substantiated, and all the other qualification criteria under refugee status are met, those individuals would qualify for refugee status.

If nexus to a reason for persecution is not substantiated, Article 15(a) QR would apply. In some cases, the death penalty would have been imposed for a serious crime committed by the applicant, or for other acts falling within the exclusion grounds (Article 17 QR) and, therefore, exclusion should be examined (see [8. Exclusion](#)).

5.2. Article 15(b) QR: torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

Last update: October 2026



For general guidance on the country guidance approach to this section, see 'EUAA, [Article 15\(b\) QD/QR: torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in the country of origin](#)' in [Country Guidance: explained](#), February 2026'.



5.2.1. Arbitrary arrests, illegal detention and prison conditions

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [Country Focus 2026](#), [1.2.](#), [1.3.](#), [5.7.](#); [Country Focus 2024](#), [5.4.](#), [5.6.](#); Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Arbitrary arrest and illegal detention are relatively common practices in Pakistan.

The Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA)'s scope and definition of terrorism was described as broad and vague, allowing for its abuse and resulting in unwarranted prosecutions and human rights violations. The ATA also restricts several due process rights as it allows the police to conduct searches and make arrests without a warrant, admits confessions made while in detention (which increases the risk of police torture), provides a very short timeline for investigations and trials, and makes offenses non-compoundable.

Sources pointed to severe overcrowding in Pakistan's prison system, estimating the nationwide overcrowding rate in recent years at over 150 %. Prison conditions have been further characterised by exploitative prison labour practices, limited contact with families and legal counsels, lack of effective complaint mechanisms, as well as by lack of hygiene, insufficient access to healthcare, nutritious food and clean water. A 'high risk' of torture and ill-treatment linked to forced confessions was reported in Pakistan.



As indicated under [4. Refugee status](#), some profiles of applicants from Pakistan may be at risk of arbitrary arrest, illegal detention and harsh prison conditions (e.g. [4.1. Persons \(perceived to be\) opposing the Government](#), [4.2. Journalists and other media workers](#)). If such risk is substantiated and all the other qualification criteria under refugee status are met, those individuals would qualify for refugee status.

For other individuals, if conditions of arrest and/or detention amount to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and there is no nexus to a reason for persecution, Article 15(b) QR would apply.

In some cases, the arrest, detention and imprisonment would have been imposed for a serious crime committed by the applicant, or for other acts falling within the exclusion grounds (Article 17 QR) and, therefore, exclusion should be examined. This would be the case for individuals responsible for some acts committed during riots, such as attacks on police vehicles, ambulances, and schools. It would also be the case for individuals involved in mob violence. See [8. Exclusion](#).

5.2.2. Trafficking in human beings

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [Country Focus 2026](#), [6.1.5.](#), [6.1.9.](#); [Country Focus 2024](#), [6.8.](#); Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.



Trafficking in human beings is described as deeply entrenched in Pakistan, with the country serving as a source, transit route, and destination for victims of trafficking in human beings. The practice affects women, men and children for various forms of exploitation.

Bonded labour, where victims are bound to debt through exploitative creditor practices, remains the most prevalent form of trafficking in Pakistan and it is carried out specifically in the agriculture, brick kilns and textile industry. There are also reports of persons being trafficked for sexual exploitation, forced labour, the drug industry, street begging, and criminal exploitation. The limited availability of protection services leaves many individuals at risk of re-victimisation, and, in some cases, drives them back into exploitative situations.

Perpetrators reportedly include criminal groups and networks but also corrupt local government officials, feudal landlords, and factory owners.



As indicated under [4. Refugee status](#), some profiles of applicants from Pakistan may be at risk of trafficking in human beings (see [4.6.2. Christians](#), [4.6.3. Hindus](#), [4.8. Women and girls](#) and [4.9. Children](#)). If such risk is substantiated and all the other qualification criteria under refugee status are met, those individuals would qualify for refugee status.

Where there is no nexus to a reason for persecution under the refugee definition, but there is a real risk of trafficking in human beings, Article 15(b) QR would apply.

Personal circumstances such as the age and the socio-economic situation of the applicant, are to be taken into account for the assessment of real risk of trafficking in human beings. For example, poverty is a root cause of trafficking in human beings and may put individuals at heightened risk of (re-)trafficking.

5.2.3. Violence in relation to land disputes

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: products: [Country Focus 2026](#), [6.1.10.](#); Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Land disputes in Pakistan encompass a range of situations involving individuals, families, tribes, organised criminal groups, and local authorities. Despite efforts by the Pakistani authorities to establish mechanisms to address the issue, such disputes continue to occur across the country and have resulted in killings, violence, forced evictions, land grabbing, and the unlawful demolition of houses.

Killings related to property ownership were reported in both intra-family disputes and disputes involving non-family members in several parts of the country. Land disputes between members of different tribes, including in the context of acts of revenge were also reported.

Pakistan's blasphemy laws have reportedly been used to target poor individuals and religious minorities in connection with unlawful evictions and land grabbing, including when



economically motivated, in order to acquire land belonging to others. Organised groups, also referred to as ‘land mafias’, are also reported to engage in land grabbing.



As indicated under [4. Refugee status](#), some profiles of applicants from Pakistan may be at risk of violence linked to land dispute (see [4.6. Religious minorities](#), [4.7. Individuals \(perceived as\) transgressing Islamic norms](#)). If such risk is substantiated and all the other qualification criteria under refugee status are met, those individuals would qualify for refugee status.

For other individuals, if there is no nexus to a reason for persecution, Article 15(b) QR would apply.

Personal circumstances such as the gender (women without a support network could be more affected than men) and the socio-economic situation of the applicant, are to be taken into account for the assessment of real risk of being victim of violence in relation to land disputes. For instance, economically disadvantaged persons, are at higher risk of land grabbing or illegal demolition of their property.

In some cases, in the context of land disputes, where the applicant has committed a serious crime or other acts falling within the exclusion grounds (Article 17 QR) exclusion should be examined (see [8. Exclusion](#)).

5.2.4. Healthcare and socio-economic conditions

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [Country Focus 2026](#), 7.; [Country Focus 2024](#), 7.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Private health-related facilities are predominantly located in urban areas, and public sector health services are available at all levels, including through rural health centres and Basic Health Units (BHUs). More than 50 % of the population reportedly lack access to basic primary healthcare services, an issue particularly affecting populations in conflict-affected and rural areas, as well as minority groups and other marginalised communities. The country records alarming levels of preventable mortality among children under five years of age and pregnant women.

The high cost of medicines renders many treatments unaffordable for low-income households, and shortages of essential life-saving medicines, including insulin, were reported in 2025. Approximately 40 % of deaths nationwide were linked to contaminated water, with diarrhoea, cholera and malaria identified among the leading causes of mortality in children.

Pakistan ranks 106th out of 123 countries on the ‘hunger severity’ index, and approximately 40 % of children were affected by stunting. Around 16 % of the population is food insecure, with the majority of vulnerable people residing in the provinces of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh.

The country also continues to face significant economic challenges, characterised by the predominance of informal employment, with most informal workers lacking access to social protection. Child labour and bonded labour remain widespread. Approximately 28.9 % of the population lives below the national poverty line. Poverty is more prevalent in rural areas, although urban poverty is also reported.



It is important to note that serious harm must take the form of conduct of an actor (Article 6 QR). In itself, unless there is intentional conduct of an actor, the general unavailability of healthcare or other socio-economic elements (e.g. difficult access to clean water) is not considered as serious harm meeting the requirements of inhuman or degrading treatment under Article 15(b) QR.

Personal circumstances such as the home area of the applicant as well as his/her gender and belonging to a minority are to be taken into account in the assessment of real risk of inhuman or degrading treatment based on the **socio-economic conditions**. Where there is an intentional conduct of an actor and no nexus to a reason for persecution is substantiated, the treatment may qualify under Article 15(b) QR, depending on the severity of its consequences in the individual case.

5.3. Article 15(c) QR: indiscriminate violence in situations of armed conflict

Last update: October 2026



For general guidance on the country guidance approach to this section, see 'EUAA, [Article 15\(c\) QD/QR: indiscriminate violence in situations of armed conflict](#) in [Country Guidance: explained](#), February 2026'.

In armed conflicts, the targeting of civilians may have nexus to one of the reasons for persecution and therefore, refugee status may be granted.

The assessment for the applicability of Article 15(c) QR is based on the 'EUAA, [COI Report – Pakistan: Country Focus](#), May 2026' and the 'EUAA, [COI Query – Pakistan: Major political, human rights and security developments](#)', July 2026, with reference period 1 November 2024 – 21 July 2026.



This guidance should be considered valid as long as current events and developments fall within the trends and patterns of violence observed within the reference period of the mentioned COI product(s). New events and developments that cause substantial changes, new trends or geographical shifts in the violence,

may lead to a different assessment. The security situation in a given territory should always be assessed in light of the most up-to-date COI available.

All the below elements have to be fulfilled in order to grant subsidiary protection under Article 15(c) QR.

Figure 1. Article 15(c) QR: elements of the assessment



5.3.1. Armed conflict (international or internal)

Last update: October 2026

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#), 6., 7.; [Country Focus 2026](#), [3.1.](#), [3.2.](#), [3.3.](#), [4.1.](#), [4.1.2.](#), [4.2.1.](#), [4.2.2.](#); Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

For information on the different State and non-state actors in Pakistan, see [3. Actors of persecution or serious harm](#).

Armed conflicts in the territory of Pakistan:

- **Armed conflict between Pakistani security forces and Islamist militant groups:** the armed conflict between Islamist militant groups, including TTP, HGB, and ISKP, and state forces mainly takes place in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, although the conflict also affects the Balochistan province to a lesser extent.
- **Armed conflict between Pakistani security forces and Baloch separatist groups:** Baloch militants are mainly active in Balochistan, particularly in the central, southern, and southwestern regions, as well as in the southern and tribal districts of KP.



- **Armed conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan:** a rise of cross-border clashes has been reported involving militants and Pakistani forces. Pakistan also conducted airstrikes on several targets in Afghanistan.
- **Armed conflict between Pakistan and India:** ongoing tensions along the Line of Control led to exchanges of fire in May 2025 over the course of a brief military escalation between Pakistan and India. A ceasefire was brokered in mid-May 2025 and has remained in place.
- **Armed conflict between different Islamist groups:** TTP and HGB are engaged in intense tribal rivalries.



Pakistan is currently affected by multiple armed conflicts, in the meaning of Article 15(c) QR. These conflicts affect different areas in Pakistan at different degrees. See more under [5.3.3. Indiscriminate violence](#).

5.3.2. Qualification of a person as a ‘civilian’

Last update: October 2026



Being a civilian is a prerequisite in order to be able to benefit from protection under Article 15(c) QR. The purpose of the provision is to protect only those who are not taking part in the conflict. This includes the potential application of Article 15(c) QR to former combatants who have genuinely and permanently renounced armed activity.

Applications by Pakistani nationals falling under the following profiles should be examined carefully. Based on an individual assessment, such applicants may be found not to qualify as civilians under Article 15(c) QR. For example:

- members of national security forces, including the Pakistan Armed Forces, the ISI and other intelligence agencies, the Pakistan Rangers, the Frontier Corps, and the Police;
- members of TTP or other Islamist militant groups;
- members of militant factions of separatist movements, including BLA, and BLF.



See also [3. Actors of persecution or serious harm](#).

Actively taking part in hostilities is not limited to openly carrying arms but could also include substantial logistical and/or administrative support to combatants.



Exclusion considerations may also apply. See [8. Exclusion](#).



5.3.3. Indiscriminate violence

Last update: October 2026



The common analysis regarding the level of indiscriminate violence combines quantitative and qualitative elements in a **holistic and inclusive assessment** which cannot exclusively depend on a minimum number of civilian casualties and deaths in the country of origin.

For more information on the methodology and indicators used to assess the level of indiscriminate violence in country guidance documents, see 'EUAA, [Indiscriminate violence](#) in [Country Guidance: explained](#), February 2026'.

The COI used as a basis for this assessment cannot be considered a complete representation of the extent of indiscriminate violence and its impact on the life of civilians. Underreporting issues, especially pertinent to the quantitative indicators, should be taken into account.

Data are primarily based on ACLED reporting from 1 November 2024 to 3 July 2026. Relevant reporting from other sources, including CRSS, PICSS and PIPS, is also noted. Please note that different sources use different methodologies for the recording of incidents, therefore some discrepancies on data are to be expected. For more information on the methodologies of data collection see '[Sources on security incidents and civilian casualties](#)' in '[EUAA COI Report 'Pakistan: Country Focus'](#) May 2026.

(a) Security situation in Pakistan: recent events

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#); [Country Focus 2026](#), [3.1.](#), [3.2.](#), [4.1.](#), [4.2.](#); Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

This section should be read in conjunction with [1. General situation in Pakistan](#). For this guidance, Pakistan Administered Kashmir is used to refer to the areas named 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)' and 'Gilgit-Baltistan (GB)' in EUAA, [COI Report – Pakistan: Country Focus](#), May 2026.

Pakistan's security environment deteriorates from late 2024 and remains highly volatile, despite some month-to-month fluctuations in the intensity of attacks. This deterioration reflects both domestic and regional dynamics: internally, an increase in terrorist attacks was accompanied by intensified counter-terrorism operations, while externally, armed tensions along the borders with Afghanistan and India added instability. Militant groups still maintain a high operational tempo while security forces conduct notable counterterrorism operations. Although the state — above all the military — continues to possess operational reach, persistent insurgencies and recurring attacks against official installations, security personnel and civilian locations eroded security in several parts of the country, especially Khyber



Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan. [State actors](#) and [non-state actors](#) have also been implicated in human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and torture.

The security situation is shaped by multiple **state** and **non-state actors**. On the state side, the Pakistan Army, the Frontier Corps, Rangers, intelligence services such as the ISI, and the police remain central to counter-terrorism and internal security. Among non-state actors, TTP remained the most prominent militant organisation. It functions through a combination of central leadership and decentralised operational cells, allowing operations across several theatres. TTP has used targeted killings, coordinated assaults on security forces and checkpoints, improvised explosives, and increasingly sophisticated means such as drones and advanced weaponry. Islamic State affiliates, notably ISKP and ISPP, also carried out attacks, often with a sectarian dimension, while Baloch insurgent groups continued separatist violence in Balochistan. Militants targeted state institutions, infrastructure and persons seen as linked to the authorities, but civilians were also affected.

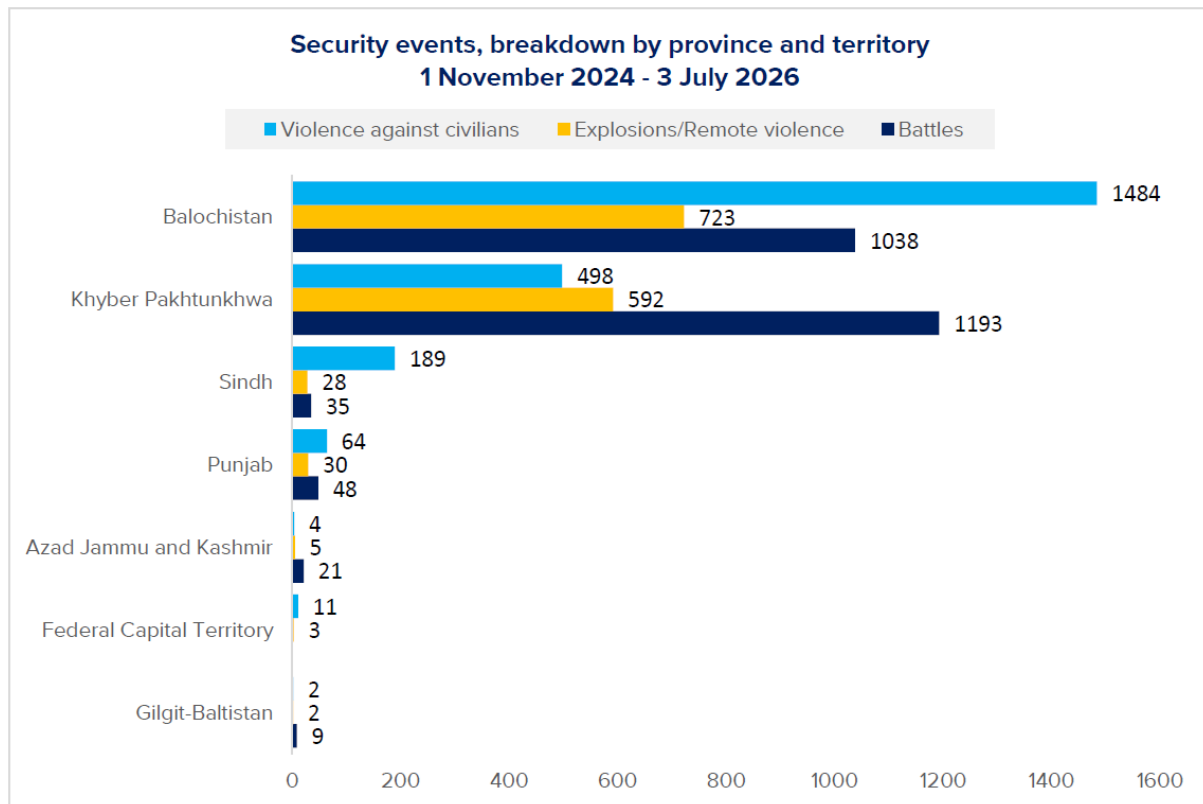
Security incidents have remained concentrated in KP — particularly in the former tribal districts bordering Afghanistan — and in Balochistan, where insurgent and separatist activity remained entrenched. Balochistan remains the most affected province by security incidents, closely followed by KP, while the former FATA areas continue to experience high number of casualties. At the same time, the geographical reach of insecurity broadened, with signs of militant expansion into Punjab and attacks also recorded in Karachi and Islamabad. Cross-border violence intensified along the Afghan frontier, involving airstrikes, infiltration and clashes between state forces, while in May 2025 Indian strikes caused disruption in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. Civilians continued to face harm from deliberate attacks and collateral damage during clashes and bombings. Even where militant groups increasingly focused on state-linked targets, civilians remained exposed in areas affected by frequent violence or military operations, and high-casualty bombings and suicide attacks continued to drive fatalities.

Conflict-related displacement has remained significant. Military operations, militant presence and fear of violence forced temporary movements, particularly in KP and Balochistan; notably, operations in KP displaced around 100 000 people in 2025. Border tensions and operations near the Afghan frontier caused further disruption, while Indian strikes in May 2025 generated additional displacement in Kashmir.

Beyond death, injury and displacement, civilians were affected by human rights violations, including enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention and surveillance targeting journalists, activists and perceived dissenters. Digital monitoring and restrictive legal measures narrowed civic space, while insecurity disrupted transport networks and livelihoods, reduced access to services and deepened socio-economic vulnerability in conflict-affected areas.



Figure 2: Breakdown by province and territory of security events recorded by ACLED, between 1 November 2024 – 3 July 2026.



From 1 November 2024 to 3 July 2026, ACLED reported 9 021 fatalities in Pakistan, with the highest numbers recorded in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (4 502) and Balochistan (4 076). ⁽¹⁸⁾



Overall, parts of Pakistan are marked by persistent insurgency, expanding militant capabilities and a notable civilian toll within a complex conflict setting across peripheral regions.

(b) Assessment of indiscriminate violence per province

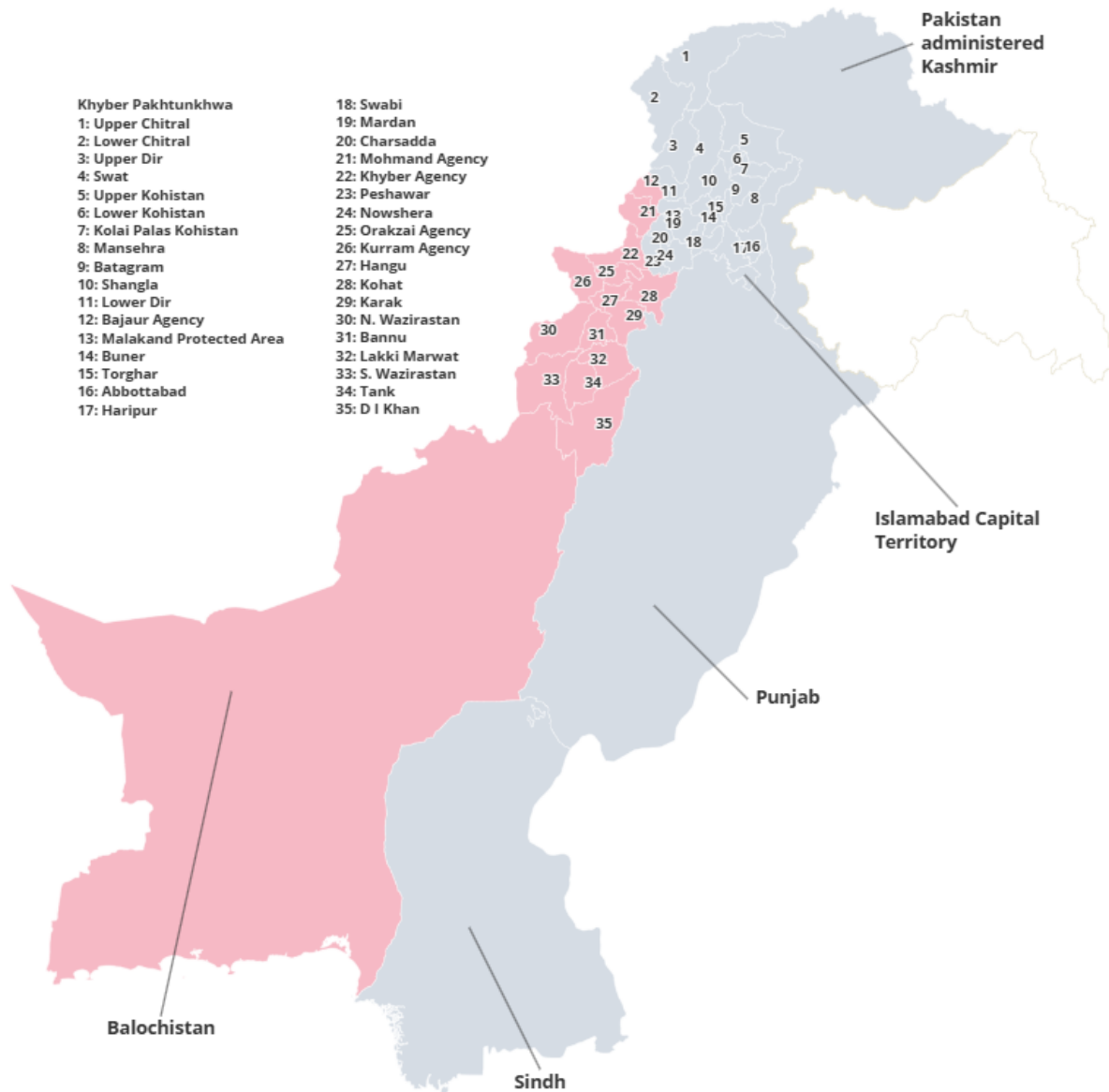
Last update: October 2026

The map below summarises and illustrates the assessment of indiscriminate violence per province:

⁽¹⁸⁾ All ACLED fatality figures provided here are estimates based on ACLED's methodology. ACLED's database does not distinguish between civilian and non-civilian fatalities and only provides figures of direct deaths or fatalities per event, not of injured persons and casualties.

Figure 3: Level of indiscriminate violence in Pakistan (based on information up to 3 July 2026)

■ No real risk ■ Not a high level



Mere presence

Areas where the degree of **indiscriminate violence** reaches such an **exceptionally high level** that substantial grounds are shown for believing that a civilian, returned to the relevant area, would, **solely on account of their presence there**, face a real risk of being subject to the serious threat referred to in Article 15(c) QR.

Accordingly, additional individual elements are not required in order to substantiate subsidiary protection needs under Article 15(c) QR.

No such areas were identified in Pakistan.

High level of indiscriminate violence

Areas where 'mere presence' would not be sufficient to establish a real risk of serious harm under Article 15(c) QR, but where, **indiscriminate violence reaches a high level**. Accordingly, a **lower level of individual elements** (see [Serious and individual threat](#)) is required to show substantial grounds for believing that a civilian, returned to the area, would face a real risk of serious harm in the meaning of Article 15(c) QR.

No such areas were identified in Pakistan

Indiscriminate violence not at a high level

Areas where indiscriminate violence is taking place, however **not at a high level**.

Accordingly, a **higher level of individual elements** is required in order to show substantial grounds for believing that a civilian, returned to the area, would face a real risk of serious harm in the meaning of Article 15(c) QR.

The areas assessed as belonging to this category as well as the main elements leading to this assessment are highlighted below.

Balochistan

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#), 1., 2., 6., 7.; [Country Focus 2026](#), [3.2.13.](#), [4.1.1.](#), [4.2.1.](#); Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

In Balochistan indiscriminate violence takes place, however not at a high level. Notably, confrontations between insurgent groups and state authorities have had a limited impact on civilians despite persistent high-intensity insecurity, marked by large-scale armed violence, and a strong militant presence across the province.

Baloch insurgent groups, particularly the BLA and its **Jeeyand** faction, expanded their methods and tactics and demonstrated greater capacity to conduct coordinated, high-profile operations, including attacks on security positions, infrastructure and government structures, suicide attacks in urban spaces, sieges, hijackings, targeted killings, roadblocks and temporary seizures of territory. At the same time, reports describe increased militarisation, and serious human rights violations by the authorities. Islamist militant expansion, and border clashes with Afghanistan further aggravated insecurity.

ACLED recorded 3 245 security incidents between 1 November 2024 and 3 July 2026, including 1 484 incidents of violence against civilians, 1 038 battles and 723 explosions/remote violence. 4 076 fatalities recorded by ACLED represented 27 per 100 000 inhabitants.



While the frequency and lethality of security incidents between insurgent groups and the authorities are significant, the impact on civilians is limited, therefore it can be concluded that indiscriminate violence takes place, but not at a high level.

South and West Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)

For this guidance, South and West Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) comprises Bajaur, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, Hangu, Karak, Khyber, Kohat, Kurram, Lakki Marwat, Mohmand, North Waziristan, Orakzai, South Waziristan, and Tank districts.

For guidance on **Peshawar** district, see [No real risk](#).

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#), 2., 7.; [Country Focus 2026](#), 3.2.1., 3.2.9., 3.3., 4.2.2.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

While the violence spread into populated areas and its intensity was significant, its impact on civilians was limited. Therefore, it can be concluded that, **in South and West Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (except [Peshawar](#) district), indiscriminate violence takes place, however not at a high level.**

The security situation was characterised by a high level of militant violence, largely driven by the resurgence of TTP since 2021, ongoing counter-militancy operations, and recurrent border clashes with Afghanistan. This violence was not confined to a single district; rather, it formed a broad arc of insecurity extending across those districts in which Islamist militant groups, particularly the TTP, maintained an operational presence, notably the former FATA and the southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

The TTP and affiliated factions carried out attacks against security personnel, including suicide operations, abductions, targeted killings, drone strikes, and cross-border infiltrations, demonstrating sustained operational capability. The rivalry between the TTP, largely associated with the Mehsud tribe of South Waziristan, and HGB, rooted in the Wazir and Dawar tribes of North Waziristan, further intensified the competition over territory and influence. Reports also indicated that the TTP maintained recruitment hubs and elements of shadow governance, while militants exercised influence through roadblocks, checkpoints, and embedded presence among civilians. Schools were also affected, facing closures, threats, and attacks, including incidents in late 2025 involving hundreds of students and staff.

Out of the 2 283 security incidents recorded by ACLED in KP between 1 November 2024 and 3 July 2026, 2 025 of them (i.e. nearly 89 %) took place in South and West KP. They included 1 067 battles, 538 explosions/remote violence and 420 incidents of violence against civilians. Out of the 4 502 fatalities recorded by ACLED in KP between 1 November 2024 and 3 July 2026, 4 168 of them (i.e. around 92 %) occurred in South and West KP and represented 32 per 100 000 inhabitants.

The highest numbers of security incidents in South and West KP were recorded in Bannu (383 incidents; 17 % of the provincial total), Lakki Marwat (297; 13 %), South Waziristan (249; 11 %),



and North Waziristan (208; 9 %). The highest numbers of fatalities were reported in North Waziristan (902 fatalities; 20 %), Bannu (567; 13 %), South Waziristan (450; 10 %), and Kurram (374; 8 %).

Against this backdrop, since most security incidents involved only TTP and Pakistani armed forces, and, taking into consideration that evacuations at times occurred in anticipation of government security operations, the impact on civilians is limited, therefore it can be concluded that indiscriminate violence takes place, but not at a high level.

No real risk

Areas where **there is no real risk** for a civilian to be personally affected within the meaning of Article 15(c) QR. This may be because the criteria for an armed conflict within the meaning of this provision are not met, or because no indiscriminate violence is taking place.

The areas assessed as belonging to this category as well as the main elements leading to this assessment are highlighted below.

Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT)

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#), 6.; [Country Focus 2026](#), 4.2.5.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

In Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), the security situation remained comparatively stable and low in intensity when measured against Pakistan's main conflict zones. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is **no real risk for a civilian to be personally affected within the meaning of Article 15(c) QR in the ICT**.

While the security incidents in ICT carried symbolic and psychological significance because they showed the reach of militant networks into the federal capital, they remained isolated and were made of attacks against security forces, minority groups and anti-government protesters. ICT Police and the Counter Terrorism Department carried out search and intelligence-based operations, arresting militants and demonstrating an active capacity to prevent attacks. The main high-impact incidents were the November 2025 suicide bombing outside a court and the February 2026 suicide attack inside a Shiite Mosque.

Considering the limited number and scale of security incidents, it can be concluded that there does not exist a situation of indiscriminate violence in the ICT.

North and East Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) including Peshawar

For this guidance, North and East Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) comprises Abbottabad, Battagram, Buner, Charsadda, Haripur, Kolai-Palas Kohistan, Lower Chitral, Lower Dir, Lower Kohistan, Malakand, Mansehra, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Shangla, Swat, Swabi, Torgar, Upper Chitral, Upper Dir, and Upper Kohistan districts.



The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#), 2., 6., 7.; [Country Focus 2026](#), 4.2.2.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Considering that the recorded violence is very limited in scale and intensity, with security incidents being generally isolated and not indicative of indiscriminate violence in the context of an armed conflict, it can be concluded that there is **no real risk for a civilian to be personally affected within the meaning of Article 15(c) QR in North and East Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Peshawar.**

Islamist militant groups, particularly the TTP and allied factions, have expanded their operational presence to nearly all districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. However, both militant activity and counterterrorism operations remain heavily concentrated in the southern belt, especially in the former FATA, which continues to be the main theatre of violence.

While violence outside former FATA has traditionally been focused in the Peshawar and Malakand divisions, it shifted predominantly towards the south in 2024–2025. In 2025, attacks again spread beyond the southern districts to areas such as Peshawar, Swat, Lower Dir and Shangla, including high-profile suicide and targeted attacks.

Out of the 2 283 security incidents recorded by ACLED in KP between 1 November 2024 and 3 July 2026, 258 of them (i.e. around 11 %) took place in North and East KP. They included 126 battles, 54 explosions/remote violence and 78 incidents of violence against civilians. Out of the 4 502 fatalities recorded by ACLED in KP between 1 November 2024 and 3 July 2026, 334 of them (i.e. around 7 %) occurred in these districts and represented 1 fatality per 100 000 inhabitants.

The highest numbers of security incidents in North and East KP districts were recorded in Peshawar (97 incidents; 4 % of the provincial total), Lower Dir (33; 1 %), and Swabi (22; 1 %). The highest numbers of fatalities were reported in Peshawar (102 fatalities; 2 %), Lower Dir (51; 1 %), and Mardan (36; 1 %).

Despite this geographic expansion, northern and north-eastern districts remained comparatively less affected and were not among the primary hotspots of violence with no noticeable impact on civilians.

Pakistan Administered Kashmir

For this guidance, Pakistan Administered Kashmir is used to refer to the areas named ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)’ and ‘Gilgit-Baltistan (GB)’ in EUAA, [COI Report – Pakistan: Country Focus](#), May 2026.

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#), 6.; [Country Focus 2026](#), 4.2.6.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Considering that violence linked to militant groups and counter-militancy operations remained sparse, with marginal impact on civilians, it can be concluded that **there is no real risk for a**



civilian to be personally affected within the meaning of Article 15(c) QR in Pakistan Administered Kashmir.

The main security dynamics were shaped less by militant activity than by violent demonstrations in late 2025 and by the short-lived India-Pakistan escalation in May 2025, causing civilians fatalities, infrastructure damage and internal displacement in districts such as Bagh, Muzaffarabad and Haveli. Other security challenges were also limited in scale, though three militant attacks occurred in 2025, including in Diamer and Gilgit, as well as some sectarian unrest and protest-related violence.

While homes, schools and hospitals were reportedly damaged in Pakistan Administered Kashmir, and isolated unrest episodes in GB occurred, these incidents remained limited in number and geographical scope with marginal impact on civilians.

Punjab

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#), 6.; [Country Focus 2026](#), 4.2.3.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Considering that the recorded violence was very limited in scale and intensity, with security incidents being generally isolated and not indicative of indiscriminate violence in the context of an armed conflict, it can be concluded that there is **no real risk for a civilian to be personally affected within the meaning of Article 15(c) QR in Punjab.**

The security situation remained very limited in intensity compared to KP and Balochistan, although militant groups continued to seek a foothold, especially in South Punjab and districts bordering KP or Balochistan. Militant attacks diminished in 2025 and were limited to isolated incidents in places such as Rawalpindi, Attock, Taunsa and Mianwali. Counterterrorism operations appeared to have disrupted urban militant cells effectively, while the TTP remained the main perpetrator and had focused attacks on police stations and checkpoints.

While Punjab experienced militant violence, with isolated TTP attacks and effective counterterrorism limiting broader operational expansion, these incidents remained limited in number and geographical scope with no noticeable impact on civilians.

Sindh

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#), 6.; [Country Focus 2026](#), 4.2.4.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Considering that the recorded violence is very limited in scale and intensity, with security incidents being generally isolated and not indicative of indiscriminate violence in the context of an armed conflict, it can be concluded that there is **no real risk for a civilian to be personally affected within the meaning of Article 15(c) QR in Sindh.**

Sindh experienced sporadic and low-level security incidents. The Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army (SRA), a Sindhi separatist group, had limited operational capabilities compared to other

militant groups in Pakistan. Baloch separatist groups and Islamist militants were responsible for a small number of attacks in Sindh province, but their activities in Sindh appeared peripheral to the groups' priorities. Methods included attacks on security forces, police stations, railway tracks, oil pipelines, oil tankers, passenger trains, and incidents of sectarian violence. State actors further routinely arrested suspected members of insurgent groups, demonstrating the willingness and ability of provincial authorities to counter militant attacks.

While Sindh faced peripheral militant activity, the separatist capacity was limited and routine state action contained broader escalation risks, making these incidents limited in number and geographical scope with no noticeable impact on civilians.



Please note that in areas where there would be 'no real risk' for a civilian to be affected by indiscriminate violence within the meaning of Article 15(c) QR, depending on personal circumstances, an applicant may still be exposed to a risk of persecution (see [4. Refugee status](#)) or a risk of serious harm under [Article 15\(a\) QR: death penalty or execution](#) or [Article 15\(b\) QR: torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment](#). Hence, this assessment of 'no real risk' should in no way be misconstrued as the designation of 'safe areas' for return or any other purposes.

5.3.4. Serious and individual threat

Last update: October 2026

In the context of the 'sliding scale', each case should be assessed individually, taking into account the applicant's personal circumstances together with the nature and intensity of the violence in their home area (see also [Indiscriminate violence](#)). It is not feasible to provide exhaustive guidance as to what the relevant personal circumstances could be and how those should be assessed. Individual elements can exist in combination. Other factors may also be relevant.

Below are some **examples of personal circumstances** to be taken into account, where the 'mere presence' threshold is not reached, in the context of Pakistan:

- **Age:** this personal circumstance would be of particular importance in relation to the ability of the person to assess the risks. Children may not be in a position to quickly assess a changing situation and avoid the risks it entails. In some cases, elderly age may also impact the person's ability to assess and avoid risks associated with an armed conflict.
- **Gender:** it is difficult to ascertain whether and in what circumstances men or women would be at a higher risk in general. It would also depend on other factors, such as the nature of the violence in the area. For example, men may be at higher risk of violence targeting local markets, banks, governmental institutions, as they are the ones more frequently being outside the home and visiting such locations. On the other hand, general gender norms in Pakistan suggest that women may have less information regarding the current security situation and the associated risks. Moreover, if the

violence moves closer to the residence of people, e.g. in the case of drone strikes or security operations in populated areas, women may have a more limited ability to avoid it.

- **Health condition and disabilities, including mental health issues:** serious illnesses and disabilities may result in restricted mobility for a person, making it difficult for them to avoid immediate risks and, in the case of mental illnesses, it can make them less capable of assessing risks. In other cases, such conditions may require frequent visits to a healthcare facility.
- **Economic situation:** applicants in a particularly dire economic situation may also be less able to avoid the risks associated with indiscriminate violence. They may be forced to expose themselves to risks such as working in areas which are affected by violence. They may also have less resources to avoid an imminent threat by relocating to a different area.
- **Knowledge of the area:** the relevant knowledge of the area concerns the patterns of violence that affect it. Different elements may contribute to a person's knowledge of the area. It can relate to their own experience in the specific area or in areas similarly affected by indiscriminate violence, or to their connection to a support network which would ensure they are informed of the relevant risks.
- **Occupation and/or place of residence:** the occupation the person is likely to have when they return to their home area may also be relevant. It may, for example, be linked to the need for a trader to travel through conflict-affected areas for their livelihoods or for a journalist or a physician to operate in or nearby a conflict zone.
- **Family members or support network:** the family or support network can be a source of information, that is necessary to evaluate dangerous situations. Therefore, a person with no or limited support network may be more exposed to indiscriminate violence. On the contrary, a person with a substantial family or support network may be more able to assess the risks.

In some cases, these personal circumstances may be cumulative, leading to enhanced exposure to risk of indiscriminate violence.

5.3.5. Qualification of the harm as a 'threat to (a civilian's) life or person'

Last update: October 2026

Some of the commonly reported types of harm to civilian's life or person in Pakistan include killing, sieges, attacks on infrastructure, attacks on and closure of schools, etc. A real risk of such serious harm would qualify as a threat to a (civilian's) life or person in accordance with the provision of Article 15(c) QR.



5.3.6. Nexus/‘by reason of’

Last update: October 2026

The interpretation of the causation ‘by reason of’ may not be limited to harm which is directly caused by the indiscriminate violence or by acts that emanate from the actors in the conflict. To a certain extent, it may also include the indirect effect of indiscriminate violence in situations of armed conflict. As long as there is a demonstrable link to the indiscriminate violence, such elements may be taken into account in the assessments, for example the destruction of infrastructure.



6. Actors of protection



For general guidance on the country guidance approach to this section, see 'EUAA, [Actors of protection](#) in [Country Guidance: explained](#), February 2026'.

6.1. The State

Last update: October 2026

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [Country Focus 2026, 3.1.7., 5.1., 5.4., 5.9., 5.10., 6.1.2., 6.1.3., 6.1.4., 6.1.10.](#); Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Pakistan's law enforcement agencies operate at two levels: provincial and federal. They also include specialised units focused on specific types of criminal activity (such as the CTD or FIA) or on providing security in specific areas or during specific events (such as religious events). These units may fall under the jurisdiction of either the military or the Ministry of the Interior. In most areas, Pakistani police and security forces have the capacity to provide protection and maintain public safety and order. Law enforcement agencies are investigating common crimes, such as murders, violent property disputes and violent attacks and certain forms of serious crime, such as trafficking in human beings; however, the effectiveness of investigations into these crimes may be hampered by high levels of corruption and inefficiency. To initiate an investigation, a First Information Report (FIR) must be filed. In some cases, reports have emerged of the police's reluctance to investigate certain crimes and of their efforts to discourage complainants from filing FIRs. In cases where police refuse to register a FIR, victims can submit a written complaint to the Superintendent of Police (SP) or refer to a magistrate to seek directions on registering the FIR. The law further provides for penal and civil remedies for individuals against whom a false FIR has been filed.

In regions with lower levels of security (primarily certain areas of Balochistan and KP, particularly the former FATA), there is a greater presence of special security and counterterrorism units and army. In these areas, law enforcement agencies may have a reduced ability to protect the general public, given the terrorist attacks targeting state authorities as well as the generally lower level of security and/or the ongoing military operations.

Pakistani authorities may be reluctant to provide protection in cases of attacks on religious minorities (particularly Ahmadis) or on those accused of blasphemy, due to concerns about public backlash and security risks. Measures aiming to introduce protections against abuse of the blasphemy laws remained largely unenforced. State authorities also repeatedly failed to provide protection to victims of forced conversions, forced marriage and sexual violence.



The police and other law enforcement agencies are associated with high levels of corruption. There are reports that Pakistani security forces resort to torture to extract confessions, carry out extrajudicial killings against the accused and misuse the laws against individuals perceived as opponents of the regime.

The judicial system is divided into federal and provincial courts and includes a large number of specialised courts, as well as religious and military courts.

In rural and tribal areas, alternative community courts (**jirgas** and **panchayats**) also operate and may address issues related to family, land, or honour. While sources described the judiciary as being 'formally' or 'for the most part' independent from the other state powers, it was noted that it 'has not been entirely independent' since 2024 as political oversight over the judiciary increased as a result of the 2024 and 2025 constitutional amendments. The effectiveness of the judicial system is further reportedly undermined by inefficiency, corruption, and lengthy proceedings. Moreover, the prosecution system was reported to have limited authority and independence, being under-financed, undertrained, and subject to political pressure.



The Pakistani state is generally able to provide protection across most of its territory. Its capacity may be limited in areas affected by military operations and/or the activities of insurgent and terrorist groups, especially in the territories of former FATA. However, even in these areas, protection may be available in individual cases.

Several factors can influence the Pakistani state willingness to provide protection. These include, above all, gender, ethnic background, socio-economic status and religion.

In cases where the applicant is a single woman or a member of [Religious minorities](#), and the reported crime is related to their membership in a religious group or is gender-based, it cannot be expected that the police will be willing to provide effective protection.

In the case of common violent crimes, it can be concluded that the police will be willing to provide potential victims with protection that meets the requirements of Article 7 QR taking into account the individual circumstances of the case.

Moreover, the Pakistani State may be an actor of persecution, for example in cases of human rights and minority rights activists, journalists and/or members and supporters of movements perceived as opposing the state, therefore, in such cases state protection would be unavailable.



6.2. Non-State authorities



No other actors are currently found to be in control of a substantial part of the territory and able to provide protection within the meaning of Article 7 QR in Pakistan.



7. Internal protection alternative



For general guidance on the country guidance approach to this section, see 'EUAA, [Internal protection alternative](#) in [Country Guidance: explained](#), February 2026'.

7.1. Part of the country

Last update: October 2026

When identifying the part of the country to be considered for IPA, the decision-maker should take into account factors related to individual circumstances, including, *inter alia*, the applicant's area of origin and existing ties with the proposed area of relocation, such as previous stay or residence and/or availability of a support network, within the proposed area.

This guidance document looks into the existence of internal protection alternative, specifically in the three cities of **Islamabad**, **Lahore**, and **Karachi**, as the major urban and economic centres in Pakistan. **This is without prejudice to the possibility to assess the reasonableness of IPA in other locations in Pakistan.**

7.2. Safety

Last update: October 2026

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [COI Update 2026](#); [Country Focus 2026](#), [4.2.](#), [6.1.2.](#), [6.1.3.](#), [6.1.4.](#), [6.1.5.](#), [6.1.6.](#), [6.1.7.](#); Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

7.2.1. Absence of persecution or serious harm

When examining the element 'absence of persecution or serious harm', the decision-maker should refer to chapters 3 to 6 of this document.

When assessing the requirement of safety with regard to the applicability of IPA in individual cases of applicants from Pakistan, the following elements should be taken into account:

- **General security situation in relation to indiscriminate violence**

Based on the analysis under [Indiscriminate violence](#), the conclusions with regard to the three cities of Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi are as follows: **in Islamabad** (Islamabad Capital Territory), **Lahore** (Punjab) and **Karachi** (Sindh), [there is no real risk for a civilian to be personally affected within the meaning of Article 15\(c\) QR.](#)



- **Actor of persecution or serious harm and their reach**

In cases where the person fears persecution or serious harm by [state actors](#) (e.g. [Persons \(perceived to be\) opposing the Government](#), [Persons convicted on blasphemy charges](#), or [Persons with diverse SOGIESC](#)), there is a presumption that IPA would not be available.

[Non-state actors](#), including Islamist and Baloch separatist militants, do not have a strong presence throughout Pakistan. Therefore, in case of persecution by such actors, the safety requirement could be satisfied in parts of the country outside of their reach.

In some cases, where the applicant faces persecution or serious harm related to the prevalent social norms in Pakistan and the actor of persecution or serious harm is the Pakistani society at large (e.g. [Ahmadis](#), [Women and girls](#), [Persons with diverse SOGIESC](#)), the safety requirement would in general not be met, and IPA would not be available.

If the actor of persecution or serious harm is the (extended) family of the applicant, the safety requirement may be met, depending on the reach of these actors. For certain particularly vulnerable categories, such as single women and children, considering the lack of State protection and their potential vulnerability to other forms of violence or exploitation, the safety requirement would in general not be met, and IPA would not be available, irrespective of the reach of the (extended) family.

Additionally, the applicant's profile could make them a priority target, increasing the likelihood that the actor of persecution or serious harm would attempt to trace them in the potential IPA location (e.g. individuals targeted by insurgent militants). In the context of Pakistan, there is limited information that non-state actors would consider an individual as a priority target and be willing to pursue them in the potential IPA location.

For the area of operation and influence of actors, see [Areas of control and influence](#) and [Indiscriminate violence](#).

7.2.2. Availability of protection against persecution or serious harm

Alternatively, it may be determined that the requirement of safety is satisfied if the applicant would have access to protection against persecution or serious harm, as defined in Article 7 QR, in the area where IPA is considered. In the case of persecution by the State, a presumption of non-availability of State protection applies. See also [Actors of protection](#).

7.2.3. Conclusion on safety



The requirement of safety may be satisfied in Islamabad, Lahore, and/or Karachi, depending on the profile and the individual circumstances of the applicant.



When the actor of persecution or serious harm is the State or the Pakistani society at large, the requirement of safety would not be met. Additionally, for certain particularly vulnerable individuals, the requirement of safety would in general not be met.

7.3. Travel and admittance

Last update: October 2026

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [Country Focus 2026](#), [4.2.3.](#), [4.2.4.](#), [4.2.5.](#), [7.1.9.](#), [7.1.10.](#), [7.2.9.](#), [7.2.10.](#), [7.3.9.](#), [7.3.10.](#); Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

If the criterion of ‘safety’ is satisfied, as a next step, it has to be established whether an applicant can **safely** and **legally travel** and **gain admittance** to the suggested IPA location.

- **Safely travel**

Pakistan has international airports in several cities, including **Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi**, all of which provide domestic and international connections.

Islamabad International Airport, Allama Iqbal International Airport in Lahore, and Jinnah International Airport in Karachi all allow generally safe access to their respective cities, with no significant security incidents reported at or near the airports. Islamabad and Karachi are also connected to other parts of the country by road and rail, while Lahore has strong rail links to other major urban centres.

Among the three, Karachi’s Jinnah International Airport handles the highest volume of air traffic, while Lahore’s airport is the second busiest. Although there were some reports of robberies on the highway between Karachi and Lahore and attacks on passenger trains in Sindh, the limited number of such incidents indicates that Karachi remains generally accessible by land.

- **Legally travel**

There are no administrative restrictions preventing Pakistani citizens from travelling within Pakistan, including from and to Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi.

- **Gain admittance**

There are no legal or administrative restrictions or requirements for Pakistani citizens to be admitted in any part of the country, including to Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi.



No significant security incidents have been recorded in the proximity of airports in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi. Infrequent security incidents at road and rail



infrastructure do not preclude the safety of travel, in general. Furthermore, there are no legal or administrative restrictions to travel and gain admittance to these cities.

7.4. Reasonableness to settle

Last update: October 2026

If the criteria of safety and travel and admittance are met, the next step in assessing the existence of an IPA in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi is to consider the reasonableness to settle in light of the general situation in each city and the individual circumstances of the applicant.

7.4.1. General situation

Last update: October 2026

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [Country Focus 2026, 7.](#); Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

- **Means of basic subsistence and employment**

Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi all offer important possibilities for internal relocation, but the socio-economic conditions differ in ways that may affect the reasonableness to settle.

The three cities are major urban and economic centres with diversified labour markets, active welfare organisations and some support mechanisms for vulnerable persons. At the same time, all three show structural constraints, notably reliance on informal work, uneven enforcement of labour protections, and limited social protection.

As the capital, **Islamabad** is closely linked to government institutions, diplomatic missions, banking, media, telecommunications and state-owned or foreign companies, giving it a strong service sector alongside some manufacturing activity. It has the lowest reported poverty rate among Pakistan's districts (3.5%), although this is accompanied by a cost of living above the national average. The presence of a Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) and the fact that one in five households receives some form of social assistance suggest relatively better institutional support, even if social protection overall remains limited.

Karachi and **Lahore** are both major economic hubs, but in both cities access to livelihoods can be challenging. **Karachi**, as Pakistan's largest city and principal commercial and logistics centre, likely offers the widest range of employment opportunities. However, rising poverty, widespread informal employment and long power outages particularly affecting daily wage earners indicate significant vulnerability for poorer households. **Lahore**, as the country's second-largest city and a key industrial and commercial centre, also offers economic opportunities, but these are influenced by very high informality and particularly poor



compliance with minimum wage rules. Labour exploitation, especially in sectors such as brick kilns in Punjab, further weakens livelihood security.

- **Food security**

Across **Islamabad**, **Karachi** and **Lahore**, available information indicates growing pressure on access to adequate food, mainly linked to rising prices, climate-related disruptions and pressure on local food supply. In all three cities, poorer households appear particularly exposed, although the degree and form of vulnerability differ.

In **Islamabad**, rising food prices reportedly affect slum residents in particular, limiting access to more nutritious foods such as meat and fruit; women were reported to be especially disadvantaged. At the same time, some mitigation efforts have been introduced, including measures to promote fortified flour and increase local food consumption.

In **Karachi**, food insecurity appears more widespread and structural. In Sindh province, almost one third of households were reportedly affected by moderate or severe food insecurity, linked to drought, water scarcity and flood-related crop damage, all of which contributed to reduced agricultural output and higher prices.

In **Lahore**, food access was also affected by supply pressures, including shrinking agricultural land and monsoon floods. Sharp price increases and shortages of key food items were reported, although government-supported Sahulat Bazaars provided some subsidised access to essential commodities.

- **Housing and shelter**

Across **Islamabad**, **Karachi** and **Lahore**, formal housing coexists with significant informal settlement patterns, particularly affecting lower-income groups. In all three cities, residents of slums or informal settlements appear more exposed to overcrowding, unsafe structures and environmental risks. In **Islamabad**, marginalised communities in informal and peri-urban settlements face exposure to flash floods and heat waves. Most households reportedly have access to a washroom. In **Karachi**, housing vulnerability appears most acute, with around 60 % of residents living in informal settlements (*katchi abadis*) marked by overcrowding and unsafe buildings, including roof and building collapses. In **Lahore**, significant slum areas persisted, while property prices further increase low-income households' reliance on informal housing.

- **Water and sanitation**

Across **Islamabad**, **Karachi** and **Lahore**, available information points to significant shortcomings in access to water and sanitation, although the nature and severity of these problems differ between the three cities. In **Islamabad**, water quality is poor and supply insufficient, resulting in water rationing; dam construction is cited as a mitigation measure. In **Karachi**, access to the public water system appears uneven due to deficiencies in infrastructure and water theft, with many residents reportedly depending on private water tankers. Conditions in *katchi abadis* are described as particularly poor, with limited or no access to piped water and sanitation, increasing exposure to waterborne infections, though access varies across settlements and city areas. In **Lahore**, water shortages, flooding, sewage



contamination and severe air pollution combine to create a particularly acute environmental situation.

- **Basic healthcare**

Across **Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore**, access to healthcare infrastructure is generally good, particularly in central urban areas and both for basic and specialised services. At the same time, the quality and effective availability of care appear to vary depending on local capacity, type of facility and ability to rely on public or private provision.

In **Islamabad**, healthcare access is reported to be good overall, with all three levels of the health system described as easily accessible, namely primary care through BHUs and Rural Health Centres (RHCs), secondary care through Tehsil Headquarters (THQ) and District Headquarters (DHQ) facilities, and tertiary care through specialised hospitals.

In **Karachi**, healthcare facilities are also described as generally accessible for most residents, with the relative exception of the outer Malir District. However, public hospitals face significant capacity constraints, in particular a severe shortage of medical staff. At the same time, treatment is available for conditions including tuberculosis, HIV and hepatitis.

In **Lahore**, the healthcare situation appears comparatively strong, with the city ranking second out of 129 districts in the District Vulnerability Index of Pakistan and hosting a high concentration of specialised hospitals. Both public and private healthcare sectors are well developed, although recent changes suggest reduced insurance-based coverage in public hospitals and only limited continued coverage in registered private facilities.



Across **Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi**, access to basic subsistence is shaped by major urban economies, but also by informal employment, uneven labour protection and limited social support. While food is generally available, access has been affected by rising prices, climate-related disruptions and pressure on supply, with some mitigation measures in Islamabad and Lahore. Housing includes both formal neighbourhoods and significant informal settlements, particularly affecting lower-income groups. Water and sanitation conditions show shortages, poor quality and uneven access, especially in informal areas. Healthcare infrastructure is generally available, including specialised services, though capacity constraints exist in parts of Karachi.

The general circumstances prevailing in the cities of **Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi** assessed in relation to the factors above do not preclude the reasonableness to settle in those cities as such. The assessment should take into account the individual circumstances of the applicant.



7.4.2. Individual circumstances

Last update: October 2026

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [Country Focus 2026, 7](#); Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

In addition to the general situation in the area of potential IPA, the assessment whether it is reasonable to settle in that part of the country should take into account the individual circumstances of the applicant, including their potential vulnerabilities and coping mechanisms.

Please note that this is a non-exhaustive list:

- **Gender:** social constraints and related practical effects (control on family finances, job opportunities and conditions, etc.) are likely to limit the chances for a woman to autonomously settle in a place different from the one she is bound to due to family links. In Islamabad, Lahore, and especially in Karachi, some welfare organisations focus on women issues.
- **Age:** children and elderly persons could have access to limited means of subsistence making them dependent on other providers. Therefore, this element should be seen in conjunction with the available support by family or a broader support network. In the case of children, the best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration, for example, with regard to access to basic education.
- **Family status and/or support network:** local knowledge and social connections are important in helping a person settle and access basic needs and services. A support network may include extended family, friends, members of the same ethnicity. Special attention should be given to some people returning after long periods abroad, who may lack such networks.
- **Professional and educational background and financial means:** the background of the applicant, their level of education and available financial means and in particular the access of the applicant to means of basic subsistence, should be taken into account when assessing the reasonableness of IPA.
- **Linguistic background:** while not a requirement, the knowledge of Urdu language would facilitate the settlement of the applicant in Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore, those three cities hosting communities of all the main ethnic and religious groups of Pakistan.
- **State of health:** the availability of the necessary medical treatment, as well as the applicant's state of health and its impact on their ability to work and to travel/relocate, should be considered. For persons with disabilities, access to basic means of subsistence, including through employment, would be further limited.

These factors would often intersect in the case of an applicant, leading to different conclusions on the reasonableness of IPA. In some cases, more than one element of vulnerability would confirm a conclusion that IPA is not reasonable (e.g. a woman or a person



with disability without a support network), while in other cases, they may balance each other (e.g. a person with disability with significant financial means and/or a high level of education).

7.4.3. Conclusion on reasonableness

Last update: October 2026



Taking into account the gender, the family status, the professional and educational background and financial means, and other individual circumstances of the applicant, it could be substantiated that IPA in Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore would be reasonable for single able-bodied men and married couples without children, including when they do not have a support network.

In the case of families with children, internal protection alternative may be reasonable, including without a support network, where the best interests of the child have been duly assessed. In the case of couples, basic subsistence has to be ensured for both spouses. In order to ensure their basic needs, other profiles of applicants would in general need a support network in the area of potential IPA.

Although the situation related to settling in Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore could entail certain hardship, it can still be concluded that such applicants would be able to ensure their basic subsistence, housing, shelter and hygiene, and access to basic healthcare.

It should be highlighted that these conclusions are without prejudice to the criteria of safety, travel and admittance and that the individual circumstances in the case at hand should be fully examined.

7.5. General conclusion on the applicability of IPA



Taking into account the assessment with regard to the three criteria under Article 8 QR, it can be concluded that internal protection alternative in the cities of Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore may be applicable depending on the profile and individual circumstances of the applicant, as detailed above.



8. Exclusion

Last update: October 2026



For general guidance on Exclusion, see 'EUAA, [Practical Guide on Exclusion from International Protection](#), September 2026' and 'EUAA, [Practical Guide on Exclusion for Serious \(Non-Political\) Crimes](#), December 2021'.

For general guidance on the country guidance approach to this section, see 'EUAA, [Exclusion](#) in [Country Guidance: explained](#), February 2026'.

In the context of Pakistan, various circumstances may require consideration of the potential applicability of exclusion grounds. The QR does not set a time limit for the application of the grounds for exclusion. Applicants may be excluded in relation to events regardless of when they took place.

More specifically, the need to examine possible exclusion issues in the context of Pakistan may arise, for example, in cases involving the groups or circumstances cited below. This list is non-exhaustive:

- (former) members of the Pakistani state armed forces, such as Pakistani army, police, the Rangers and/or other state supported armed militias;
- (former) members of Islamist, terrorist and/or insurgent groups, such as LeT, TTP and affiliated groups, and BLA;
- (former) members of groups known for sectarian violence such as the Sipah-e Sahaba Pakistan (SSP);
- (former) members of trafficking networks;
- individuals involved in mob attacks;
- individuals involved in riots;
- perpetrators of forced marriage, child marriage or forced conversion.



Given the serious consequences that exclusion may have for the individual, the exclusion grounds should be interpreted restrictively and applied with caution.

The examples mentioned in this chapter are non-exhaustive and non-conclusive. Each case should be examined on its own merits.



8.1. Exclusion based on the commission of international crimes

Last update: October 2026

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [Country Focus 2026](#), [2.2.1.](#), [3.1.3.](#), [3.1.4.](#), [3.1.7.](#), [4.2.1.](#), [4.2.2.](#); Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Violations of international humanitarian law by different parties to the non-international armed conflicts in Pakistan, including Pakistani state authorities or state-supported militias and Islamist and insurgent groups, could amount to **war crimes**. Examples include indiscriminate attacks impacting the civilian population during military operations.

Terrorist and insurgent groups have also carried out attacks on public places, including schools and places of worship; targeted attacks against humanitarian aid convoys have also been reported.

The commission of excludable acts may also have occurred in connection with the armed conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan, including attacks on non-military targets and the use by Pakistani armed forces of weapons with indiscriminate effects.

Other reported crimes such as killing, torture, and enforced disappearance by the different actors could amount to **crimes against humanity** when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population.

Some acts in the current conflicts, such as extrajudicial killings, torture, and forced disappearance, could amount to both **war crimes** and **crimes against humanity**.

8.2. Exclusion based on the commission of a serious (non-political) crime

Last update: October 2026

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: [Country Focus 2026](#), [3.1.3.](#), [3.1.4.](#), [3.1.7.](#), [4.2.3.](#), [6.1.1.](#), [6.1.2.](#), [6.1.3.](#), [6.1.9.](#); Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

The personnel of some Pakistani state actors and its proxies may also be found responsible for serious (non-political) crimes (e.g. extrajudicial killings, torture, enforced disappearance, protesters and activists shooting).

Some of the crimes committed by Islamist and insurgent groups include e.g. kidnapping and bomb attacks and targeted killing. [TTP](#) and other Islamist and insurgent groups have also conducted attacks against police, military and other government facilities and against persons with perceived links to the state authorities.



Violence particularly against women and children, such as forced and child marriage or forced conversion, is reported in Pakistan. These crimes sometimes occur in connection with one another and may also be linked to kidnappings. Other forms of serious criminal activity, such as trafficking in human beings, work and sexual exploitation or modern slavery are also reported in Pakistan.

Reports also describe violent mob attacks linked to religious radicalism and religious radical groups, such as [Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan \(TLP\)](#).

Some serious (non-political) crimes could be linked to an armed conflict (e.g. if committed in order to finance the activities of armed groups) or could amount to fundamentally inhumane acts committed as a part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population, in which case they should instead be examined under Article 12(2)(a)/Article 17(1)(a) QR.

8.3. Exclusion based on acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations

Last update: October 2026

(Former) membership in groups such as [Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan \(TTP\) and affiliated groups](#) or [Islamic State Khorasan Province \(ISKP\) and Pakistan Province \(ISPP\)](#) could trigger relevant considerations and require an examination of the applicant's activities under Article 12(2)(c)/Article 17(1)(c) QR, in addition to the considerations under Article 12(2)(b)/Article 17(1)(b) QR.

Membership alone is not sufficient to substantiate exclusion, however, participation in the activities of a terrorist group, undertaken with knowledge of the fact that such participation will contribute to the criminal activities of the terrorist group, should be given significant weight in the exclusion assessment⁽¹⁹⁾. The application of exclusion should be based on an individual assessment of the specific facts in the context of the applicant's activities within that organisation. The position of the applicant within the organisation would constitute a relevant consideration and a high-ranking position could justify a (rebuttable) presumption of individual responsibility. Other engagement with a group, such as the aforementioned (see [8. Exclusion](#)), could also trigger exclusion considerations. Nevertheless, it remains necessary to examine all relevant circumstances before an exclusion decision can be made.

Where the available information indicates possible involvement in crimes against peace, war crimes or crimes against humanity, the assessment would need to be made in light of the exclusion grounds under Article 12(2)(a)/Article 17(1)(a) QR.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Directive (EU) 2017/541 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2017 on combating terrorism and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA and amending Council Decision 2005/671/JHA.



8.4. Exclusion based on constituting a danger to the community or to national security

Last update: October 2026

In the examination of the application for international protection, the exclusion ground under Article 17(1)(d) QR (danger to the community or national security) is only applicable to persons otherwise eligible for subsidiary protection.

Unlike the other exclusion grounds, the application of this provision is based on a forward-looking assessment of risk. Nevertheless, the examination takes into account the past and/or current activities of the applicant, such as association with certain groups considered to represent a danger to the national security or criminal activities of the applicant.



Annex: Country of origin information references

The main COI sources used in the common analysis are the following (listed alphabetically by reference used in the text)	
COI Update 2026	EUAA, COI Query Response - Pakistan: Major political, human rights and security developments , July 2026.
Country Focus 2026	EUAA, COI Report – Pakistan: Country Focus , May 2026.
Country Focus 2024	EUAA, COI Report – Pakistan: Country Focus , December 2024.





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