



STATE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN 2021

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan



State of Human Rights in 2021

Human Rights Commission
of Pakistan



© 2022 Human Rights Commission of Pakistan

All rights reserved. Any part of this publication may be reproduced by duly acknowledging the source.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the contents of this publication. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan takes no responsibility for any unintentional omissions.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan has reproduced the images included in this publication under a fair-use policy, intending no copyright infringement, and has credited all sources.

ISBN 978-627-7602-01-7

Printed by Visionaries Division
90A Airlines Housing Society
Khayaban-e-Jinnah, Lahore

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan
Aiwan-e-Jamhooor
107 Tipu Block, New Garden Town
Lahore 54600
T: +92 (042) 3583 8341, 3586 4994, 3586 9969
F: +92 (042) 3588 3582
E: hrcp@hrcp-web.org
www.hrcp-web.org

Editor: Farah Zia
Design and layout: Rida Fazal



NOTES ON SOURCES

Sources, where not quoted in the text, include HRCP surveys, fact-finding reports and communications from its correspondents and private citizens; official gazettes; economic and legal documents and other public releases and statements; reports in the national and regional press; and publications of international human rights and development agencies. HRCP is especially grateful to the police and prisons departments in Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Islamabad Capital Territory, and Gilgit-Baltistan for providing data on law and order and on jails and prisoners.

Considering the limitation of official reports, press accounts and sample surveys conducted by NGOs, the figures and assessments offered here may not always represent the full or exact picture. They should be taken as a reflection of the trend during the year.

Images have been taken from national and regional newspapers and other online sources.



IMAGE SOURCES

1. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1617837>
 2. <https://www.aaj.tv/news/30273195>
 3. <https://www.aaj.tv/news/30261226>
 4. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2316724/snc-to-cement-nation-minimise-discord-shafqat>
 5. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1664473/community-takes-up-cudgels-against-smog-by-monitoring-air-quality-in-lahore>
 6. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1611569/outrage-after-sindh-university-student-found-dead-in-sukkur-following-alleged-police-abduction>
 7. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1655958>
 8. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1627973>
 9. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/884672-mehran-town-fire-a-reminder-of-useless-laws-as-they-are-never-implemented>
 10. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1563577>
 11. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1540731>
 12. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1648182>
 13. <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/2021/10/08/aps-victims-parents-protest-govt-officials-statements-about-forgiving-ttp/>
 14. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/detail/618008-why-stop-at-corporal-punishment>
 15. <https://dawn.com/news/1647539>
 16. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2306452/pkmaps-usman-khan-kakar-is-no-more>
 17. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/748607-balochistan-appoints-first-woman-as-assistant-sub-inspector-for-quetta-police>
 18. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1599686>
 19. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1602475>
 20. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/328136-balochistan-water-woes>
 21. <https://dailytimes.com.pk/798834/noor-mukadam-case-zahir-jaffer-made-several-calls-for-rescue-after-murder/>
 22. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1630171>
 23. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/740877-coronavirus-lockdown-to-be-imposed-in-targeted-areas-of-islamabad>
 24. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2291686/educators-warn-of-long-march>
 25. <https://www.aaj.tv/news/30261281>
 26. <https://archive.pakistantoday.com.pk/2019/08/10/traders-call-off-four-day-shutter-down-strike/>
 27. <https://www.geo.tv/latest/362428-ajk-election-pti-prevails-in-la-16-after-balloting-held-in-four-polling-stations>
 28. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1614552>
 29. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/803384-six-colliers-killed-in-balochistan-mine-explosion>
 30. <https://www.geo.tv/latest/312595-yda-unanimously-rejects-pakistan-medical>
-



CONTENTS

Note on sources

Image sources

Abbreviations

Glossary

Introduction	...	1
A media ‘martial law’?	...	4
Key issues	...	13
Punjab	...	23
Sindh	...	49
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	...	75
Balochistan	...	103
Islamabad Capital Territory	...	129
Azad Jammu and Kashmir	...	153
Gilgit-Baltistan	...	169
Appendix 1	Human rights legislation in 2021	... 189
Appendix 2	HRCP activities	... 195
Appendix 3	HRCP stands	... 207



ABBREVIATIONS

AJK	Azad Jammu and Kashmir	NGO	non-government organisation
ANP	Awami National Party	OOSC	out-of-school children
ASER	Annual Status of Education Report	PDM	Pakistan Democratic Movement
ATC	anti-terrorism court	PECA	Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act
BAP	Balochistan Awami Party	PEMRA	Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority
BHC	Balochistan High Court	PFUJ	Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists
BISP	Benazir Income Support Programme	PHC	Peshawar High Court
BLA	Balochistan Liberation Army	PIDA	Pakistan Islands Development Authority
CDA	Capital Development Authority	PKMAP	Pakhtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party
CII	Council of Islamic Ideology	PLWD	person living with a disability(ies)
CNIC	computerised national identity card	PMDA	Pakistan Media Development Authority
COIED	Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances	PML-N	Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz)
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor	PPE	personal protective equipment
ECP	Election Commission of Pakistan	PPP	Pakistan People's Party
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas	PSP	Pak Sarzameen Party
FC	Frontier Corps	PTA	Pakistan Telecommunication Authority
FIA	Federal Investigation Agency	PTI	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf
FIR	first investigation report	PTM	Pashtun Tahafuz Movement
FWO	Frontier Works Organisation	RTI	right to information
GB	Gilgit-Baltistan	SHC	Sindh High Court
GBV	gender-based violence	SNC	Single National Curriculum
ICT	Islamabad Capital Territory	SOP	standard operating procedure
IHC	Islamabad High Court	SSP	senior superintendent of police
IS-K	Islamic State Khorasan	TLP	Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan
JI	Jamaat-e-Islami	TTP	Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan
JSM	Jeay Sindh Muttahida Mahaz	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
JUL-F	Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Fazal)	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
KDA	Karachi Development Authority	WHO	World Health Organization
KIU	Karakorum International University	YDA	Young Doctors Association
KMC	Karachi Metropolitan Corporation		
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa		
LEA	law enforcement agency		
LHC	Lahore High Court		
LOC	Line of Control		
MOHR	Ministry of Human Rights		
MQM	Muttahida Qaumi Movement		
NAB	National Accountability Bureau		
NADRA	National Database and Registration Authority		
NCHR	National Commission of Human Rights		
NCOC	National Command and Operation Centre		
NCSW	National Commission on the Status of Women		



GLOSSARY

<i>Hadith</i>	a collection of traditions containing sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).
<i>Jirga</i>	a gathering of elders, especially in tribal societies, which settles disputes, decides criminal cases, etc.
<i>Kachhi abadi</i>	a settlement or shanty town where poor people live in makeshift shacks.
<i>Kanal</i>	traditional unit of land area.
<i>Karo kari</i>	'karo' and 'kari' were originally terms for 'adulterer' and 'adulteress', but this term is now used for multiple forms of perceived immoral behaviour. It describes a traditional custom whereby a woman and a man found in, or more often suspected of, an illicit relationship are killed by family members to restore family honour.
<i>Khatm-e-nabuwat</i>	a religious principle concerning the finality of prophethood, belief in which is considered a basic article of Islamic faith.
<i>Khwaja sira</i>	any person whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the social norms and cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at the time of their birth, otherwise known as a transgender person.
<i>Madrassa</i>	seminary.
<i>Nikah</i>	an Islamic marriage ceremony whereby the Muslim couple legitimise their marriage by signing a marriage contract in the presence of witnesses.
<i>Nullah</i>	watercourse.
<i>Pakhiwas</i>	a nomadic community in Pakistan.
<i>Swara</i>	a custom where girls, often minors, are given in marriage or servitude to an aggrieved family as compensation to end disputes.
<i>Taluka</i>	an administrative division (commonly, in Sindh).
<i>Tehsil</i>	an administration division (commonly, in Punjab).
<i>Zina</i>	adultery; fornication.

Dedicated to the memory of

Dr Mehdi Hasan
(1937-2022)

Former chairperson
Human Rights Commission of Pakistan



INTRODUCTION

Although 2021 was the second consecutive year of the Covid-19 pandemic that has raged across so many countries, including Pakistan, it began on a promising note—the world seemed to have found a solution in the form of a vaccine. In Pakistan, too, the vaccination campaign began in March and continued smoothly throughout the year, despite periodic surges in infections owing to new variants of the disease.

For the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), however, it was an exceptionally sad year because of the loss of two formidable colleagues in April. The deaths of vice-chair HRCP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Kamran Arif and former secretary-general I. A. Rehman left a vacuum in the human rights movement that will be very hard to fill. We also lost two Council members, Zaman Khan and Sindhu Mukesh, in the latter part of the year.

For HRCP, the right to freedom of expression was the most pressing issue of the year, with a direct bearing on all other rights, including press freedom, freedom of assembly and association, parliamentary supremacy and the state of democracy. Crucial violations such as enforced disappearances and police excesses persisted, while the demands of marginalized sections of society were often undermined by constant censorship, tacit or otherwise, and violence against the media. That is why this year's report has chosen freedom of expression as its overarching theme. It is also why we deemed it fitting to present the Nisar Osmani Award for Courage in Journalism to the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists in 2021.

As with preceding reports, State of Human Rights in 2021 delves into a wide spectrum of human rights violations. Following last year's pattern, this year's report comprises separate chapters on the federating units, Islamabad Capital Territory, and the administrative units of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

HRCP was happy to note that both the National Commission for Human Rights and National Commission on the Status of Women had new chairpersons appointed after a gap of several years; we are eager to see both commissions function to full capacity and with the financial autonomy they need. The year also saw some progressive legislation enacted in the federal capital as well as in some provincial assemblies, amid attempts to thwart laws on domestic violence and forced conversions by institutions such as the Council of Islamic Ideology. The Supreme Court ruling against the use of capital punishment for mentally ill prisoners is indeed a huge step forward.

Yet, other news and developments were deeply depressing. The year

was marked by violent protests staged by a religious group, followed by the state's acquiescence in entering into opaque agreements with the group. As in the previous year, the Punjab Assembly unanimously passed several regressive resolutions that pushed for conservative legislation. The local governments largely remained in a state of limbo, except in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where the first phase of the long-awaited elections were held in December. The questionable Single National Curriculum, imposed on all provinces except Sindh, remained a subject of immense debate. HRCP observed an uptick in blasphemy allegations. It was also an unusually difficult year for women, who continued to suffer domestic violence, harassment, rape, honour crimes, and public humiliation, with the murder and beheading of a woman in the capital city of Islamabad drawing international headlines.

After the fall of Kabul to the Afghan Taliban in August, despite Pakistan's assurances that Afghan refugees would be given asylum, civil society was perturbed by reports of harassment of refugees at the border and cumbersome documentation requirements. The case of Idris Khattak was a grim reminder of how the Official Secrets Act and Army Act can be weaponized against human rights defenders (HRDs). The year ended with the horrific lynching of a Sri Lankan national in Sialkot on charges of blasphemy, which became international news.

In the face of enormous challenges, our nine offices across Pakistan and governing Council gradually returned to more active human rights work in the field, engaging in advocacy and lobbying with renewed commitment. We conducted several key fact-finding missions, including investigations into the Ravi Riverfront Urban Development Project, the situation of industrial workers in the textiles sector in South Punjab, and human rights violations in the coalmining sector in Balochistan. We managed to hold 74 mobilisation meetings with HRDs across Pakistan and eight focus group discussions on social movements in Pakistan, leading to a comprehensive report on the subject. We also commissioned a study on the trafficking of women and girls in the country. Our complaints desks continued to function effectively at all chapter offices.

HRCP worked on the right to access to citizenship documents, giving much-needed visibility to voiceless and stateless citizens, and engaging with policymakers to facilitate them. We also focused on the right to freedom of assembly, monitoring not just assemblies in 2021 but also mapping legal and procedural constraints to freedom of peaceful assembly, with recommendations for a comprehensive legislative review. This year, two I. A. Rehman research grants were awarded.

In the end, I would like to acknowledge the effort put into compiling this report by our contributors, including Dr Mahvish Ahmad, Muhammad Badar Alam, Aziz Ali Dad, Zofeen T. Ebrahim, Alefia T. Hussain, Israruddin Israr, Jalaluddin Mughal, Shujauddin Qureshi, and Adnan Rehmat. Special thanks are owed to Maheen Pracha, Fatima Faisal Khan,

Maheen Rasheed, Ali Haider, and Adeel Ahmad who assisted in conceptualizing and editing the report with Farah Zia. I am grateful to the secretary-general Harris Khalique and Council members Zohra Yusuf, Salima Hashmi, Naazish Ata-Ullah and Nazir Ahmed for their feedback.

HRCP vows to continue its struggle for the realisation of human rights for all Pakistani citizens and residents without any distinction or discrimination on grounds of gender, race, religion, sect or belief, ethnicity, area of origin, disability, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. We hope for a safer, more equitable, and just world in the years to come.

Hina Jilani

Chairperson



OVERVIEW

A media ‘martial law’?

‘Enough is enough,’ is how the president of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), Shahzada Zulfiqar, and its secretary-general Nasir Zaidi described the state of press freedom in January 2021, as they ran a campaign on the theme under the aegis of the PFUJ to protest against retrenchments and threats to journalists. Pakistan’s press freedom ranking dropped to 145 out of 180 countries on the World Press Freedom Index for 2020.

Indeed, not just press freedom, but the right to freedom of expression as a whole faced more pressure and threats in 2021 than it has done in recent years. A summary of these curbs reads more like a dictatorial regime bent on usurping its people’s right to speak and act as they please. This leads one to conclude that the right to freedom of expression remained a recurrent and hence the most pressing human rights issue of the year—one that impinged on the right to freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and association, parliamentary supremacy, and the state of democracy.

Understandably, freedom of the press faced the worst form of controls. Attacks on journalists continued, as did efforts to gag and control the news and social media. The use of financial coercion to control newspapers and television channels went on as the government persisted with its attempts to tell the news and entertainment media what they could or could not show. Some dissidents were attacked physically; others were silenced forcibly. The executive and regulatory authorities issued multiple advisories and directives as to what people could say or do on social media or what they could show or watch on television screens.

Reporters Without Borders, an international non-government organisation working on the freedom of the press, was unequivocal in its assessment of these phenomena. In a report that it released in July 2021, it included Prime Minister Imran Khan in ‘a gallery of grim portraits [of] predators’: 37 heads of state or government who, according to the organisation, had ‘launched a crackdown massively on press freedom.’

This characterisation explained that Khan’s government was complicit with the state in suppressing fundamental freedoms. This mutually convenient arrangement has allowed the civilian executive to ride roughshod over its political opponents, its critics in the media and its detractors in civil society. In return, it has looked the other way as the state embarked on a not-so-secret campaign to punish anyone who dared to differ with it.

With a high degree of impunity, it did what it had earlier done only during its own dictatorial regimes: ‘managing’ the Parliament, suppressing democratic demands and aspirations of marginalised sections of society and controlling the national narrative with all the administrative tools and legal and quasi-legal instruments it could lay its hands on. Instances of enforced disappearances were reported persistently, even in 2021.

This illustrates why *State of Human Rights in 2021* has chosen freedom of expression as its overarching theme.

Shooting the messenger

In the very first month of 2021, a United Nations human rights panel made a prescient comment on what the year had in store. It said it was concerned over ‘an alarming pattern of restrictions’ on the freedom of expression in Pakistan. As if to prove that such a pattern did indeed exist, the Sindh police arrested a number of journalists and political activists and registered cases against them under the Anti-Terrorism Act in the middle of March 2021. They were merely protesting against the killing of a Sindh University student, Irfan Jatoi, who had lost his life in an alleged police encounter in Sukkur.

A month later, Absar Alam, a former chairman of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), was shot injured by an unidentified man while walking in a park near his home in Islamabad. He was hit in the ribs. He later alleged that his tweets about the involvement of the military and its intelligence agencies in political activities were the reason for the attack.

About a month later, in the last week of May, another media-person, Asad Toor, came under attack by unidentified armed men outside his residence in Islamabad’s F-10 sector. They gagged him and tied him up, repeatedly hitting his arms with pistol butts. Like Alam, he too had been accused in 2020 of defaming the military, although a court had acquitted him of the charge since the police could not find any evidence to prove the allegation.

However serious, Toor’s injuries were not the most significant outcome of the attack. Its greatest casualty turned out to be one of Pakistan’s most well-known talk-show hosts, Hamid Mir. He was taken off air immediately after commenting at a protest in Islamabad on 29 May on the attack on Toor, implying that his attackers belonged to the security and intelligence agencies. He was not allowed to host his long running show, Capital Talk, till the end of the year.

In April, the Association of Electronic Media Editors and News Directors issued an extremely disturbing statement, stating it was ‘deeply concerned’ over the advisories its members was receiving from PEMRA

for favourable media coverage of various institutions of the government and the state—including the National Accountability Bureau. It pointed out that such advisories limited the media’s right to report and discuss issues that ‘are of paramount public interest.’

As if on cue from state actors, non-state actors too thought it fit to harass and attack journalists and social media activists. In one such instance, Ajay Laalwani, a Sukkur-based journalist, was shot by assailants on motorcycles and in a car in March 2021. He died instantly. According to an opinion piece published in *Dawn*, his editor believed his writing and reporting may have triggered his killing.

In a similar incident, a member of the Sindh Assembly, Jam Owais Gohram Jokhio, and his associates allegedly beat a social activist, Nazim Jokhio, to death in Karachi’s Malir district in November 2021. They were enraged that he had made and broadcast a video of their Arab guests hunting migratory birds illegally on the outskirts of Karachi.

Earlier, in September, the most infamous of all non-state actors in the country, the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan, tried to make journalists do its bidding. It issued a warning to them that they must avoid using the term ‘terrorist’ for its members, otherwise it would regard them as ‘enemies.’

Freedom Network, a non-government organisation working for media freedom in Pakistan, documented many such incidents in a report released on 30 April 2021, a couple of days ahead of World Press Freedom Day. It noted 148 instances between the start of May 2020 and the end of April 2021 in which the rights of journalists were violated. These violations, according to the report, included the killing of six journalists for their work, seven failed assassination bids, five kidnappings, 25 arrests or detentions, 15 assaults and the registration of 27 criminal cases.

The report stated that Islamabad was the most dangerous place in Pakistan for journalists to work in—accounting for 34 percent of all instances in which their rights were violated. Since the city is the seat of the federal administration, this suggests that the state’s own functionaries were involved in many of those violations.

Sindh came second on this list. The case of senior journalist Waris Raza shows how it has become a highly risky place for journalists. He was abducted from his own home on 22 September 2021 and released a day later. Many months have passed since then but nobody knows who abducted him and why. He himself never talks about it.

Development or destruction?

As early in the last year as 25 January, the opposition-dominated Senate rejected a draft law tabled by Faisal Javed, a senator belonging to the ruling party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. The draft, according to *Dawn*,

sought to 'give powers' to PEMRA to 'look into the complaints' that alleged that private television channels were violating the employment contracts they had given their employees.

The government side argued that the draft law was aimed at protecting the rights of media workers. The opposition, on the other hand, believed that its passage could give the government the power to arm-twist television channels into submission by prosecuting them for real or perceived breaches of their contractual obligations. The opposition also pointed out that 'secret calls' were already being made to the newsrooms of television channels, telling them what to cover and what not to.

Journalists were also very apprehensive of the draft. They feared that the proposed law could turn PEMRA into a supra-news editor of all television channels in the country. This attempt, however, failed.

Undeterred, the government started to toy with the idea of setting up the Pakistan Media Development Authority (PMDA) as a single regulatory entity for all types of media – print, electronic, digital, social, cinematic. Ostensibly, it was meant to replace the current 'fractured' regulatory environment and 'fragmented' media regulation by multiple entities.

A brief official proposal said it was being set up to 'cater to the professional and business requirements of all forms of media and their users.' Some ministers also claimed that its purpose was to introduce new technologies into the media, to protect working journalists from their employers and to save the public from the depredations of a wayward press.

An explainer carried in *Dawn*, on the other hand, stated that, if and when set up, the new authority would have the power 'to impose sanctions on media entities in case of any violations of [the government] regulations.' It would also allow 'the federal government [to] set up media complaints councils in all major cities to receive, scrutinise, investigate and review complaints pertaining to the content published or broadcast on media platforms and the non-payment of wages to media workers.' Those not satisfied with the decisions of these councils could move media tribunals headed by high court judges or someone equivalent to them in qualifications and experience. 'These tribunals will have the power to hand punishments of up to three years in jail and PKR25 million in fines to content producers for violating the new provisions,' the newspaper said. The PMDA could also 'without notice order the seizure of equipment at a television station or the sealing of a media outlet's premises' and it could 'prohibit any media-person, newspaper, televisions and/or a website' from operating.

Unsurprisingly, journalists, human rights activists and jurists rejected the proposed authority, calling it a means to impose a 'media martial

law'. 'The proposed law is draconian in scope and devastating in its impact on the constitutional principles and guarantees for freedom of expression, media freedoms, and the right to information as well as the profession of journalism,' they said in a joint statement.

Journalists then held a sit-in in front of the Parliament building in Islamabad in September 2021. They demanded a guarantee from the government that the PMDA would not be set up without discussing it thoroughly with them and without their endorsement; they wanted the government to stop the trolling of journalists critical of its policies and actions—particularly women journalists who were routinely harassed online by the federal government's supporters; and they wanted an end to such punitive measures as the filing of criminal cases against journalists and banning them from work.

The government responded to the protest harshly. On 14 September, the speaker of the National Assembly closed the doors to the press gallery for journalists during the president's address to Parliament's joint session—merely because they had decided to walk out of the press gallery during the address.

In a similarly unseemly way, the provincial assembly of Punjab unanimously passed a law in July 2021 to empower its judicial committee to conduct the trial of a journalist or a bureaucrat for breaching the privilege of the assembly, of any of its committees or of any of its members. The offender could be convicted in a summary trial, leading to a six-month imprisonment and a fine of Rs10,000. The offences covered by the law include: wilfully misrepresenting any speech made by a member before the assembly or before any committee, publishing any report or any debate or proceedings prohibited or expunged by the person chairing the assembly's session, publishing any reflection on the conduct of the chair or any imputation of partiality against him, publishing any proceedings or report of any committee before these are reported to the assembly or published in the official gazette. Essentially, it meant that the journalists covering the Punjab Assembly could report nothing but official handouts.

Caught in the crosshairs

In August last year, two journalists, Amir Mir and Imran Shafqat, were arrested from Lahore by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). They were accused under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (PECA) Act 2016 of defaming the military, the judiciary and women on their YouTube channels. Though they were released a day later, their arrest set off a courtroom drama at the highest echelons of Pakistan's judiciary.

On 20 August, a Supreme Court judge, Justice Qazi Faez Isa, turned an application by the Press Association of the Supreme Court about the arrests into a suo motu notice. It asked the relevant individuals and

institutions to explain why the two journalists had been arrested. The next day, the then acting chief justice, Umer Ata Bandial, constituted a five-member bench to hear the case. This led Justice Isa to complain that he had been completely bypassed in the process. The new bench would later rule that individual judges of the Supreme Court do not have the power to take suo motu notice since doing so is the sole prerogative of the chief justice of Pakistan.

After passing this ruling, the five-member bench continued hearing the case until two of the movers of the original application, Amir Mir and Abdul Qayyum Siddiqui, told the court they did not want to pursue the case further. In a telling two-page request that Mir submitted to the bench, he said 'he had reasons to believe that he would not be able to get justice.' He attributed this to his belief that 'invisible' elements that 'have been using the FIA Cybercrime Wing to intimidate, harass and abduct/arrest me for the past two years were more powerful than those who were supposed to provide justice and safeguard the fundamental rights of the Pakistani citizens.'

The dust had not yet settled on this controversy when the Islamabad High Court took up a case that could lead to the institution of a contempt-of-court case against Ansar Abbasi, a senior reporter working with the Jang Group of Newspapers, and Amir Ghauri, editor of *The News International*. They were respectively accused of writing and publishing a news report on an affidavit recorded and preserved in the UK by a former chief justice of Gilgit-Baltistan, Rana Muhammad Shamim. The affidavit alleges that the former chief justice of Pakistan, Saqib Nisar, ordered a sitting judge of the Islamabad High Court to ensure that former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his daughter Maryam Nawaz were convicted for corruption and not released from jail before the 2018 general election.

After the preliminary hearing, the court observed in a 12-page ruling that the affidavit 'appeared to be an attempt to influence the [court] proceedings [against Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz and] obstruct and interfere with the due administration of justice.' It also stated that the affidavit's contents, its timing and its publication 'had likely profound consequences for the proceedings pending before the Court relating to the appeals preferred by the two persons named therein.' Most importantly, it observed: 'Freedom of expression is not an absolute right and for a journalist, it carries with it responsibilities and duties.'

The social as political

Just as the federal government was bent on setting up the PMDA, it was also adamant on imposing stringent rules on both service providers and users of social media. These rules were first framed in November 2020 in order to implement various provisions of PECA. Titled the Removal and Blocking of Unlawful Online Content (Procedure, Oversight and

Safeguards) Rules 2020, these were meant to oblige companies running the internet and social media platforms such as YouTube, Twitter and Facebook to register themselves with the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA). These companies would also be required to establish their offices in Pakistan 'as and when feasible' and they would have 48 hours to remove or block any content the PTA objected to.

Journalists as well as activists working on social media freedom and digital rights viewed these rules as draconian in scope and antithetical to the government's own claim to foster development of digital technologies. The PFUJ, therefore, challenged them before the Islamabad High Court. During one of the hearings, the attorney general of Pakistan assured the court that the government was ready to review the rules. As a follow up to this commitment, Prime Minister Imran Khan constituted a ministerial committee in March 2021 to carry out the review.

The rules underwent multiple revisions in the following months but when they were re-notified in October 2021, they were essentially the same.

Commenting on their revised version, Jeff Paine, managing director of the Asia Internet Coalition, an alliance of companies running digital and social media platforms, said its member companies were 'disappointed with the revisions.' Pointing out the reason for that disappointment, he said: 'Despite repeated feedback from industry over several months, the draft rules still include a number of problematic provisions—such as data localisation and local presence requirements—that undermine the country's digital growth and transformation agenda.'

The rules also provided detailed definitions of the 'integrity and defence' of Pakistan, the 'glory of Islam' and 'public order' and stated that their breach would, respectively, entail the offences of sedition, blasphemy and threats to public convenience, decency and morality. These definitions were also meant to take precedence over the community standards or rules that social media platforms already have in place. The rules also required social media platforms to provide whatever information the FIA wanted about any social media user in an unencrypted and usable format—thereby putting an end to the constitutional guarantee of the right to privacy.

The case of TikTok is emblematic of the problems these rules might cause. Throughout 2021, various Pakistani courts and the PTA continued to switch this platform off and on, variously calling it a serious threat to public decency and morality and a provider of ready entertainment. This arbitrary handling has not just hurt the business interests of the company owning it, but it has also thwarted the freedom of expression of its users.

Another manifestation of such whimsical application of decency and

morality was witnessed when PEMRA issued a notification in October 2021 and told television channels to avoid 'airing objectionable dramas/content based on indecent dressing, caressing, bed scenes and gestures, sensitive/controversial plots and unnecessary detailing of event(s).' It also told them to refrain from showing 'hugs/caress scenes/extramarital relations, vulgar/bold dressing, bed scenes and intimacy of married couple[s].' It noted that such immoral acts were 'being glamourised in utter disregard to Islamic teachings and culture of Pakistani society.'

Deliberately silenced

In April 2021, more than 300 writers, poets, intellectuals, human rights activists, lawyers, journalists, teachers, students and other people demanded that the government provide security to veteran Sindhi writer Amar Jalil. He was facing death threats from one Pir Sirhindi and his followers based in Sindh's Umerkot district. Sirhindi is known to have announced a reward of PKR5,000,000 for anyone who killed Jalil.

His crime—he had argued three years ago at the Sindh Literature Festival that the limited human intellect could not comprehend or encompass God because He could not be contained within any limits. Sirhindi and his followers saw this as a negation of God's existence and hence a blasphemous argument.

In another instance, curbs on the freedom of speech came from the state itself and that too in the heart of Pakistan. The occasion was the annual Asma Jahangir Conference in November and the target of the restriction was Nawaz Sharif, a three-time former prime minister of the country. As soon as he started his speech during the conference through a video link from London, all internet connections went off at its venue located within a private hotel in Lahore.

The organisers of the conference later stated that the internet provider was restrained from providing the service before Sharif's speech started. They added that even mobile phone internet services were cut off.

Conclusion

It is almost a truism to say that one can have no other freedom unless one has the freedom to ask for it. Freedom of expression thus begets all other freedoms.

Indeed, it is so fundamental to human existence that the founding members of the United Nations thought it necessary to include it in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Article 19 of the declaration, therefore, reads: 'Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.'

The framers of Pakistan's constitution too, have included it as a fundamental right under Article 19 but they have subjected it to 'reasonable' restrictions. These restrictions concern national security, respect for religion, relations with other countries, public order, decency, contempt of court and incitement to a crime.

The truth though is that, however vague most of these restrictions may sound, the higher courts of the country have developed a large cache of case law to make their definition concrete and their application limited. They have done so mostly by defining the word 'reasonable'. Nothing can be deemed reasonable, the courts have averred time and again, unless it is demonstrably so.

But, as the year gone by illustrates, both the civilian and the military components of the hybrid regime remain wilfully oblivious to the limits of what is reasonable and what is not. Consequently, they have sought to expand the scope of the restrictive part of Article 19. With such disrespect shown by the state actors to constitutional rights and institutional probity, it is only natural that non-state actors – powerful individuals, terrorist groups and lynch mobs – too would want to impose their whims on those who do not agree with them or whom they do not find agreeable. In one extremely disturbing instance, a Sri Lankan factory manager was killed in Sialkot in December 2021 by a mob enraged over a perceived slight to its religious sensibilities.

In suppressing the freedom of expression, the hybrid regime ruling Pakistan has, unwittingly, turned the state of this freedom into a symbol of the state of the country itself: precarious and forever fragile.



KEY ISSUES

Laws and law-making

- A total of 172 laws were enacted by Parliament and the provincial assemblies: 58 federal and 114 provincial laws. The Punjab Assembly's performance was the worst, with only 15 laws passed.
- The federal government continued to issue presidential ordinances – with a record 32 issued in 2021 – thereby circumventing correct constitutional and parliamentary procedures.
- While the establishment of an independent commission for the protection of journalists was welcomed under the Protection of Journalists and Media Protection Bill 2021, the law was criticised for several vague provisions that were deemed tantamount to censorship and intimidation.
- At least two notable bills, the Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Bill 2020 and the Prohibition of Forced Conversions Bill 2021, could not be passed due to objections by the Council of Islamic Ideology.
- The Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Bill was unanimously approved by the Senate in July.
- The passage of the Anti-Rape (Trial and Investigation) Act 2021, which called for the establishment of special courts to conduct fast-track trials in rape cases, was criticised by human rights organisations for proposing chemical castration as punishment for perpetrators.

Administration of justice

- By year-end, there were over 2.14 million cases pending in the judiciary, as against over 2.15 million in 2020, representing a slight fall in the backlog of cases.
- The proportion of women in the judiciary remained significantly low at 17 percent, according to media reports. At the high court level, this proportion was even lower, with only two women each in the high courts of Sindh and Lahore, and one in Peshawar (of a total of 114 judges).
- In two cases of delayed justice, the Lahore High Court acquitted Liaquat Ali, who had spent 11 years in jail on charges of blasphemy as well as a Christian couple convicted for blasphemy – Shagufta Kausar and Shafqat Masih – who had spent eight years on death row.
- In a welcome step, the Supreme Court commuted the sentences of Kanizan Bibi, Imdad Ali and Ghulam Abbas – all mentally ill prisoners on death row – in February 2021. The ruling was widely hailed as laying down the principle that mentally ill prisoners would not be awarded capital punishment.

The death penalty

- According to data collected from press reports, the death penalty was awarded to at least 125 persons in 2021 (including three women)—a fall from at least 177 persons in 2020. No executions were reported to have been carried out.
- There were 1,143 prisoners on death row, according to the provincial prisons departments. Sindh accounted for the highest number of condemned prisoners at 490, including two women.
- In January, an anti-terrorism court issued death sentences to three people for having shared allegedly blasphemous content on social media platforms.
- In October, the law ministry proposed replacing the word ‘death’ with ‘remainder of life’ in offence 9C of the Control of Narcotics Substance Act and Section 127 of the Railways Act.

Pakistan and international human rights mechanisms

- A review of Pakistan’s eligibility for GSP+ status was initiated by the European Union in April in light of recent human rights abuses, which subsequently found no grounds to revoke the status, extending it till 2024.
- UN human rights experts called on Pakistan to halt evictions of residents from Gujjar *nullah* and Orangi *nullah* in Karachi, and separately appealed for the release of Stephen Masih, a Pakistani Christian from Sialkot who had been detained for two years on blasphemy charges.
- In June 2021, the spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights urged Pakistan to ensure the passage of the enforced disappearances bill and ratify the International Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances. Subsequently, in December, UN human rights experts condemned the sentencing of rights activist Idris Khattak to 14 years’ imprisonment by a military court.

National human rights institutions

- Both the National Commission for Human Rights and the National Commission on the Status of Women were made functional and new chairpersons appointed.
- The National Commission on the Rights of the Child remained largely ineffectual as a result of the absence of rules of business.

Law and order

- Over 100 persons were reported to have died in target killings, military operations and various other incidents of high-degree violence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including four women aid workers who were gunned down in North Waziristan.
- In January, Islamic State militants kidnapped and killed 11 coal

miners from the Shia Hazara community. The community held a multiple-day protest against the incident in Quetta and demanded that Prime Minister Imran Khan visit their camp. However, the prime minister termed their demand ‘blackmailing’ and refused to visit the protesters.

- The extrajudicial killing of a student, Faizan Jattak, by the Eagle Squad of the Quetta Police prompted a public outcry. Although the perpetrators were arrested, no headway had been made on the case by the end of the year.
- In January, 21-year-old Usama Satti was shot dead when police personnel opened fire on him for not stopping his car.
- In February, Irfan Jatoi, a student at Sindh University in Jamshoro, was abducted by the police who claimed he was a ‘dangerous dacoit’. Jatoi was later killed in an encounter in Sukkur.

Jails and prisoners

- Prisons in Pakistan remained sorely overcrowded, with 87,668 inmates in 119 jails against a sanctioned capacity of 65,334—an occupancy rate of 134 percent, according to the provincial prisons departments. Almost 68 percent of the total prison population comprised under-trial prisoners, at 59,422 inmates.
- Details provided to the Senate in January 2021 indicate that 9,191 Pakistanis were languishing in foreign jails in 73 countries, with the highest proportion in Saudi Arabia (2,555), the UAE (1,918) and Greece (884). Three Pakistani nationals were being held in Guantanamo Bay.
- According to lists exchanged by India and Pakistan at the end of the year, over 600 Indian prisoners were being held in Pakistan, while 355 Pakistanis were languishing in Indian jails.

Enforced disappearances

- The long-awaited bill aimed at criminalising enforced disappearance as a separate, autonomous offense, has still not been passed despite commitments to this effect by the PTI government since 2018.
- The highest number of enforced disappearances reported to the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances in 2021 was in Balochistan, at 1,108, while the highest number of pending cases, 1,417, were from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- Seengar Noonari, a political leader belonging to the Awami Workers Party, was abducted from his home in Naseerabad in June 2021 by unknown armed personnel, some of whom were in uniform. He was released after 35 days.
- In February, a large group of protestors held a week-long sit-in in Islamabad to protest against enforced disappearances in Balochistan. Although the prime minister met a three-member delegation from the sit-in, no progress was made towards recovering their family members.

- Two students from the University of Balochistan were allegedly disappeared in November, following which students boycotted their classes and shut down the university in protest.

Democratic development

- The Punjab government remained without local governments for 21 months. The system was restored by the government in October after the Supreme Court expressed alarm over non-compliance with its 25 March 2021 order.
- The Sindh assembly passed the Sindh Local Government Act 2021 in December, amid uproar from the opposition and widespread protests across Karachi. However, the provincial government was unable to announce fresh elections.
- Khyber Pakhtunkhwa finally held local government elections in December 2021 to elect candidates for more than 14,000 general and reserved seats.
- Although the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) was officially banned in April 2021 under the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997, the group continued to participate in political activities in the country, including the by-elections in Sialkot in July.
- In September, Mohsin Dawar, a member of the National Assembly from North Waziristan, along with a corps of nationalist leaders, announced the launch of the National Democratic Movement.
- National Assembly member Ali Wazir continued to languish in jail on charges of sedition, which he has denied.
- Amid bitter opposition, the Balochistan Awami Party-led government had to resign after a no-confidence motion against Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan in October. Quddos Bizenjo, former speaker of the assembly, assumed the office of chief minister.
- General elections were held in AJK and the region elected its tenth legislative assembly. Political parties accused the federal government of influencing the electoral process through pre-poll rigging.
- The status of Gilgit-Baltistan remained unchanged during 2021, even after the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly unanimously adopted a joint resolution demanding that the federal government declare the region a provisional province of Pakistan, while ensuring its representation in the National Assembly, Senate and other constitutional bodies.

Freedom of movement

- For the second consecutive year, Covid-19 infections persisted, restricting people's right to movement at intervals.
- The Lahore High Court ruled that the right to movement cannot be separated from the right to life.

- In November, the Balochistan government barred Pashtun Tahafuz Movement leaders Manzoor Pashteen and Mohsin Dawar from entering the province for 90 days.

Freedom of assembly

- TLP activists disrupted life in Punjab and the rest of the country at regular intervals after the arrest of their leader Saad Hussain Rizvi in April 2021. Three people were killed and hundreds injured in a clash between TLP activists and police in Lahore. The mob also attacked a police station and kidnapped five police officers. Despite such unwarranted acts, the TLP managed to strike a deal with the government.
- In November, the police and the Rangers baton-charged and fired tear gas shells on residents and builders protesting outside Karachi's Nasla Tower, which was being demolished under the Supreme Court's orders.
- In October, the parents of over 130 students killed by terrorists during the Army Public School attack in 2014 held a protest demonstration in Peshawar against the federal government's proposed amnesty to the TTP.
- In March, the tribesmen of the Janikhel area of Bannu held a three-week sit-in demanding the arrest of the killers of four of their youth and placing the bodies of the victims in front of the local police station. The tribesmen's attempt to march to Islamabad along with the bodies was disrupted by the police with use of force including baton-charges and tear-gas.
- During a historic sit-in in Gwadar, thousands protested against the absence of government attention in Gwadar, particularly against the backdrop of CPEC projects.

Freedom of association

- In November, the Progressive Students Collective organised the Students' Solidarity March in several major cities. Their demands included the restoration of student unions, student representation in decision-making, and increasing the education budget to at least 5 percent of GDP.
- Space for NGOs continued to shrink in 2021, with project implementation suffering because of problems such as difficulty obtaining clearances and no-objection certificates for activities from different government offices.

Freedom of expression

- Pakistan was ranked 145th out of 180 countries on the World Press Freedom Index.
- The federal government's proposed Pakistan Media Development Authority Ordinance 2021 was condemned by rights organisations as nothing less than 'media martial law.'

- The Balochistan Right to Information Act 2021 was passed after several years’ campaigning by civil society organisations.
- Social media activist Nazim Jokhio was tortured and killed in November, allegedly by politically influential lawmakers from the PPP after he posted a video about illegal hunting trips for Arab dignitaries.
- Reporter Ajay Lalwani was gunned down in March by armed men in Sukkur, allegedly for reporting on the alleged abuse of power by a locally influential person.
- At least two journalists were killed in Balochistan, one in a case of personal enmity, and another in a bomb blast claimed by the Balochistan Liberation Army.
- Senior journalist Waris Raza was abducted from his residence in Karachi in September, allegedly by law enforcement agencies. He was released the same evening.
- In April, senior journalist Absar Alam was shot and injured in a park close to his house.
- Journalist Asad Ali Toor was beaten up by ‘unknown assailants’ in May.
- In June, senior journalist Hamid Mir was taken off air after he made a fiery speech at a protest against the attack on Asad Ali Toor.
- The Fourth Schedule of the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 continued to be used as a tool to gag dissenting voices in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Digital rights

- In March, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) banned popular social media app TikTok across Pakistan on the grounds that it allowed the circulation of ‘objectionable material harmful to society’. The ban remained in place until November.
- The Removal and Blocking of Unlawful Online Content (Procedure, Oversight and Safeguards) Rules 2021 were heavily criticised by digital rights activists who accused the government of imposing a complete monopoly over social media in Pakistan.

Freedom of religion or belief

- In a particularly savage incident, Priyantha Diyawadana, a Sri Lankan national, was tortured and killed by a lynch mob in Sialkot, who accused him of having committed blasphemy.
- Police data shows that at least 585 persons were booked on charges of blasphemy in 2021, with the overwhelming majority from Punjab. Persons accused of blasphemy included a Hindu boy as young as eight in Rahim Yar Khan.
- In a widely criticised move, the Punjab government passed a resolution declaring that an oath of *khatm-i-nabuwat* (finality of prophethood) should be made part of *nikah* (marriage) documents.

- HRCP documented at least 27 alleged forced conversions in Sindh in 2021, seven of which involved minors. In Punjab, the number of forced conversions increased from 13 cases in 2020 to 36 in 2021, according to the Centre for Social Justice.
- The Pakistani Buddhist community continued to be excluded as a distinct religious group in the national census and from educational and government job quotas.
- Data from the Ahmadiyya community indicates that over 100 cases were registered against members on religious grounds, including ‘posing’ as Muslims, preaching their faith, and allegations of blasphemy. At least three members of the Ahmadiyya community were killed in separate targeted attacks, allegedly on the basis of their faith.

Women

- Based on police reports, there were 5,279 rapes (including gang-rape) and 478 honour killings registered in the country.
- In August, a crowd of more than 400 men assaulted a young woman in Lahore’s Greater Iqbal Park. The incident was captured on several videos that went viral.
- The uproar against the Islamabad chapter of the Aurat March since 2020 refused to subside in 2021 as the Peshawar High Court, under the Justice of Peace Provision, directed on 26 March that an FIR be charged against the organisers on grounds of religious offence, although that had been categorically debunked.
- In June, the prime minister faced a torrent of criticism for remarking during an interview that the rise in sexual violence against women in Pakistan was linked to their attire.
- In July, 27-year-old Noor Mukadam was found brutally murdered at Zahir Jaffer’s house in Islamabad. This event, following on the heels of the murders of Maria Shah (in Shikarpur), Saima Ali (in Peshawar) and Qurutulain Baloch (in Hyderabad) in preceding weeks, shocked civil society and sparked nationwide protests.
- A video that surfaced on social media showed a man named Usman Mirza forcing a young couple to strip naked in a room full of other men. The Islamabad police arrested Mirza and registered an FIR against him. The suspects were revealed to be linked to a criminal ring that filmed such videos for blackmail purposes.

Transgender persons

- The transgender community continued to be marginalised both socially and economically. In Karachi alone, more than 200 threatening video and audio messages sent to transgender persons were reported, creating a sense of fear and insecurity among the community.

- The Punjab government decided to pay a monthly stipend to the transgender community under the Masawaat Programme, initiated by the Punjab Social Protection Authority.

Children

- At least 1,896 cases of child abuse were documented across the country between January and June, according to one estimate, although the number is likely higher. Of these, 1,084 cases involved sexual abuse, 523 were cases of abduction, 238 were cases of missing children, and 51 were cases of child marriage.
- Children between the ages of six and 15 years—both boys and girls—remained the most vulnerable to abuse and violence.
- In two particularly grim instances, locals in Hoshap, Balochistan, alleged that a Frontier Corps soldier had sexually molested a ten-year-old child. Additionally, two children were killed in Hoshap, with their families alleging that FC personnel had fired a mortar shell on them.
- In October, the Federal Shariat Court declared that the tradition of *swara* was un-Islamic, although it remains to be seen whether this ruling will effectively curb this deeply entrenched practice. The court also determined that setting a minimum age limit for girls' marriage by the state was not against Islam.

Labour

- Covid-19 hit the labour sector for the second consecutive year. The pool of jobless people swelled as companies downsized and the incomes of middle- to low-income workers fell as companies reduced wage bills.
- Although the Punjab government announced an increase in the minimum wage to PKR20,000 per month from PKR18,000, the increase failed to protect workers against increasing inflation.
- The minimum wage for unskilled workers was raised to PKR25,000 by the Sindh government. This was challenged in the Sindh High Court by employers' organisations which rejected their plea. However, on appeal, the Supreme Court stayed the decision of the provincial government.
- According to estimates from the Pakistan Central Mines Labour Federation, 176 miners died in accidents onsite during the year. According to HRCP's own data, at least 71 such deaths occurred in Balochistan alone. Despite this, Pakistan has still not ratified ILO Convention 176, which specifies a maximum depth that is deemed safe for miners.
- In August, at least 16 workers lost their lives when a fire broke out at an industrial unit in Karachi's Mehran Town
- According to the Hari Welfare Association, about 1,451 bonded

workers were released from various farms through court orders in different districts of Sindh, including 318 men, 436 women and 617 children.

- For the first time since the passage of the Sindh Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 2015, 14 out of 30 districts finally formed district vigilance committees to monitor and report instances of bonded labour.
- After a 28-day-long protest by residents of Gwadar, the prime minister promised to take strict action against illegal trawlers fishing in Gwadar.

Refugees

- Following the takeover of Kabul by the Afghan Taliban, there was an influx of Afghan refugees, many of whom reported instances of harassment, such as border officials extorting money and refusing entry.
- Cumbersome documentation requirements led to slower processing of visas and transit.
- Public debate on this issue was also ousted, with reports of civil society members being harassed by state authorities when they attempted to assist refugees. Instead, 'secret briefings' were held on the matter, relegating the issue to the military domain.

Education

- In August, the prime minister officially launched the much-disputed Single National Curriculum (SNC) for primary schools and seminaries, claiming that this initiative would reduce educational disparities. The SNC drew strong criticism from education experts and human rights defenders for its lack of inclusivity, over-emphasis on Islamic religious content at the expense of religious minorities, and poor pedagogy.
- The Sindh government refused to adopt the SNC, saying it was a provincial subject after the 18th Amendment and that it had already framed its own curriculum.
- Bahauddin Zakariya University and the University of Bahawalpur reduced the number of reserved seats for students from the newly merged districts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, leading to weeklong protests by students in Lahore.
- The Annual Status of Education Report 2021 found that nearly 19 percent of all school-age children in Pakistan remained out of school.

Health

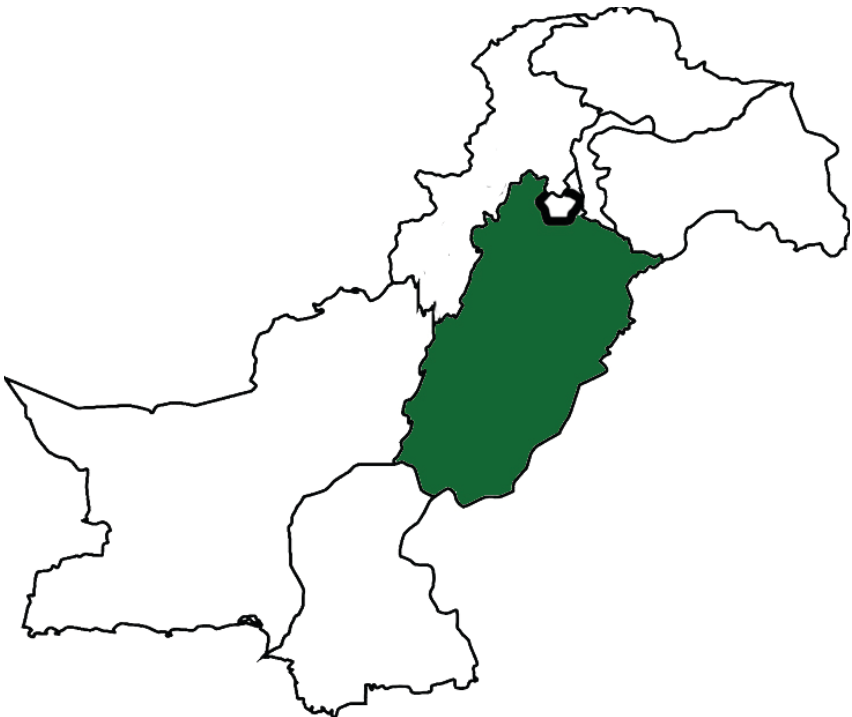
- As Covid-19 variants kept emerging through the year, the National Command and Operation Centre initiated a more rigorous vaccination drive.

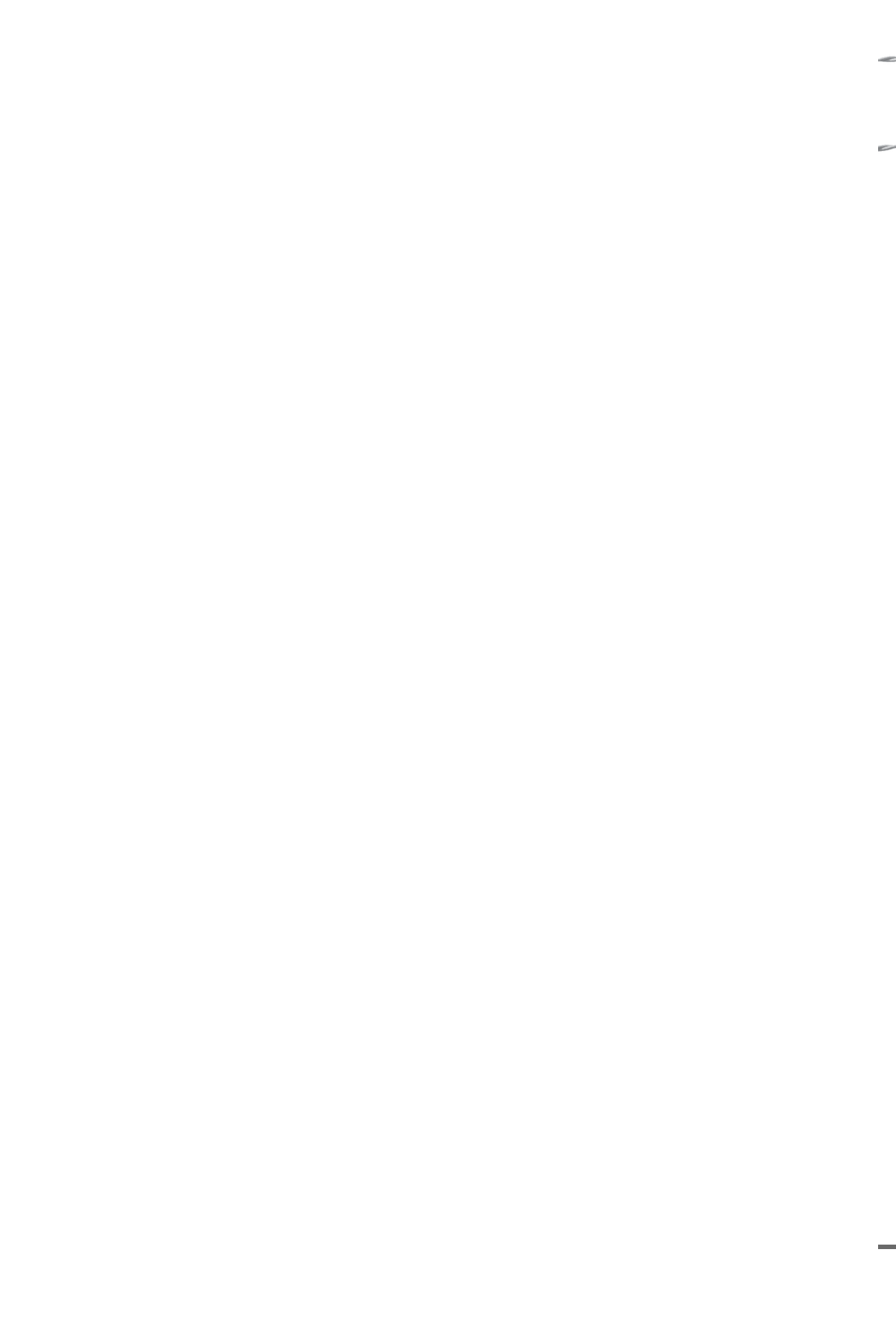
- The National Health Card or Qaumi Sehat Card scheme was launched in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, AJK, and Islamabad Capital Territory. The programme provides access to free-of-cost indoor healthcare services at empanelled hospitals.
- Reports of dengue cases began to emerge in October, turning into a trajectory reminiscent of the 2011 dengue epidemic. Despite the launch of a campaign to eliminate dengue larva from hotspot areas in Lahore as early as June, the health department was unable to efficiently counter the spread of the disease.
- At least 115 persons committed suicide in Tharparkar in 2021, of which 68 were women. The majority of cases belonged to the Hindu community.

Housing and environment

- Lahore earned the distinction of being the most polluted city in the world in November when smog descended onto the city and its precincts earlier than usual.
- Environmentalists and rights activists welcomed the Lahore High Court’s decision to scrap the Ravi Riverfront Urban Development Project. The court declared several provisions of the Ravi Urban Development Authority Act 2020 unconstitutional and against the fundamental rights of citizens.
- An anti-encroachment drive in Karachi led to the razing of hundreds of homes along three major *nullahs* in the city, reinforcing the opinion held by many urban experts that the drive reeked of an anti-poor bias.
- A study revealed that precipitation had fallen drastically in Balochistan and that a large proportion of Quetta’s population would not have access to drinking water by 2025.

PUNJAB







KEY TRENDS

- For most of the year, the province remained without local government representatives. They were restored after the Supreme Court intervened.
- The Punjab Assembly passed a public interest resolution to include an oath of *khatm-i-nabuwat* (finality of prophethood) in *nikah* (marriage) documents.
- The year was marked by violent protests by the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan, ending in an agreement accepting the group's demands.
- The mob lynching of Priyantha Diyawadana, a Sri Lankan national in Sialkot, shook the country and became international news.
- The shocking incident of a woman being tossed, undressed and groped by a crowd on 14 August in Lahore brought to the fore the issue of women's vulnerability in public spaces.
- Human rights defenders remained concerned about the imposition of the Single National Curriculum in schools and its overt religious content.
- For the second consecutive year, Covid-19 infections restricted people's movement, with the government imposing lockdowns to curtail the spread of the disease.
- The Punjab government announced a monthly stipend for transgender persons.
- Cases of domestic violence culminating in murder escalated in 2021.
- Lahore remained one of the world's most polluted cities with the worst air quality recorded in November 2021.
- The National Health Card or Qaumi Sehat Card scheme was launched in Punjab at the start of 2021. It aimed to provide complete coverage across the province by the end of 2021.
- The Punjab government made insignificant progress in providing housing to marginalised people against Chief Minister Usman Buzdar's promise to build 10,000 housing units in 32 districts of Punjab.
- The Punjab Enforcement of Women's Property Rights Act 2021 passed by the Punjab Assembly was a welcome step. It allows women to seek redressal against denial of their inheritance share.
- The Punjab government's mega-development initiative, the Ravi

River Urban Development Project, was challenged in the courts for violating farmers' rights and not meeting environment assessment and land acquisition requirements.



OVERVIEW

The human rights situation in Punjab was marred by violent extremism and limits to freedom of expression, thought and religion in 2021.

The lynching to death of a Sri Lankan national working in Sialkot and a case in which an eight-year-old Hindu boy was charged with blasphemy in Rahim Yar Khan put extremism in the spotlight.

Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) activists disrupted life in the province at regular intervals in 2021, demanding the expulsion of the French ambassador and a ban on imports from France in protest against the publication of blasphemous images in France.

In Lahore on 18 April, three people were killed and hundreds injured in a clash between TLP activists and the police. A policeman was taken hostage and the Orange Line train service was disrupted. Following another bout of unwarranted violence in October, the government reached an 'agreement' with the TLP on 31 October. In violation of the people's right to know, the government refused to divulge details of the agreement. The disturbing developments that followed gave people only a glimpse of the secret deal.



In Lahore on 18 April, three people were killed and hundreds injured in a clash between TLP and the police.

The Punjab Assembly approved a resolution in September seeking the display of Quranic verses and *hadith* on the finality of prophethood in provincial government offices. It also passed a resolution on the inclusion of an oath of *khatm-i-nabuwat* (finality of prophethood) in *nikah* (marriage)

documents in October. The resolution suggested that the *khatm-i-nabuwat* certificate should be made mandatory for the bride, groom, their witnesses and *nikahkhwān*.

Further, the Single National Curriculum (SNC) was imposed in schools in Punjab. One of the aspects of the curriculum is to teach the Quran in schools to students from pre-primary to grade 5. Education experts held that topics such as tolerance and fairness are fused with religious ideals and Islamic principles in subjects other than Islamiyat; when taught to students from diverse faith backgrounds, the curriculum goes against the spirit of secular education.



RULE OF LAW

Laws and law-making

In the third parliamentary year, the Punjab Assembly passed a total of 58 laws. A majority of the bills passed by the provincial assembly pertained to establishing private universities. The method of passing the bills was objected to by the Higher Education Department and Punjab Higher Education Commission as it bypassed rules and regulations and the Higher Education Department procedures. After serious concerns were raised in the assembly and with the intervention of the prime minister, the bills were sent for evaluation to a special committee but not to the relevant standing committees on higher education.

The Punjab Assembly approved a resolution seeking the display of Quranic verses and *hadith* on the finality of prophethood in provincial government offices in September. The resolution demanded that these verses and *hadith* and their translations declaring Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) the last prophet be put up at prominent places in government offices and along highways at the entrance of districts.

In a similar spirit, the Punjab Assembly passed a public interest resolution seeking the inclusion of an oath of *khatm-i-nabuwat* in *nikah* documents in October. The resolution was adopted unanimously. It suggested that the *khatm-i-nabuwat* certificate be made mandatory for the bride, groom, their witnesses and *nikahkhwan*. 'The Punjab Assembly calls on the Punjab Government that the oath as inserted in the NADRA and Passport forms to differentiate between Muslim and Non-Muslim (Qadiani, Ahmedi etc) should also be clearly inserted in the marriage certificate form under Section 10 and 8 of the rules of The Muslim Family Laws Ordinance 1961 [*sic*],' reads the resolution. Further, the Punjab Assembly adopted a resolution on 23 November on the mandatory recitation of the Quran in private and public schools during assembly hour.

The Punjab Enforcement of Women's Property Rights Act 2021 passed by the Punjab Assembly is a welcome step forward. It allows women to seek redressal against denial of their inheritance share. According to the law, a complaint may be filed before the ombudsperson, which exercises the same powers, functions and authority as the ombudsperson under the Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010. It remains to be seen if the law will ensure women their rightful inheritance.

Administration of justice

The Lahore High Court (LHC) began the year with 188,176 pending cases. The court instituted some 148,436 new cases and disposed of 149,362 in the year. By the end of December 2021, the balance of cases

was 187,255. The district judiciary Punjab started the year with 137,2879 pending cases. By the end of November 2021, the courts had instituted 2,826,774 and disposed of 2,904,745 cases. The balance of cases was 1,313,669.

As in previous years, the courts continued to prescribe capital punishment for crimes. The principal of a private school was awarded the death penalty by a district and sessions court over a blasphemy charge under Section 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code.

In a case of delayed justice, the LHC acquitted Liaquat Ali, a resident of Nankana who was sentenced to life imprisonment on charges of blasphemy, after he had spent 11 years in jail. The state counsel and other lawyers stopped appearing to plead his case in the trial court, following which he pleaded his case himself, but got life imprisonment. The LHC took up his appeal in 2021, appointed a state counsel and on hearing the case, set aside the trial court verdict.

Initiating an important debate on animal rights, the LHC, while hearing a public interest petition challenging the killings of stray dogs, questioned the legitimacy of the existing practice of shooting stray dogs. The court directed the Punjab government to ensure that its policy to neuter and vaccinate stray dogs was converted into a law.



ENFORCEMENT OF LAW

Law and order

The following table gives the total number of crimes against persons for 2021:

<i>Nature of crime</i>	<i>Total cases in 2021</i>
Murder	Males = 3,287 Females = 1,092
Rape	4,329
Gang rape	269
Rape of minors	193
Honour killings	197
Domestic violence	753
Acid attacks	Males = 6 Females = 28
Blasphemy	426
Cases against police officials	580
Police encounters	294

Source: Punjab Police, in response to HRCP's request for information

Extrajudicial killings

In 2019, the Counter-Terrorism Department personnel gunned down four people including two parents and their teenage daughter in what they described as an encounter with 'terrorists' in Sahiwal. In a shocking development in a case in October 2021, an anti-terrorism court (ATC) acquitted all six officials responsible. The Punjab government thereafter challenged the acquittal of suspects before the LHC. The decision is awaited. Meanwhile, customary fake encounters continued throughout Punjab, although some effort appears to have been made to check the practice. For instance, a high-level inquiry committee found 23 officials of the Attock police, including two subdivisional police officers and two station house officers, guilty of staging a 'fake encounter' in which one alleged car thief was shot dead and another injured.

Transfers

In a top-level reshuffle in Punjab bureaucracy once again, the Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaaf (PTI) government changed the police chief in September 2021, replacing Inam Ghani with Sardar Ali Khan as inspector general of police. Khan became the seventh police chief in three years. In November 2021, the government transferred several regional and district police officers of Lahore for mishandling the violent TLP rally. Twelve senior officers were transferred across Punjab.

The administrative structure across departments in Punjab has suffered and the performance of public servants in all sectors has not been up to the mark because of the inordinate number of transfers of government servants. The quick transfer policy of the government has invited much criticism. Senior police officers complain that instability in tenure hinders effective police performance and affects the morale of officers.

Jails and prisoners

The following table gives a breakdown of the prison population in 2021:

Statistics	Number
Total jails	43
Authorised capacity	36,806
Present occupancy	51,704
Convicted	15,660
Condemned	247
Under-trial	33,601
Male	50,184
Female	865
Juvenile	655

Source: Punjab Prisons, in response to HRCP's request for information.

In October, the Punjab government announced a PKR5.5 billion package for prisons in the province. The package is aimed at improving prisons and attempting to make them more humane. Yet, a proposal to get rid of the archaic jail rules has been pending with the cabinet for approval for almost a year.

A report published in *Newsweek* on women prisoners across Punjab jails states: 'According to the Punjab Prisons Department, just 16 of the 921 women currently awaiting trial in 41 jails across the province have received any legal assistance from the state, while 905 have yet to be provided any aid.' It further adds that the highest number of convicted and under-trial women prisoners, 130, who have not been provided any legal aid, are interred in the Lahore Central Jail, followed by 129 in the Rawalpindi Central Jail, 90 in the Multan Women's Jail, and 80 in the Faisalabad Central Jail.



FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

Freedom of movement

For the second consecutive year, Covid-19 infections persisted in waves, each subsequent wave more infectious than the previous one, till the fifth wave of the milder Omicron variant swept the country at the end of the year. The virus restricted people's right to movement.

To detect and curb the spread of new and fatal strains of Covid-19, the Punjab Health Department imposed sporadic smart lockdowns in high-risk areas—neighbourhood-wise in cities and district-wise in the province. Over the two Eid holidays in June and August, a complete lockdown was imposed in the province. Public transport and tourist destinations were closed, and the police, Rangers and army personnel were deployed at entry and exit points of all the cities.

Following a sudden surge in the number of cases in October, after the reopening of schools, colleges, marriage halls and other public spaces, the provincial government enforced micro-lockdowns in all 36 districts of Punjab. According to an official report, the Punjab government had enforced 856 micro smart lockdowns in the province by October. However, irrespective of strict measures, the provincial government could not enforce standard operating procedures in public spaces—marketplaces, weddings, and rallies and processions—as well as private offices.

Freedom of movement for women

Two women and a minor girl were travelling in a rickshaw near Greater Iqbal Park in Lahore on 14 August 2021 when some boys made obscene gestures. The video of one of them jumping from a motorbike on to the moving rickshaw and sexually harassing one of the women went viral. A case was registered on the complaint of SHO Ghulam Abbas.

As in the case of the molestation of a woman by a mob on the same day and in the same neighbourhood, this instance reaffirms that women cannot move freely—whether to commute or to partake in Independence Day celebrations. Such activities remain men's prerogative.

Exit control list

The LHC ruled that the right to movement cannot be separated from the right to life and 'the exercise of executive authority is subject to judicial review.' The ruling came after a petition lodged by the wife and children of a chief executive officer of a securities company, challenging a directive of the interior ministry that had placed them on the exit control list. The company faced a reference by the National Accountability Bureau on charges of embezzlement.

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

The lynching to death of Priyantha Diyawadana, a Sri Lankan national who worked as general manager of an industrial engineering factory in Sialkot in December 2021 shocked the world. Diyawadana was accused of having committed blasphemy for allegedly taking down posters containing religious messages. According to reports, he was tortured and killed, and his body set on fire. Rights campaigners viewed the incident as one of unthinkable savagery and demanded an immediate, transparent inquiry.



Widow and children of Priyantha Diyawadana, the Sri Lankan national lynched to death in Sialkot for allegedly taking down posters containing religious messages.

On 4 August, a violent mob forcibly entered a Hindu temple in Bongh Sharif, Rahim Yar Khan, and vandalised it after an allegation that a Hindu boy had desecrated holy scriptures. The station house officer of the area was suspended for his inability to stop the incident. Later, the police registered three different first information reports (FIRs) against hundreds of people held responsible for the crime. The Supreme Court also took suo motu notice, demanding a report on the event immediately from the local administration.

In welcome news was the acquittal of a Christian couple on death row – Shagufta Kausar and Shafqat Masih – was acquitted because of lack of evidence by the LHC in June 2021. They were convicted for having committed blasphemy and suffered eight long years of imprisonment. The couple was awarded the death sentence by an additional district and sessions judge in Toba Tek Singh on 4 April 2014 under Section 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code, read with Section 34, for sending blasphemous messages on the phone.

Forced conversions

Religious minorities continued to live in fear as the number of forced conversions increased from 13 cases in 2020 to 36 in 2021 in Punjab, according to the Centre for Social Justice.

Freedom of expression

For yet another year, media-persons worked in stifling conditions. They were intimidated, subjected to physical and verbal abuse and targeted under counterterrorism legislation—to name just a few tactics used against them across Pakistan. Manzoor Qadir Bhandar, a Gujranwala-based lawyer, filed a petition with an additional district and sessions court judge to try prominent journalists Hamid Mir and Asma Shirazi for treason, for making provocative speeches in May in support of fellow reporter, Asad Ali Toor, who was beaten up by three unidentified men in his apartment in Islamabad on 26 May 2021.

Dress codes imposed on women

Women were instructed to not wear jeans to college or university. On 29 December, the Toba Tek Singh sub-campus of the University of Agriculture Faisalabad issued a directive against female students wearing jeans.

Restrictions were also imposed on wearing T-shirts, sleeveless shirts, see-through and tight-fitting shirts and flashy jewellery and heavy make-up. Earlier in the year, the same university announced it would celebrate ‘Sisters’ Day’ on 14 February (Valentine’s Day) by gifting scarves and abayas to female students.

In the same fashion, on 23 September 2021, the Bahawalpur Victoria Hospital banned jeans and made it mandatory for women medical officers and paramedics to cover their heads with a scarf or dupatta to ‘preach Islam and reform society.’

The list of ‘not allowed’ dresses is detailed and includes jeans, tights, fitted clothes, untied long hair, high heels, nail polish, long nails, heavy bangles, and low necklines.

Freedom of assembly

TLP activists disrupted life in Punjab and the rest of the country at regular intervals after the arrest of their leader Saad Hussain Rizvi in April 2021 for leading protests that called for the expulsion of the French ambassador to Pakistan over comments made by French President Emmanuel Macron in October 2020.

In Lahore, for instance, on 18 April, three people were killed and

hundreds injured in a clash between TLP activists and the police. The mob, carrying arms and petrol bombs, attacked a police station and kidnapped five police officers. Despite such unwarranted acts, the TLP managed to strike a deal with the government.

The start of the year saw people protest against the targeted killings of Hazaras. Later in the year, the visually impaired took to the streets to demand regularisation of their service. The Progressive Students Collective protested against the Islami Jamiat Tulaba's use of torture against two of their activists at Punjab University, but the authorities turned a deaf ear to their legitimate demands.

Similarly, hundreds of students from different colleges staged a demonstration against the exam schedule announced by the Punjab Education Board in Bahawalpur in March. The protesting students chanted slogans against the Education Department and demanded promotion on the basis of online classes.



DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT

Local governments

In complete disregard for the promotion and protection of people's rights through local governments, the Punjab government remained without local governments for 21 months.

The system, however, was restored by the Usman Buzdar administration in October 2021 after the Supreme Court expressed alarm over non-compliance with its 25 March 2021 order.

The Supreme Court had ordered the restoration of local governments in the province in March after declaring their dissolution by the PTI government, under the Punjab Local Government Act 2013, unconstitutional.

The petitioner had challenged the dissolution of local governments with a plea that elected members were entitled to complete their constitutional five-year term (set to expire on 31 December 2021).

Shrinking space and the role of assemblies

The last two weeks of October 2021 were marked by protests by the TLP. The government reached an 'agreement' with the TLP on 31 October 2021 to end the impasse.

The deal was viewed as a surrender by the government to a group that has often challenged the writ of the state and preached violence in the name of faith. It was feared that the deal would embolden other proscribed organisations and hurt democracy and political culture in the country.

The PTI government had banned the TLP in April 2021 under Section 11-B (1) of the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997. Still, the group participated in political activities in the country, for instance, in the by-elections of PP-38 Sialkot in July 2021.



RIGHTS OF THE DISADVANTAGED

Women

On 14 August 2021, a crowd of more than 400 men assaulted a young woman in Lahore’s Greater Iqbal Park. The incident was captured on several videos that went viral. It showed a mob of men descend on the woman as she made a TikTok video with friends. They tossed her among them, tore her clothes and groped her. This went on for hours before she was rescued. Soon after the incident, many people started blaming the victim on Twitter with the trend #NotAllMen. The unfortunate incident was a reminder that the malaise is pervasive in the country and the state continues to fail to protect women. Data compiled by the Punjab Women Helpline 1043, managed and supervised by the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women, reveals a depressing reality (see tables below).

As opposed to 2020, the helpline recorded an increase in all forms of gender-based violence (GBV) in 2021, particularly domestic violence and harassment at the workplace and online.

Year	Total calls	Criminal offences			Violence	
		Murder	Rape	Kidnapping	Domestic violence	Violence at other places
2020	22,947	35	67	77	2,287	497
2021	24,296	33	69	106	3,481	563

Year	Property matters			Harmful traditions		Family issues		
	General	Inheritance	Possession	Child marriage	Forced marriage	Maintenance	Khula	Custody of minors
2020	19	2196	269	64	141	371	183	155
2021	51	1939	479	84	92	441	186	209

Year	Employment			Financial support		Departments		
	Salary	Pension	Transfer	Loan	Others	Education	Health	Police
2020	24	22	4	18	112	27	289	694
2021	24	24	2	12	62	26	217	706

Year	General inquiries			Harassment		
	Others	Invalid	Prank	Harassment at workplace	Online harassment	Other matters related to harassment
2020	995	4989	5137	71	602	1562
2021	1,802	4172	4001	133	794	2437

Year	Lahore	Rawalpindi	Faisalabad	Multan	D G Khan	Sahiwal
2020	3,920	1042	768	740	167	229
2021	5,219	1432	980	854	213	358

Year	Bahawalpur	Gujranwala	Sargodha
2020	442	424	406
2021	421	576	387

Source: Punjab Women Helpline 1043.

Domestic violence

It is a welcoming development that more women are reporting instances of domestic violence, as shown by the statistics above: the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women helpline received 2,287 calls in 2020 whereas the number swelled to 3,481 in 2021, but it also reveals the true scale of this form of violence against women in Pakistan.

Data collected by the Digital Rights Foundation shows the number of deaths due to domestic violence—the most commonly reported crime against women in Punjab in 2021. Some 12 cases of murder were reported between 1 and 15 January 2021 alone. There was no let-up in this nature of crime for the rest of the year. Covid-19 restrictions, combined with unemployment and financial stress linked to the pandemic, may have caused domestic violence cases to spike across the country.

Other forms of GBV

Eliminating honour crimes remains difficult in a culture of impunity and the government's inability to deliver justice to GBV survivors. The system has also been unable to root out acid attacks despite the Acid and Burn Crime Bill 2017 passed by the National Assembly in 2018. In June, a young girl sustained burns on her body when a man attacked her with acid for refusing to accept his marriage proposal in Lahore.

Transgender persons

In a positive step toward the empowerment of the transgender community, the Punjab government decided to pay a monthly stipend to the community. The Masawaat Programme, initiated by the Punjab Social Protection Authority, will provide financial assistance of PKR3,000 a month to transgender persons over age 40 and PKR2,000 to those with disabilities between ages 18 and 40. To avail the stipend, transgender persons are required to register with NADRA as 'transgender' and those with disabilities must have an authentic certificate of disability. The Punjab government also announced it would open schools for *khawaja sira* (transgender) communities in each district of the province.

Discrimination against transgender persons was reported in workplaces. A transgender person filed a petition in the LHC in October over discrimination against transgender persons in police jobs. They pleaded the court to direct the Central Police Office to clarify its position on not recruiting any transgender person in the last ten years.

Children

In June this year, a student in Lahore alleged that Mufti Azizur Rehman, a former Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) leader, an organisation of religious scholars, had him and another student expelled from the *madrassa* (seminary) on the charge of cheating in an examination: he allegedly agreed to reconsider his decision only if the student engaged with him sexually.

The student shared a video of the sexual assault with the police and seminary administration as proof. The victim claimed that Rehman had sexually abused and blackmailed him every Friday for three years. The police investigation found Rehman guilty and a local court indicted him in October.



A student in Lahore accused Mufti Azizur Rehman, a former JUI-F leader of sexually assaulting him for three years.

This was not a solitary case in Punjab in 2021. According to data provided by child protection organisations, on average, more than ten children are subjected to sexual abuse every day in Pakistan. Data collected from all four provinces of Pakistan in the first six months of 2021 revealed that a total of 1,896 cases of child abuse were reported across Pakistan – 1,084 cases were of sexual abuse against children, 523 were cases of abduction, and 238 cases of missing children. Statistics from the province show that 60 percent of the total cases were reported from Punjab.

It can safely be said that these figures grossly underestimate the true scale of child sexual abuse. The actual figure is thought to be much higher. The case of Mufti Azizur Rehman was brought on record but there are thousands that are not. The pattern of crime in most cases is similar: a young boy or girl is abducted and sexually abused (a five-year old was abducted in Okara in June), and then killed and dumped (two minor boys were abducted and killed, and their bodies were dumped in a canal in Okara in July).

Child labour

It seems child labour draws attention only on World Day Against Child Labour on 12 June. The media covers statements by ministers and labour activists issued at seminars and workshops on the plight of child labourers. It is a forgotten subject for the rest of the year. Only occasional and sketchy reports in the media allow a glance into the seriousness of the problem: a child labourer died while his brother was critically injured when a cylinder blew up at a refrigerator repair shop in Pakpattan on 28 June.

A headmistress in Hamidpur Kanora was terminated over engaging minor students in forced construction labour on 29 June 2021. The police arrested a motorcycle mechanic after a video clip went viral on social media showing him torturing a minor boy employed at his workshop in Shahdara on 30 June 2021. It is no secret that households, the agriculture sector and informal businesses employ children as labour where they are underpaid and mistreated. Yet, no concise data is collected by rights organisations and provincial government departments to assess the gravity of the problem. Further, with restrictions imposed on registration of rights organisations and other not-for-profit entities, a vast space that should have been monitored by watchdogs is left vacant for violations.

Labour

Covid-19 hit the labour sector for the second consecutive year. The pool of jobless people swelled as companies downsized and incomes of middle- to low-income workers fell as companies reduced wage bills. Many middle-class families were pushed down to the ranks of low-income families. The Punjab government announced an increase in the minimum wage of workers to PKR20,000 per month from PKR18,000. However, the increase failed to protect workers against increasing inflation.

Farmers' protests

A large number of farmers affected by the Ravi Riverfront Project protested against the takeover of their agriculture land for the benefit of land developers. They agitated against the meagre rate of PKR200,000 per acre they had been offered, which they claimed was far below the

market value. Farmers in Punjab threatened to launch a tractor march, as in India, for rationalisation of the support price of wheat, the power tariff for tube wells and fertiliser rates.

Some 2,000 farmers were blocked by the local administrations of Okara and Kasur from proceeding to Lahore in December 2021. They were demanding a support price of PKR2,200 for the wheat crop, the restoration of the previous electricity tariff of PKR5.35 per unit for tube wells and availability of urea and fertiliser at fixed prices.

Kissan cards

Prime Minister Imran Khan launched the Kissan Card scheme in Multan in May 2021 as the government's agriculture transformation initiative. The card is expected to pass on a subsidy of PKR117 billion to farmers on fertiliser, seeds and pesticides, while also enabling them to access loans and crop insurance.

Persons living with disabilities

Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar inaugurated the PKR3.5 billion Hamqadam Programme for persons living with disabilities (PLWDs) in December 2021. The programme is part of the Punjab Ehsaas Programme, whereby interest-free loans worth PKR270 million will be provided to 63,500 PLWDs. The chief minister also announced the allocation of PKR100 million for a scheme that will provide wheelchairs, hearing aids and necessary equipment to PLWDs.

The Punjab government has also drafted a law, the Empowerment of Persons with Different Abilities Act 2021, to ensure the rights of PLWDs under which all kinds of social and economic rights are guaranteed to them. The government was unable to table it till the end of the year. Despite much noise created about such laws, it appears they reflect tokenism because more serious and disturbing news about PLWDs filled the same news space, perhaps with more frequency: a special needs girl was raped in Kamalia in March and a mentally disabled woman gang-raped in Faisalabad again in March.

Job quota for the visually impaired

Visually impaired persons were out on the streets again this year, demanding the implementation of their job quota. Earlier, in 2019 and 2014, they had taken to the streets with the same demand. While talking to *Dawn*, one protestor said, 'For the last four to five years, we have been working on daily wages' and 'We are repeatedly given assurances that we will be given contractual jobs but nothing happens.'



SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

Education

Irregular school patterns since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 finally ended in October 2021 when the School Education Department in Punjab allowed all public and private educational institutions to resume regular educational activities. However, when schools reopened, many schoolchildren had to discontinue their education due to the economic hardship caused by the pandemic.

Where the government was compelled to shut down educational institutions to protect children, parents and teachers against Covid-19, it did little to ensure that all children benefitted from online learning. Experts warned of an education crisis, of the government failing to ensure all children between ages 5 and 16 received free and compulsory education as guaranteed in Article 25-A of the Constitution. The government also failed to provide easy internet access equally to all students.

In a 2021 report by the Pak Alliance of Math and Science titled *The Missing Third*, the proportion of out-of-school children (OOSC) at the district, provincial and national level was extracted from the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurements Survey for 2019/20. The study estimated that 7.69 million (24 percent) students between ages 5 and 16 were out of school in Punjab, of which 3.96 million (26 percent) were girls. Some 96 percent reported that school was too expensive for them to attend. The report cited 'child not willing' as the main reason for children dropping out of school. The report states that Rajanpur district had the highest rate of OOSC in Punjab at 48 percent, followed by Muzaffargarh district at 43 percent. Among the 36 districts in the province, the worst ten districts in terms of OOSC proportion were from southern Punjab. Districts Chakwal and Narowal had the lowest rate of OOSC at 9 percent.

Single National Curriculum

In the midst of pandemic-related learning disruptions, the Punjab government enforced the controversial Single National Curriculum (SNC) in Punjab when schools resumed regular classes in August 2021, covering pre-primary to grade 5. The government initiated the curriculum without building consensus between the state and civil society, especially religious minorities.

For the most part of the academic year, school administrators across Punjab followed a wait-and-see policy, especially in schools where children from religious minorities were enrolled. They remained sceptical about teaching the Quran and when and how to hire new teachers for the subject. Justifiably, human rights defenders remained



The Punjab government enforced the controversial Single National Curriculum (SNC) in Punjab when schools resumed regular classes in August 2021.

concerned about the government perpetuating a singular view of religion in educational institutions in the province through the SNC and depriving young students of the right to a secular education.

The School Education Department issued a notification as per orders received from the LHC that all schools in the province must be checked for 'teaching of Holy Quran/Nazrah in schools as subject [sic].' It directed the head of the district education authority and a district and sessions judge to inspect and file a report on the progress made on the subject in schools. This has had adverse consequences for children, teachers and school administrations.

As activist and academic Pervez Hoodbhoy wrote in *Dawn* on 4 December: 'Magistrates accompanied by rifle-bearing policemen are pouncing upon schools, interrogating seven- to 12-year-old children. Their teachers are ordered out of the classroom or asked to stand silently in the corner. In some cases, school principals have been told to present themselves in person before authorities located in various parts of the province.'

Health

Covid-19 vaccination

The provincial government started Covid-19 vaccination in the first week of March. Initially, the vaccine campaign took time to gain traction. Repeated complaints of shortage of vaccines were registered from Faisalabad and Lahore, where a number of vaccination centres had to be

closed down for lack of availability of vials. By the end of the year, amid the fifth wave of Covid-19 (Omicron), an official report said that the provincial government had yet to fully vaccinate 60 percent of the population in 25 districts of the province. Lahore, Faisalabad and Gujranwala were among the low-performing districts in the vaccination drive. The three districts were also marked as the most vulnerable cities for reporting the maximum number of Covid-19 cases and deaths.

According to the Punjab Disaster Management Authority, by November 2021, 26.885 million of the targeted 66.907 million population had been fully vaccinated (40.18 percent) in the province. The National Command and Operation Centre issued a notification that allowed cities that had achieved more than 60 percent vaccination to return to normalcy on 1 November. The only city in Punjab to qualify in this category was Mandi Bahauddin, followed by 40 to 60 percent in Rawalpindi and Jhelum and 45 percent in Lahore.

Dengue

Reports of dengue cases began to emerge as the summer heat subsided. The outbreak by October had turned into a trajectory reminiscent of the 2011 dengue epidemic. Despite the launch of a campaign to eliminate dengue larva from hotspot areas in Lahore as early as June, the health department was unable to efficiently counter the spread of the disease.

Health insurance

After Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, the National Health Card or Qaumi Sehat Card scheme was launched in Punjab at the start of 2021. The programme provides access to free-of-cost indoor healthcare services at empanelled hospitals.

It supports hospitalisation and chronic disease care, such as heart and kidney disease, diabetes, HIV/hepatitis, organ failure, cancer and burns. Punjab Health Minister Yasmin Rashid confirmed on 13 December in Lahore that cards had been handed over to 3.3 million families in poorer divisions of Sahiwal and Dera Ghazi Khan.

Mental health

In a welcome step towards acknowledging that mental disorders are a health problem, the Supreme Court in February 2021 commuted the sentences of Kanizan Bibi, Imdad Ali and Ghulam Abbas who had spent 30, 18 and 14 years on death row, respectively. All three exhibited acute symptoms of mental illness. The court also directed the Punjab government to shift the accused from prison to the Punjab Institute of Mental Health in Lahore for treatment and rehabilitation.

The court said that carrying out the death sentence did not 'meet the ends of justice' if prisoners on death row were unable to comprehend the rationale for their punishment due to a mental illness.

Housing

Chief Minister Usman Buzdar announced the identification of 133 sites in 35 districts of Punjab for the prime minister’s affordable housing scheme in May 2021 in sync with the PTI’s commitment to building five million low-cost housing units across Pakistan for the underprivileged.

He said that 54 locations for the Punjab Peri-Urban Low-Cost Housing Scheme, jointly executed by the Punjab government and the Naya Pakistan Housing and Development Authority, had been chosen for the first phase of the project. Construction work would start ‘on a priority basis at 32 sites,’ he stated.

So far, the Punjab government has made insignificant progress in providing housing to marginalised people. One reason for the delay has been reluctance on the part of banks to disburse loans. The appetite for housing finance significantly dried up as low-income households grappled with the rising cost of living during the pandemic. Their disposable income was significantly constricted.

Environment

Lahore earned the distinction of being the most polluted city in the world in November 2021. Smog descended onto Lahore and its precincts earlier than usual—in mid-October when the air quality index (AQI) fluctuated between satisfactory and poor levels. The air quality was worst in November—as much as 435 on 14 November.



Lahore earned the distinction of being the most polluted city in the world in November 2021.

Vehicular traffic remained the biggest source of pollution in the city, followed by industrial gaseous emissions and rice stubble burning in neighbouring rural areas of the city. Although the provincial government claimed to have directed petrol filling stations to sell Euro-5 petrol, for all vehicles creating pollution to be removed from the roads, for factories and brick kilns using old methods to be sealed, and action taken against people involved in setting crop residues on fire, they appeared to have little impact on the toxic air in Punjab.

Reports of smoke billowing from factories and burning garbage were frequent. People continued to complain of stinging eyes, breathing difficulties, nausea and headaches. Despite the necessary but sporadic measures adopted by the provincial authorities, environmental experts insist that the government does not have a clear policy to improve air quality, and relies on sloganeering, isolated projects and random crackdowns.

Protesting against the government's aversion to clean environment, civil society organisations held a climate march in Lahore on 9 November. They demanded the government launch meaningful actions against climate change. Hundreds of climate activists participated in the march with the slogan 'climate revolution, not pollution.' The Environment Protection Department sealed about 100 brick kilns and imposed fines on them for emitting hazardous smoke, disregarding the right to employment of brick kiln workers. It viewed brick kilns as the main polluters, refusing to acknowledge the share of vehicular carbon and nitrogen dioxide emissions, even as the number of automobiles soared.

Ban on plastic bags

It is widely acknowledged that, to protect communities at climate risk in Pakistan, dynamic environment-related laws and their effective implementation is critical. Yet, the authorities have not been able to develop an effective legal framework for the implementation of the Plastic Shopping Bags Act 2020. The Punjab law department returned the draft of the act to the Environment Protection Department in August to make it 'more implementable.' Meanwhile the use of plastic bags is rampant, with the exception of a few high-end stores.

Felling trees for housing societies

Reportedly, nearly 6,000 acres of mango orchards were cut down to make ground for housing societies in Multan without any environmental approval or assessment.

Ravi Riverfront project

Environmentalists and rights activists welcomed the LHC's decision to scrap the Riverfront Urban Development Project. The court declared

several provisions of the Ravi Urban Development Authority Act 2020 unconstitutional and against the fundamental rights of citizens. Announcing a reserved judgment on multiple petitions on 25 January 2021, the LHC found gross irregularities in the project and suspected it to be benefitting land developers. The petitioners had challenged the method of land acquisition proceedings undertaken for the project by the Ravi Urban Development Authority—a statutory body formed to oversee the project.

A 40,000-hectare site, promoted as the ‘world’s largest riverfront modern city’ near Lahore, launched by the Punjab government under the direct supervision of the prime minister, had alarmed many rights activists. HRCF organised a fact-finding mission including a civil society consultation in January 2021 to explore the social, legal and environmental aspects of the project.

Finding gross violations in the environment assessment, land acquisitions, and also considering farmers’ concerns, the mission concluded that in the garb of providing affordable housing to the needy, the project will render poor farmers and their families homeless; the government is forcing farmers to sell their lands by ‘involving the army-run FWO for development work and that deploying police to the area as a harassment tool’ and the project would benefit only a ‘select few.’

It recommended that competent experts perform another environmental assessment. The role of media in covering the issue was criticized as well.

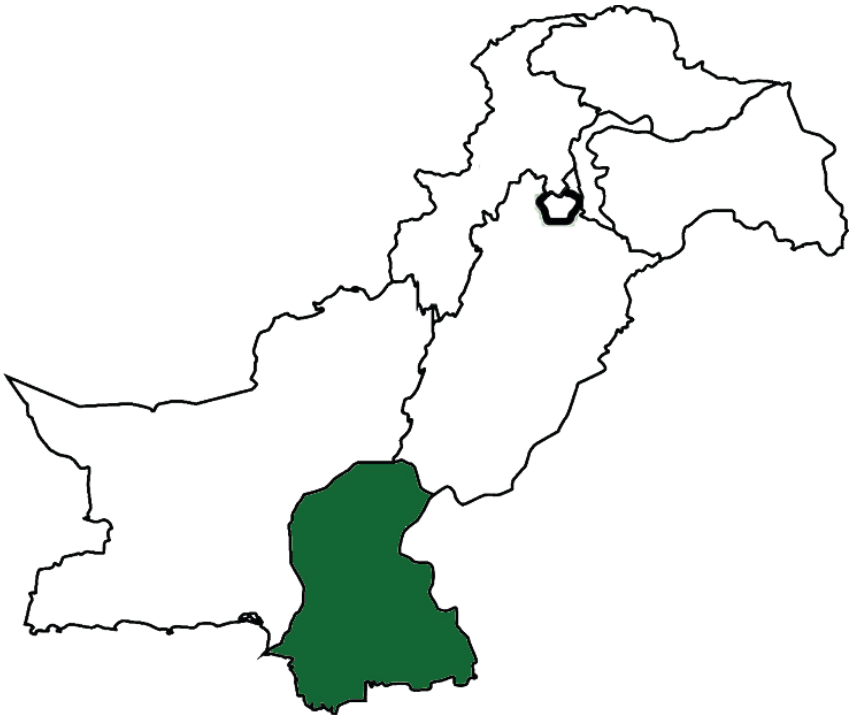
Citizenship

The issue of not registering nomadic communities as citizens of Pakistan persisted in 2021. Governments have refused to issue them national identity cards as they lack permanent addresses. Because their existence is not part of the National Database and Registration Authority records, they are denied jobs, education and health facilities including Covid-19 vaccine.

At a policy consultation organised by HRCF, participants examined the obstacles to citizenship for seasonal workers based in and around Lahore, many of whom hail from the nomadic or *pakhiwas* community.

It was found that a significant proportion of the *pakhiwas* community are unaware of the benefits of computerised national identity cards, including the fact that citizenship documents could make them eligible for public healthcare and social safety nets, such as the Benazir Income Support Programme.

SINDH







KEY TRENDS

- Following the orders of the Supreme Court to restore the local government system, the provincial assembly passed the Sindh Local Government Act 2021 on 11 December amid uproar from the opposition and widespread protests across Karachi that claimed that the already meagre powers of local bodies were being usurped.
- Enforced disappearance cases were reported from various parts of Sindh. At several hearings, strict orders were issued for the recovery of those who had been missing for years.
- Social media activist Nazim Jokhio was killed allegedly by politically influential people from the Pakistan People's Party after he posted a video about illegal hunting trips for Arab dignitaries.
- The minimum wage for unskilled workers was raised to PKR25,000 by the Sindh government after a year's lapse. This was challenged in the Sindh High Court by employers' organisations which rejected their plea. However, on appeal by the Employers Federation of Pakistan, the Supreme Court stayed the decision of the provincial government.
- At least 115 persons committed suicide in Tharparkar in 2021, of which 68 were women. The majority of cases belonged to the Hindu community.
- At Taxila's Gandhara Festival in October, Pakistani Buddhists pointed out how the state's exclusion of Buddhists in the census and educational and government job quotas had hindered their community's development. They also stated that there was no place of worship for them in Pakistan and that various Buddhist heritage sites lay neglected.
- The Sindh government reserved quotas for persons with disabilities (5 percent) and transgender persons (0.5 percent) in government jobs. It announced it would reserve 1 percent each for these groups in local governments.
- The Sindh government announced the closure of 4,901 non-viable schools in the province. The education department detected 1,459 ghost schools in Karachi, Badin, Dadu, Ghotki, Jacobabad, Qambar, Mirpurkhas, Jamshoro and Sanghar districts, which existed only in official files.



OVERVIEW

As Covid-19 variants kept emerging through the year, the provincial government initiated a more rigorous vaccination drive. The Sindh Telemedicine and Telehealth Act 2021 was also passed to improve access to healthcare.

The anti-encroachment drive continued with more vigour after the Supreme Court's order, leading to the demolition of two illegally built multi-storey buildings. Following this, the government hurriedly drafted an ordinance—the Sindh Commission for Regularisation of Construction Ordinance 2021—to protect other illegally constructed buildings from meeting the same fate. Transparency International-Pakistan termed this act tantamount to contempt of court.

The year saw the ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP) fighting battles on many turfs. While passing the controversial Sindh Local Government Act 2021, it failed to quell the ire of several political parties united in opposing it. This stirred up much unrest on the streets of Karachi.

Of the 29 bills passed in the assembly, a landmark bill was the Sindh Protection of Journalists and Other Media Practitioners 2021. Another important bill that did not receive much attention was the passage of the Sindh Water Management Ordinance 2018 Amendments Bill, aiming to increase the role of women in water resource management and irrigation system in the province.

Relations between the provincial and federal government remained tense. The former rejected the controversial Single National Curriculum (SNC) on the grounds that education was purely a provincial subject. It refused to include the Sehat Sahulat Card programme in its healthcare. The battle to take control over three major hospitals of Karachi continued. The federal government, through its Rotation Policy 2020, transferred many senior police officers from Sindh to other parts of the country which was not taken to kindly by the province.

The tragic murder of Nazim Jokhio, allegedly by two PPP legislators for posting a video on social media of illegal hunting of the houbara bustard by Arab dignitaries, showed how the rich and powerful can flout laws and get away with murder.



RULE OF LAW

Laws and law-making

The Sindh provincial assembly remained more active in law-making during 2021 compared to last year when the exercise had come to a virtual standstill due to Covid-19.

Of the 29 bills passed this year, the most momentous and controversial was the Sindh Local Government (Amendment) Act 2021 presented by the ruling PPP.

Passed at the tail end of the year, amid strong protest by the opposition, it was sent to the governor for assent, but he refused and sent it back for review to address the objections raised. However, the local government bill became law without the governor's signature.

The amendment removed the clauses to elect any person (and not just elected members) as the mayor, deputy mayor, chairperson or vice-chairperson.

The provincial assembly also amended the Sindh Solid Waste Management Bill 2021, which allowed the mayor to become co-chairperson of the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board along with the local government minister.

A sound piece of legislation for rural women came in the form of the Sindh Water Management (Amendment) Bill, giving them representation in water management for the first time in Sindh's history.

The Child Protection Authority Act, amended for a third time in the assembly, was passed along with another law to establish special courts for child protection.

To protect the rights of media workers, a landmark piece of legislation, the Sindh Protection of Journalists and Other Media Practitioners Bill 2021, was passed unanimously by the Sindh Assembly in May. The initiative was hailed both nationally and internationally by journalists' federations.

Other laws that were passed included a law to control narcotics, carrying a maximum punishment of death penalty; the Sindh Reproductive Healthcare Rights Act to promote reproductive rights in the province; the Sindh Prisons and Corrections Services Act to bring reforms in the management, control and security of prisons and correctional facilities as well as custody and welfare of prisoners; the Sindh Institute of Music and Performing Arts Act 2021; the Sindh Employees Social Security (Amendment) Act 2021 and the Sindh Seized and Freezed Facilities (Hospitals and Dispensaries) Act 2020.

Administration of justice

According to the Law and Justice Commission, the Sindh High Court (SHC) started the year with a pendency of 81,684 cases; by 31 December 2021, the balances of cases stood at 84,104.

A total of 34,065 new cases were instituted during the year and 31,750 cases disposed of. The District Judiciary Sindh began with a pendency of 115,815 cases; by the end of the year, the balance of cases stood at 117,790. A total of 346,109 new cases were instituted during the year and 344,701 cases disposed of.



ENFORCEMENT OF LAW

Law and order

Due to continuous hostility between the provincial government and the federal government, law and order remained compromised. The new Rotation Policy 2020, under which the federal government transferred many senior police officers across provinces, remained a thorn in the side of the Sindh government. A notification issued by the federal government in November – ordering the transfer of at least eight deputy inspector generals of police, deployed in Sindh for several years, to be posted for at least two years outside the province – was rejected by Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah. All efforts by the provincial government came to nought and the officers followed the federal government’s orders and reported to their new duty posts.

The table below gives the total number of crimes against persons registered in 2021:

<i>Nature of crime</i>	<i>Total cases</i>
Rape	217
Gang rape	13
Child rape	25
Honour crimes (<i>karo kari</i>)	120
Domestic violence	236
Acid attacks	9
Blasphemy	113
Police encounters	1645

Source: Sindh Police, in response to HRCP’s request for information

The Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) administrator and spokesperson for the Sindh government, Murtaza Wahab, admitted to a rise in street crimes in Karachi, blaming it on the worsening economic condition of the population. Karachi saw a 15 percent increase in street crime in 2021 compared to the previous year.

According to data published by the Citizens-Police Liaison Committee, the crime rate in Karachi increased in the past year with 55 kidnappings for ransom compared to 24 in 2020. Motorcycle snatching and theft increased by 86 percent and 34 percent respectively, car snatching and theft rose by 19 percent and 21 percent respectively, and mobile phone snatching increased by 18 percent compared to 2020. PTI parliamentarian Khurram Sher Zaman filed a petition in the SHC against increasing street crimes, blaming the Sindh government for failing to curb street crimes across the province.

As of the end of 2021, there were 113,684 personnel in the Sindh Police, of which 1,877 (1.65 percent) were women. Greater inclusion of women is needed to reflect a gender balance and tackle gender-based violence crimes more efficiently.

Extrajudicial killings

Extrajudicial killings followed the same pattern as last year, with law enforcement agencies picking up youth, mostly from Sindhi nationalist parties, and torturing them.

One such case was that of Irfan Jatoi, a student at Sindh University, Jamshoro, who was abducted by the police in February. The police claimed he was a ‘dangerous dacoit’. Jatoi was killed in an encounter in Sukkur after about a month. This triggered an outrage, with the opposition parties in the provincial assembly demanding a judicial probe into the matter.



Irfan Jatoi, a student at Sindh University, Jamshoro, was abducted by the police and killed in an encounter in Sukkur after about a month.

The Sindh inspector general of police, Mushtaq Ahmed Mahar, ordered an inquiry into the killing. The brother of the deceased had filed a petition for his recovery, but he was killed before the hearing. Jatoi’s father accused Hyderabad station house officer Nisar Shah of demanding up to PKR 2.5million for his release from the family.

The case was pending at Sukkur’s session court as the year drew to a close and the date for the next hearing was fixed for 29 January 2022.

Jails and prisoners

The table below gives Sindh's prison statistics for year 2021:

<i>Statistics</i>	<i>Number</i>
Total jails	27
Sanctioned capacity	13,538
Convicted	4,944
Under-trial	14,291
Male	19,820
Female	219
Juvenile	209

Source: Sindh Prison department, in response to HRCP's request for information.

The Sindh government announced the construction of three new jails in Benazirabad, Thatta and Malir district in Karachi, to accommodate up to 1,500 prisoners. In addition, it allocated PKR1,010 million for the construction of new jails in Tharparkar, Mithi, Umerkot, Kashmore and Kandhkot. Sindh also initiated a Covid-19 vaccination drive for every jail inmate (over the age of 50) in all 22 prisons in April 2021. An estimated 2,500 inmates were vaccinated along with the jail staff. In November, the Sindh Prisons Department, in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the US Mission to Pakistan, installed and trained staff in a Prison Management Information System, replacing the old-fashioned manual filing system to help improve the administrative efficiency of prisons across Sindh.

Enforced disappearances

Many incidents of missing persons were reported from different parts of Sindh throughout the year. According to the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances, there are 170 cases pending in Sindh till 31 December 2021. In 2021, the commission received 57 new cases in the province. At least 40 missing persons returned home in Sindh while the dead bodies of four other missing residents were traced in 2021. Hearing a petition on the enforced disappearance of a government employee, Mohammad Nadeem, who went missing from Karachi's Liaquatabad area on 24 February 2015, the SHC pointed out on 17 April 2021 that such abominable practices were prohibited under Pakistan's constitution.

Seengar Noonari, a labour and political leader belonging to the Awami Workers Party, was abducted from his home in Naseerabad town on the night of 26 June 2021, by unknown armed personnel, some of whom were in uniform. He was released after 35 days during which political workers and civil society organisations held protests across the province.



FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

Forced conversions continued to be reported from different parts of Sindh during 2021. A majority of those forcibly converted belonged to low-caste or scheduled-caste Hindus and Christians. The pattern is always similar. A girl from a Hindu family is abducted and a few days or weeks later, she appears before a court or informs the world through a video message that she has married a Muslim man out of love and converted to Islam. A certificate from a certain religious school or a cleric is shown as evidence indicating the conversion. Incidents of forced conversions routinely receive media attention, especially when the girl is underage. After the kidnapping, the parents manage to lodge a case with the police, but the latter often fail to recover the girl.

The federal government had drafted a bill which was shot down by the ministry of religious affairs and the parliamentary committee even before it could be presented to the parliament this year. HRCP, in a press statement, slammed the rejection, terming it 'indifference' towards religious minorities living in the country. The following 27 alleged forced conversion cases were reported in local newspapers *Pahnji* and *Kawish* in 2021:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Name of victim</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Name of accused</i>
16 February	Reena Meghwar	Badin	Qasim Khaskheli
10 March	Kavita alias Umm-e-Hina (underage)	Shikarpur	Mushtaq
1 April	Puja Meghwar alias Sumaira Shaikh	Hyderabad	Mehtab Khaskheli
3 April	Kanta alias Khadija (underage)	Badin	Unknown
25 April	Rekha alias Saima	Sanghar	Hanif Bozdar
25 April	Sanju Bheel alias Razia	Khairpur	Shahbaz Thebo
27 April	Soomri Bheel alias Khairan Shaikh	Not known	Nawaz Ali Junejo
17 May	Haryan Bheel alias Aneela Shaikh	Mirpurkhas	Ismail Lanjwani
19 May	Shanza Mashi alias Fatima (underage)	Sukkur	Hasnian Rajput
20 May	Phuli Bheel (underage)	Mirpurkhas	Majnun Arain
20 May	Luni Bheel	Mirpurkhas	Not available

<i>Date</i>	<i>Name of victim</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Name of accused</i>
31 May	Kaveeta Meghwar alias Shehnaz Shaikh	Tharparkar	Murad s/o Dino Halo
13 June	Miran Kolhi alias Fatima	Umerkot	Mithu Solangi
16 June	Aneeka alias Parveen Shaikh (underage)	Umerkot	Zameer Baloch
17 June	Arshi Kumari alias Bakhtawar Shaikh	Ghotki	Babar Mirani
19 June	Kamla Meghwar (underage)	Umerkot	Ghulam Rasool Solangi
23 June	Kaleema alias Aysha Shaikh	Jacobabad	Ahsan Barro
6 July	Kaweeta alias Mehnaz	Not known	Javaid Khaskheli
3 August	Shahbana Meghwar alias Khalida	Ghotki	Safeer Kalor
5 August	Noori Gargolo alias Aysha	Sanghar	Dilshair Bhanejo
13 August	Chatri Bheel alias Khadija Shaikh	Tharparkar	Sohbat Rind
13 August	Soomri alias Bakhtawar	Tharparkar	Muhammad Baqa Rahmoon
6 September	Sonika alias Hania Shaikh	Larkana	Zeeshan Laghari
12 September	Gagashna Sami alias Khadija	Badin	Yar Muhammad Nizamani
27 September	Reshma Kolhi alias Aysha (underage)	Mirpurkhas	Imran Rajput
3 October	Walia Urf Marvi Bheel	Sanghar	Nawaz Ali Machhi
8 October	Sindhu Walas alias Muskan Fatima	Ghotki	Suhail Akhtar Malik

In most cases, these incidents were later deemed to be voluntary conversions and marriages. At least three cases were proven to be forced conversions, and in at least seven cases, the victims were underage. In March this year, a minor Hindu girl, Kavita, was kidnapped from her home in Tangwani *taluka* (administrative sub-division) in Kashmore district. She was converted by Pir Abdul Khaliq, the caretaker of Khanqah-i-Aalia Qadria Bharchundi Sharif in Daharki, in Ghotki district. When she was produced by the police in a local court, she sought protection from her parents, stating that she had converted to Islam and married one of her alleged kidnappers, Mushtaq. The girl's father,

Takhtmal, who had earlier lodged a first information report (FIR) of his daughter's kidnapping, had nominated Mushtaq and four others as suspects. Things took a turn for the worse when the medical examination proved that she was less than 18 years of age. She was sent to a shelter run by the Child Protection Unit in Karachi and not allowed to meet her parents. Being underage, the marriage was deemed invalid and a cognisable crime filed under the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act 2013.

In yet another case, a video appeared in July on social media showing a young woman crying for help. After the video went viral, the provincial government asked the area police to investigate. The police recorded the statement of 20-year-old Reena Meghwar in the presence of her husband Qasim Khaskheli, in which she stated the video was fake but admitted to having converted. A few days later, she again appeared in another video seeking help to escape from her husband, who, she alleged, was torturing her. The matter was taken to the local court where the girl said she wanted to be reunited with her parents. The court allowed Reena to go back to her parents three months after she was abducted and forcibly converted and married. Her husband Khaskheli and the other three men were arrested. A Hindu girl from Larkana, identified as Sonika, daughter of Namo Mal Chawla, suddenly went missing in the first week of September, appearing four days later in a video uploaded on social media and disclosing that she had contracted marriage with a Muslim man, Zeeshan Ali, after converting to Islam. Her father registered a formal complaint of abduction, naming the husband as primary suspect along with others. The police took the husband's brother into custody when they could not find Zeeshan Ali. Following her brother-in-law's arrest, Sonika appeared on social media to demand his release, sharing legal documents of her marriage and faith conversion, stating that she was an adult and had embraced Islam of her free will.

2021 brought more visibility to the neglected Buddhist community in Sindh. There is a widely held perception that there are no Buddhists in Pakistan. In October, the Punjab government, in collaboration with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), invited two brothers Juman Bheel and Munawar Lal from Sindh to a Gandhara festival in Taxila to represent their community and share its grievances. It was revealed that instead of counting them as Buddhists, the census brackets their community as 'Others' and puts them in the list of scheduled castes since a majority of them are Bheel. There is a certain quota fixed for Hindus, Christians and other religious minorities in educational institutions and government jobs, but there is nothing for Buddhists, said Juman Bheel, a retired primary school teacher in Mehrabpur town of Naushehro Feroz district in Sindh. A large number of Buddhist stupas are scattered in different parts of Sindh and other parts of the country but are decaying due to neglect by the archaeology department and the local population. The Kirthar Hill range, which borders Sindh and Balochistan, has some Buddha inscriptions. The stupa of Moenjodaro is famous but there are numerous stupas in Dadu, Nawabshah, Mirpurkhas and other areas of Sindh. The

community complained that they did not have a worship place anywhere in Pakistan to offer their prayers. 'We have made worship places in our own homes,' said Juman Bheel.

An attack on Narainpura Temple in Ranchore Lane area of Karachi was reported to the local police on 21 December. The culprit, 22-year-old Waleed, was caught and handed over to the police.

Freedom of expression

As elsewhere in the country, the media in Sindh faced growing censorship, attacks and harassment. Ajay Lalwani, a reporter from Royal News TV, was gunned down in March by armed men in the Saleh Pat area of Sukkur while sitting inside a barbershop. He later succumbed to his injuries. The Sindh Journalists Council appealed to the chief minister and the inspector general of police to launch a credible investigation and apprehend those responsible. According to his colleagues, Lalwani was killed for reporting on the alleged abuse of power by a locally influential person. In March again, a reporter from Samaa TV, Sahil Jogi, was allegedly tortured by the police while covering the murder investigation of Sindh University student, Irfan Jatoi, in an alleged police encounter. The Sukkur Police registered cases against Sahil Jogi and other journalists under various criminal charges, including terrorism.

Nazim Jokhio, a social media activist from Malir, was killed in November after he posted a video about illegal hunting trips for Arab dignitaries. The building where he was tortured and killed was owned by PPP parliamentarians Jam Abdul Karim Bijar and Jam Awais. The accused have been booked for murder, but rights activists fear intentional delays in the investigation or an out-of-court settlement. The wife of the deceased, Shireen Jokhio, admitted that she had been offered money to withdraw the case.



Relatives of Nazim Jokhio, a social media activist from Malir, held a protest in Karachi.

Another senior journalist and columnist, Waris Raza, who has vigorously defended media freedom and missing persons online, was allegedly abducted from his residence in Karachi on 21 September, but was released by evening after his daughter, Laila Raza, tweeted that her father was abducted by 'law enforcement agencies'. The Karachi Union of Journalists and Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists condemned Raza's detention by law enforcers and demanded his immediate release. Two days after his release, journalists' unions held a demonstration outside the Karachi Registry of the Supreme Court, which was attended by Raza himself.

Another incident was the brutal attack on Ghulam Qadir Shar, a local journalist working for *Time News* and *Pahenji Akhbar*, allegedly by goons of a PPP leader, Kamal Uddin Shar, in Sanghar district. Shar had recently reported on a *jirga* (gathering of people to resolve disputes between two parties), declared illegal by the SHC since 2004, conducted by the politician. Although a case was registered, the police did not arrest the assailants. The incident was condemned by the International Federation of Journalists, which urged the government to hold the perpetrators accountable, ensure the safety of journalists, and uphold freedom of the press.

In July, Shikarpur police arrested Abb Tak News reporter Sultan Rind, a former president of Shikarpur Press Club, along with Waheed Brohi of Time News and Javed Rahojo of *Daily Sobh* after a case was registered against them by Javed Shaikh, personal assistant to the energy minister, Imtiaz Ahmed Shaikh. The three had highlighted the alleged use of substandard material in government projects.

Following a protest held by journalists and civil society activists, Rind was released by the police in July. In February, a remark was made against Sindh and Sindhis by TV anchor Irshad Bhatti in his programme *Khabarnaak*. Despite a clarification issued by the TV channel, protesters broke a walkthrough gate installed at the entrance of the building, as well as the main entrance door to the building of Geo News and Jang Media Group in Karachi and manhandled the employees of the media house.

The police arrested 13 suspects, produced them in a local anti-terrorism court the next day, who were then remanded for their alleged involvement in the attack.

Freedom of assembly

In December, outside the Karachi Press Club, the police baton-charged medics and took 23 others into custody, including women, to prevent them from marching towards the Chief Minister House. These young doctors and paramedics, appointed by the provincial government to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic, were protesting for regularisation of their jobs.

The Karachi Bachao Tehreek, along with several rights organisations, organised the People’s Climate March in December to demand climate justice, particularly in light of environmental disaster unfolding due to mega projects. The marchers were stopped by the police and the paramilitary forces from heading towards Bilawal House. The participants then staged a sit-in near Bilawal Chowrangi to register their protest against the police action.

In November, the police and the Rangers baton-charged and fired tear gas shells on residents and builders protesting outside Karachi’s Nasla Tower that was being demolished under the Supreme Court’s orders as it had been constructed on encroached land. The Association of Builders and Developers of Pakistan had organised this demonstration in support of the owners of the building.

Another noteworthy protest was the Bengali community’s rally outside Karachi Press Club in October demanding that they be issued CNICs to access jobs and public facilities, be protected from harassment, counted in the census and have their National Alien Registration Authority cards abolished.

Freedom of association

In November, the police in Jamshoro booked 21 students from Sindh University, along with over a dozen suspects, on charges of sedition. The university administration had issued notices to them for violating the code of conduct agreed upon for holding Sindh Culture Day, an event held a week earlier, on 18 November. The suspects had allegedly raised anti-state slogans at the instigation of proscribed Jeay Sindh Muttahida Mahaz (JSMM) leader Shafi Burfat.

In November 2021, the Progressive Students Collective organised the Students’ Solidarity March in Karachi. Their demands included the restoration of student unions, student representation in decision-making, action against recent fee hikes in several public sector institutions and increasing the education budget to at least 5 percent of GDP.



DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT

Political participation

The Sindh Action Committee, an alliance of nationalist parties and activists of the province, organised a sit-in outside Bahria Town Karachi on 6 June, protesting evictions of indigenous people and demolition of their homes in a ploy to expand the housing scheme. Starting peacefully, some miscreants vandalised and torched the main gate, creating panic when the police fired shells of teargas to disperse the protesting activists. The FIR filed by the Bahria Town security manager against an estimated 10,000 people stated the protesters had entered the commercial area, ransacked two shops, three ATMs, looted the money and torched five restaurants in Tauheed Plaza.



Miscreants vandalised and torched the main gate of Bahria Town, Karachi creating panic when the police fired shells of teargas to disperse the protesting activists.

Hafeez Baloch, an activist of Sindh Indigenous Rights Alliance, said it was a plot to sabotage the protest. The Malir police also arrested over 140 political workers and leaders of the Sindh United Party, Jeay Sindh Mahaz, Jeay Sindh and Awami Tehreek and booked thousands of others after the registration of over 28 FIRs, some under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

Some 70 workers from banned nationalist parties, like the JSMM and the Jeay Sindh Qaumi Mahaz-Arisar, announced they were quitting their political affiliation and joining national politics.

Local government

Since the dissolution of the four-year term of the local government in Sindh in August 2020, the provincial government was unable to announce fresh elections to form a new local government and nominated political persons or bureaucrats as administrators. In Karachi, the commissioner was given charge of the KMC, followed next by appointing Murtaza Wahab, a PPP stalwart, as its administrator.

In the meantime, under strict orders from the Supreme Court, the provincial government amended the Sindh local government law on 12 December 2021, stirring up a new controversy among parties in the opposition which opposed the law tooth and nail.

Besides parliamentary parties like MQM-P, PTI and Grand Democratic Alliance, key political parties that were not in the parliament, such as the Jamaat-e-Islami and Pak Sarzameen Party (PSP), protested on Karachi's streets against the new local government law, which they said was against the autonomy of local governments. They blamed the provincial government for usurping the local governments' powers in subjects like education and health. The PSP filed a complaint against the law in the SHC.

Major health facilities like the Karachi Medical and Dental College, the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital, Sobhraj Hospital, the Leprosy Centre and Sarfraz Rafiqi Centre would no longer be part of the KMC, according to the new local government law. Instead, these hospitals would come under the Sindh government. Similarly, the schools being run by the municipal corporations of Karachi, Hyderabad and Sukkur, would be controlled by the provincial government.

The Sindh government had already taken over many functions of the local governments during the previous tenure, which included the Solid Waste Management Board (renamed the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board) and the Karachi Building Control Authority, which were previously under Karachi's city district government during General Pervez Musharraf's tenure.

The new local government law has restored the Musharraf era governance system, replacing the district municipal corporations and district councils with 18 towns. Some other important functions of the local government like the issuance of birth and death registration certificates have also been taken over by the provincial government.

Jamaat-e-Islami, which has been out of the local government in Sindh since 2006, vehemently opposed the new law. It went to the extent of demanding an amendment in the constitution to insert a chapter for the election process and working of local governments. It has also demanded devolving the National Finance Commission award to the district level.

Although no date for elections of the local governments in Sindh has been announced, the election commission is in the process of demarcation of local government limits.

Shrinking space for civil society organisations

Although the provincial assembly passed the Sindh Charity Registration and Regulation Act 2019, the government failed to bring welfare organisations within the ambit of the commission. The registration period which expired on 11 February this year, was extended to 10 April, then 10 June and finally to 10 September.

Resistance by civil society organisations to this new legislation came up because they are already registered with either the provincial social welfare department or Registrar of Societies (under the Societies Act) or with the federal Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan as not-for-profit companies. The Trust Act 1882 also registers them. Their main objection was that the government wanted to create impediments through the new legislation.

Those non-government organisations (NGOs) receiving foreign funds from donors were asked to sign a memorandum of understanding with the federal Economic Affairs Division under the NGOs Policy 2013.

In November, the provincial assembly was informed by the social welfare ministry that the registration of around 7,000 of the over 12,000 registered NGOs, has been rescinded because they had failed to fulfil the criteria set for the purpose in the relevant government rules.



RIGHTS OF THE DISADVANTAGED

Women

Domestic violence continued unabated in 2021. In July, Quratul Ain Baloch, a mother of four, was tortured for hours and brutally murdered by her husband Umar Khalid, in Hyderabad. The same month, Fozia Buradi was allegedly killed by her brother-in-law Hakim Buradi. The corpse was buried to hide his crime. Her husband lodged a complaint and the accused was apprehended; he later confessed to his crime. In October, Roshan Mahboob, an NGO activist in Ranipur in Khairpur district, was allegedly shot dead by Syed Peer Mashooq Shah, belonging to Pakistan Muslim League (Functional).

Seven accused were also named in the FIR registered by her stepson, Aqil Mahboob, who said his mother was killed over a piece of land donated for her NGO, Roshan Sahara Foundation in the village of Moosa Rajper. HRCP's media monitoring recorded at least three cases of harassment, 42 cases of rape and 11 cases of gang rape against women in Sindh (as well as 43 cases of rape and 21 cases of gang rape against men).

Transgender persons

The transgender community continues to be marginalised both socially and economically in Pakistani society, but now it faces additional harassment online. According to the Gender Interactive Alliance, more than 200 threatening video and audio messages were received in 2021 in Karachi alone, creating a sense of fear and insecurity among transgender people in the city. In March, a transgender person was attacked and tortured in her home in the Aziz Bhatti area in Karachi. Although an FIR of the incident was registered with the police the same day, the accused was arrested after three-and-a-half months.

In December, transgender rights activist Rana, along with representatives of other civil society organisations, held a press conference at the Karachi Press Club, highlighting the increase in violence towards the transgender community and ensuing fear among the community. She said that at least four transgender people had died in Karachi within a month and provided details of each one. While two were murdered, the other two had died because of the transphobic attitude of the medical personnel, she said.

Among them was Toffee, 19, living with HIV, who was refused treatment and therefore could not survive. Rights activists condemned the systematic increase in violence and discrimination against the community and urged the government to implement all obligations under the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2018, including the establishment of protection centres and safe houses. They further

demanding that the provincial bill proposed by the *khawaja sira* community be passed in the Sindh assembly without further delay. In November, at least 25 transgender persons announced they were joining the PPP. Senior party leaders, including Nisar Khuhro and Saeed Ghani, were present during the press conference organised by the community to announce the news.

An amendment to the Sindh Services Act 1973 has resulted in a 0.5 percent quota in jobs being earmarked for the community. The draft, approved by the cabinet, is ready to be presented in the assembly. With 41,000 vacancies in various Sindh government departments, around 206 jobs may be reserved exclusively for them. In an important step, the provincial government announced it would reserve one seat each for transgender persons and persons living with disabilities in every local council of the province.

Children

In April, the Sindh Assembly passed the Child Protection Authority Amendment Act 2021, and PPP MPA Shamim Mumtaz was nominated as its acting chairperson. After the latest amendments, the police have been authorised to lodge cases in order to protect children who fall prey to different kinds of violence, the failure of which will result in punishment against the cops. HRCP's media monitoring also recorded at least two instances of child marriage in Sindh.

Labour

Neither the provincial nor the federal government attempted to increase the wages of unskilled workers in 2020. However, in June 2021, just hours before the budget was introduced in the Sindh Assembly, the Sindh government announced a 20 percent increase in government employees' salaries and raised the minimum wages for unskilled workers from PKR17,500 to PKR25,000 a month. This was the biggest increase ever made by Sindh, even higher than other provinces. Labour leaders in Sindh have been demanding an increase in wages due to the high rate of inflation and increased food prices.

The Karachi-based Employers Federation of Pakistan challenged the notification in the SHC, which upheld the government's decision. However, the federation has taken it to the Supreme Court which, for now, has suspended the provincial government's notification. Accidents at workplaces continued as laws and regulations on health and safety in the workplace were flouted.

In August, at least 16 workers lost their lives when a fire broke out at an industrial unit of BM Luggage in Karachi's Mehran Town, which was built in a residential colony for overseas Pakistanis and developed by the Karachi Development Authority (KDA). Besides factory owners and



At least 16 workers lost their lives when a fire broke out at an industrial unit of BM Luggage in Karachi's Mehran Town.

landowners, the police registered cases against officials of government departments, including the Sindh Building Control Authority, the KDA, the KMC and the civil defence department. Although the provincial assembly passed the Sindh Home-Based Workers Act 2018, no measures were taken to implement the law.

In November, the provincial Labour and Human Resource Department, signed an MOU with the Home-Based Women Workers Federation to register home-based workers in Sindh so they could avail social security benefits, marriage and death grants from the workers' welfare fund, as well as unionise for collective bargaining.

Those working in the agriculture sector did not fare any better, although they were promised a PKR3 billion subsidy on fertilisers for small farmers during the financial year 2021/22 after issuance of the People's Hari Card. Despite acute shortage of fertilisers in the country during winter, farmers were able to get supplies from designated dealers. According to the Hari Welfare Association, agriculture and brick kiln workers received wages of between PKR6,000 and PKR7000 per month.

It also reported that about 1,451 bonded workers were released from various farms through court orders in different districts of Sindh from January to September 2021. Out of those released, there were 318 men, 436 women and 617 children. For the first time since the passage of the Sindh Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 2015, under which the provincial government was supposed to establish district vigilance committees in each district, 14 out of 30 districts finally formed these bodies in 2021.

Fisherfolk continue to languish in Indian jails after crossing over

maritime borders. The Sindh government's Fishermen's Cooperative Society stated in 2021 that they were taking measures to resolve this issue, although it takes years to prove that arrested fisherfolk in Indian prisoners are Pakistani due to the slow responses of the Foreign Office and the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi, in stark contrast to the Indian High Commission's support to Indian fisherfolk arrested by the Pakistani Maritime Security Agency.

The elderly

Although Sindh was the first province in Pakistan to pass the Sindh Senior Citizens Welfare Act in 2014, the implementation was delayed until 2021, when the government finally formulated the rules for its implementation.

However, despite frequent reminders, the government failed to issue the much-trumpeted Senior Citizen Azadi Card for those aged 60 and above this year. The law stipulates the setting up of welfare committees for senior citizens and establishment of old-age homes at the district level. Cardholders could get a 25 percent discount on healthcare at private hospitals and avail concessional fares for trains and buses.

However, it has now been decided that only those senior citizens who are not drawing pensions can avail this facility. In addition, the provincial government has reserved a fund of PKR500 million for their welfare.



Despite frequent reminders, the government failed to issue the much-trumpeted Senior Citizen Azadi Card for those aged 60 and above this year.

People living with disabilities

The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities was set up after the passage of the Sindh Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act 2018. This act was an amendment of the Sindh Differently Abled Persons Act 2014, and the purpose was to increase the employment quota from 2 to 5 percent. As part of its tasks, the department continued to carry out its data collection on persons living with disabilities (PLWDs) (245,000 people have been registered) to ascertain their number in the province. It provided jobs to 46 PLWDs and opened a rehabilitation centre in Sujawal. Currently there are 18 rehabilitation centres for PLWDs, employing 247 against the 274 sanctioned posts.

In addition, 27 training courses were being offered to the blind and deaf in 64 special education centres across Sindh in 2021. The courses included knitting, music, call-centre training, salesmanship, PABX board operation, packing, stitching, candle-making, welding, tailoring, auto mechanic, electric work and embroidery. Their children are given free pick-and-drop services, uniforms, shoes, books and a PKR2,000 stipend each.

ConnectHear, a start-up led by people working for sign language accessibility and deaf inclusion in Pakistan, launched an online sign language interpretation app on 3 December, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, in a ceremony organised by the provincial Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities at the Chief Minister House, where attendees were told that 3,000 persons were already using it.

Refugees

After the Taliban took over Kabul on 15 August, Pakistan expected a renewed influx of the Afghan refugees. With approximately 63,000 registered Afghan refugees in Sindh, a majority of whom have settled in Sohrab Goth in Karachi and adjacent areas, legislators expressed their concern as to how well-equipped the provincial government was to control the spread of polio or coronavirus in the province in case more Afghan refugees reached Sindh. Conversely, there were questions by opposition legislators about how they would be accommodated in refugee camps.

The energy minister, Imtiaz Ahmed Shaikh, responding on behalf of the chief minister, said that new refugees would be provided shelter in camps on Sindh's borders on humanitarian grounds and, from there, would be sent back to their country.



SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

Health

A shocking 115 persons are reported to have committed suicide in Tharparkar in 2021, of which 68 were women. The highest number of 32 was reported from Nagarparkar followed by 26 in Islamkot, 21 in Chhachhro, 19 in Mithi, eight in Daheli, seven in Diplo and two in Kaloi. Of the total, 99 belonged to the Hindu community. A study conducted by the Sindh Mental Health Authority in 2021 revealed that 24 percent of the suicide victims already suffered from different types of mental illnesses. It urged the provincial government to table the Suicide Prevention Act in Sindh, recommending the abolition of Section 325 of the Pakistan Penal Code to decriminalise suicide.

In November, fourth-year medical student Nosheen Kazmi was found dead in her hostel room at Larkana's SMBBMU. Initial police investigations termed it a suicide, but her family as well as student activists contested this claim since the circumstances of her death was suspiciously similar to that of medical student Nimarta Kumari's death in 2019. The Sindh health minister then ordered a further investigation into the student's death. The Sindh government announced a 29.49 percent increase in budget allocation for health in the next fiscal year, from PKR132.884 billion to PKR172 billion, in which continued financial support for hospitals such as the PPHI Sindh, SIUT and Indus Hospital Karachi were accounted for. However, the battle over who controls Karachi's three major hospitals between the Sindh and federal governments continued.

Earlier in the year, the federal government announced it had already started the process of taking over three major Karachi hospitals—the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre, the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases and the National Institute of Child Health—and was forming an independent board of governors under the Medical Teaching Ordinance. As of the end of the year, these three health institutions were under control of the Sindh government. Sindh's public healthcare sector continued to suffer from a severe shortage of paramedics when it needed them most. With a population-to-nurse ratio of 10,000 to 50, according to the World Health Organization, Sindh's population of 55 million should ideally have at least 260,000 nurses to support the overall healthcare system.

However, of the 10,000 needed, according to Young Nurses Association of Sindh, only 4,000 slots were filled across hospitals in Sindh, despite the fact that the province has 19 nursing colleges. According to the Sindh Health Department's focal person for nursing, Khairul Nisa Khan, there was an urgent need for at least 8,960 general nurses for government hospitals, 2,000 for intensive care units and 100 nurses for high-dependency units. In October, the Sindh Assembly's standing committee on health approved the draft Sindh Telemedicine and TeleHealth Bill

2021. Once passed, registered medical practitioners will be able to provide health services remotely. It is hoped this will benefit female doctors who are unable to practice in person for personal reasons.

Sindh remains the only province which has opted out of this health insurance programme, which, many say, is more because of political differences than the idea itself of free access to health. Of an estimated 200,000 people living with HIV and AIDS in Pakistan, about 86,000 are in Sindh alone. What is alarming, however, is that 39,000 are spreading the infection unwittingly by transmitting the viral disease without their family members and others knowing. These patients have little understanding of the magnitude of the problem, say health experts.

Education

With 6.5 million children (between the ages of five and 16) out of school in Sindh, 2021 was a disappointing year even for those enrolled. Their entire academic year lasted just 98 days, largely owing to the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, even after two years, the appointment of a permanent vice chancellor for the University of Karachi could not take place and several important positions in the school education and literacy department, and those in the seven educational boards, remained vacant. While closing down 4,901 non-viable schools, the Sindh government initiated the gargantuan process of hiring up to 46,549 teachers across the province. Regrettably, of the PKR26 billion set aside for education projects by the department, only PKR7.59 billion was released, of which only PKR3.24 billion was used during 2021. The government also declined to adopt the Single National Curriculum saying it was a provincial subject after the 18th Amendment and that it had already framed its own curriculum.

Differences between the Sindh and federal government arose with regard to the Pakistan Medical Commission policy when the former decided to lower the required passing percentage for the Medical and Dental College Admission Test in 2021 from 65 percent to 50 percent to qualify for admission to colleges and universities for the 2021/22 session. According to health minister of Sindh, with the pass percentage kept at 60 percent in 2020, 8,287 students in Sindh qualified in the examination. Of these 2,900 got admission in the public sector and 800 in private colleges. The remaining 4,587 could not join the medical college as they were unable to afford the fee, leaving about 1,800 seats vacant. In a positive development, the health department vaccinated 1.4 million students enrolled in grades 9 to 12 against Covid-19.

Housing and public amenities

The anti-encroachment drive that led to the razing of hundreds of homes along three major *nullahs* (storm drains), namely the Manzoor Colony nullah, the Gujjar nullah and the Orangi nullah, initiated after the

Supreme Court's orders, picked up pace in 2021, reinforcing the opinion held by many urban experts that these decisions reeked of an anti-poor bias. According to a survey by the NED's Infrastructure and Urban Development Department, more than 5,000 concrete structures had been built along the storm water drains in the city with leases provided by the city government. Meanwhile, the government announced the possible relocation of displaced families to low-cost housing units in Scheme 42 and Taiser Town.

The Karachi Bachao Tehreek, a movement of demolition-affected people, rejecting the government survey carried out through drones, said it had failed to calculate the human cost. Moreover, people had yet to be compensated. In addition, nearly 70,000 homes were bulldozed but the government figure showed a mere 435. As part of the anti-encroachment drive, the apex court also ordered the demolition of two major multistory residential buildings, Nasla Towers and the under-construction Tejori Heights, in Karachi, which was carried through.

In defiance, the Sindh government hurriedly drafted an ordinance, the Sindh Commission for Regularisation of Construction Ordinance 2021, to protect illegally built buildings from meeting the same fate and forwarded it to the governor for his assent after getting it passed in the assembly. Transparency International-Pakistan, terming this contempt of court, said it could be struck down.

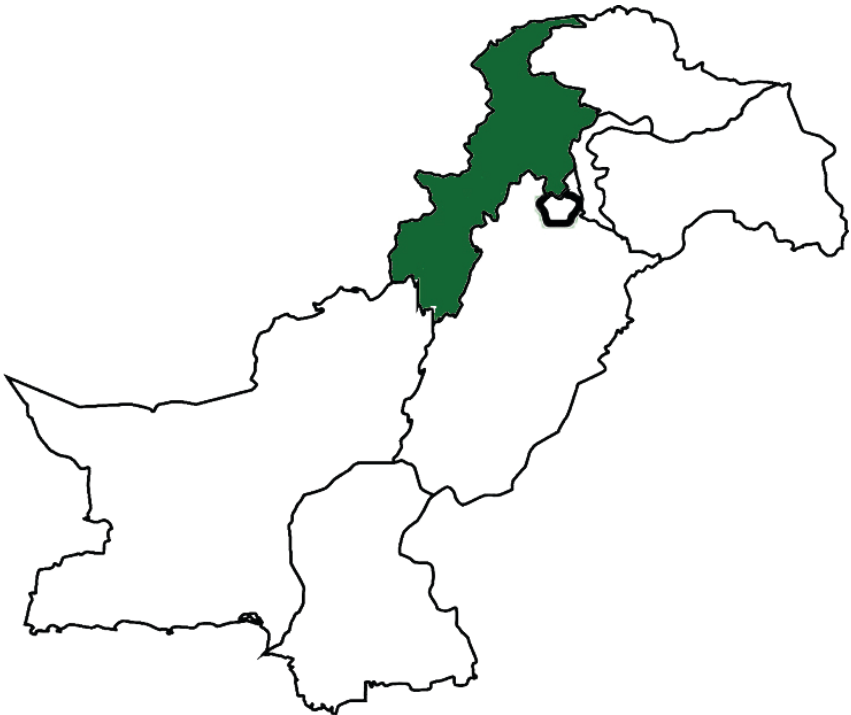
Environment

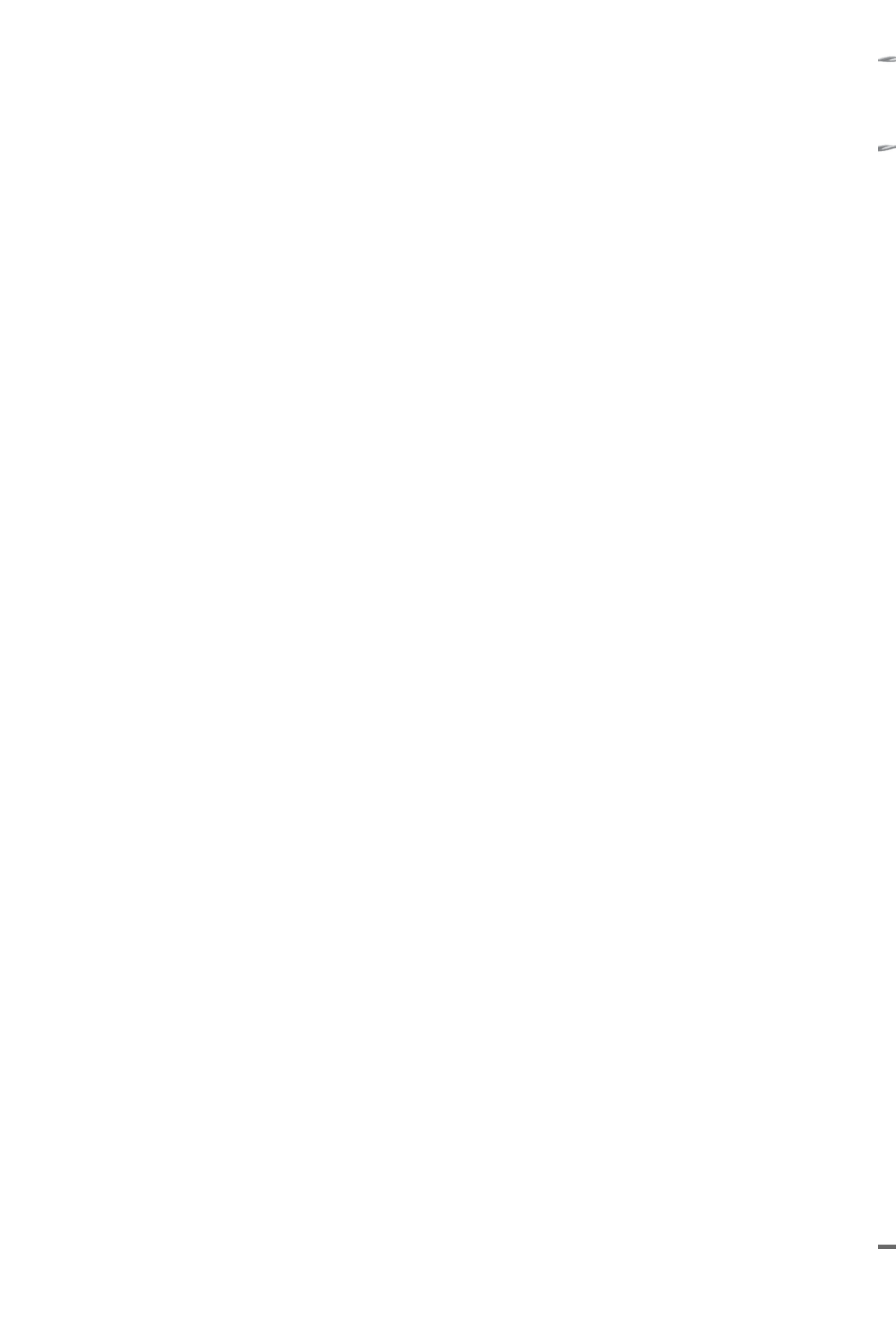
Jacobabad became the world's hottest place after it crossed the deadly threshold of 52 degrees centigrade. Temperatures in Karachi also recorded the highest values in 74 years. The city was nearly in the eye of storm with four cyclones Tauktae (May) Yaas (August), Gulab (September) and Shaheen (in October) in 2021.

The federal government's decision to commercially develop Bundal and Buddo islands, after promulgating an ordinance to establish the Pakistan Island Development Authority (PIDA) in August 2020, was vehemently opposed by the provincial government in 2021, which called the move an attempt to 'occupy' provincial resources.

A resistance movement by local communities and fisherfolk against PIDA in November and October 2020 was supported by environmentalists in 2021 who stated that nearly a third of Karachi's 73,380 hectares of green cover was preserved by the mangroves on these islands. The islands are also home to a rich ecosystem of various marine species and the sand banks protect the Port Qasim channel entrance. Development projects in these islands would have an extremely harmful impact on the environment. Multiple petitions have been filed in the SHC to challenge PIDA.

KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA







KEY TRENDS

- Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) held the much-awaited local government elections on 19 December 2021, in 63 tehsils of 17 districts to elect candidates for more than 14,000 general and reserved seats, plus four city mayors and 63 tehsil chairpersons.
- A total of 181,402 persons tested positive for Covid-19 infections in KP during 2021 against 58,701 in 2020. Of these 5,930 died against 1,649 deaths recorded in 2020. A total of 174,897 infected persons recovered in the province from infections during 2021 against 53,708 recoveries recorded in 2020.
- A total of 39 laws were passed by the KP Assembly in 2021 (compared to 50 in 2020) of which at least five were directly related to human rights, including protection for women against domestic violence, protection for witnesses, protection against exploitation for domestic workers, improved conditions for probation and parole of the accused and fairer retirement age and pension eligibility for civil servants.
- By 30 November 2021, a total of 44,496 cases were pending adjudication in the Peshawar High Court. These were 41,041 on 1 January 2021. A total of 21,884 new cases were registered in this period while 18,432 cases were disposed of. The district judiciary in KP had pending with it 257,206 cases on 30 November 2021. The number was 230,869 on 1 January 2021.
- Over 100 persons died in target killings, military operations and various other incidents of high-degree violence. Those killed included citizens including women and members of religious minorities, politicians, security personnel and militants.



OVERVIEW

Introduction

The brightest spot in 2021 for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) was the forward movement on inclusive participatory politics in the shape of the first phase of local elections in 17 of the province's 35 districts. The most negative development was the grim impact of Covid pandemic on the health of its citizens.

Three times more people were infected and three times more deaths recorded in KP in 2021 than in the preceding year. In addition to the health sector, this negatively impacted both the state of education and the economy, keeping governance under pressure.



RULE OF LAW

Laws and law-making

The KP government passed a total of 39 laws in the KP Assembly in 2021 of which at least five were directly related to human rights, including protection for women against domestic violence, protection for witnesses, protection against exploitation for domestic workers, improved conditions for probation and parole of the accused and fairer retirement age and pension eligibility for civil servants. Legislations directly related to human rights included:

- The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Witness Protection Act 2021
- The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Home Based Workers (Welfare and Protection) Act 2021
- The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Probation and Parole Act 2021
- The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Domestic Violence Against Women (Prevention and Protection) Act 2021
- The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Civil Servants (Amendment) Act 2021

The Witness Protection Act, passed in April, aims to provide protection to witnesses in criminal cases including those of terrorism and heinous offences. Under this law, the government will establish a witness protection board and allow witnesses to invoke protection including complete anonymity and online cross-examination.

The law on protection of women against domestic violence, passed in January, makes abuse of women by family members an offence punishable with five-year imprisonment and fine. It seeks to prosecute domestic violence against women including physical, psychological and economic abuse. The law provides for establishment of district protection committee in every district.

The law on civil servants, passed in April, reversed a three-year increase in the retirement age of provincial government employees. The retirement age was increased to 63 years in 2020 to save PKR20 billion on the annual pension bill. This was declared unconstitutional by the Peshawar High Court (PHC). The Supreme Court upheld the verdict when challenged by the provincial government.

Administration of justice

The pendency of cases in KP courts remained high in 2021, as in previous years. By 30 November 2021, a total of 44,496 cases were pending adjudication in the PHC. These were 41,041 on 1 January 2021. A total of 21,884 new cases were registered in the PHC between January and

November 2021 while 18,432 cases were disposed of in the same period. The district judiciary in KP had pending with it 257,206 cases on 30 November 2021. The number was 230,869 on 1 January 2021. During the period January to November 2021, the district judiciary disposed of 439,689 cases while 463,806 new cases were registered in the same period. In April, the PHC launched a five-year policy for the speedy disposal of cases to clear the persistent backlog. A District Judiciary Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Policy 2020–25 was formulated for reducing the backlog of cases every year and virtual elimination by 2025.

Throughout the year, KP struggled to fill vacancies of judges to deal with the mounting case backlog. In May, a meeting of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan headed by the chief justice of Pakistan postponed the appointment of five additional judges to the PHC. This came after the PHC chief justice withdrew the names of five district judges he had earlier proposed for elevation when some members of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan disapproved of the nominees.

At the time, 14 of the sanctioned strength of 20 judges were serving in PHC. The district judiciary is short of 83 civil judges-cum-judicial magistrates and 24 additional district and sessions judges. Several key cases relating to military trial, bail for activists and equity in development shone a light on the administration of justice in KP in 2021. Some significant cases included the following:

Idris Khattak case. In December, a military court convicted rights and political activist Idris Khattak of alleged espionage, sentencing him to 14 years of rigorous imprisonment. A field general court martial declared Khattak 'guilty of espionage and leaking of sensitive information' to a foreign intelligence agency. He was tried under the Pakistan Army Act and Official Secrets Act 1923. Khattak had investigated enforced disappearances in the erstwhile tribal areas and Balochistan. He was travelling from Islamabad to Peshawar on 13 November 2019 when he was picked up intelligence operatives. The PHC had in January rejected an appeal by Khattak's brother against his military trial.

Death penalty in blasphemy cases. In response to a petition filed by a senior lawyer, the PHC in September directed the federal and KP governments to update it on efforts to amend the Pakistan Penal Code to prescribe the death sentence for the offence of blasphemy in line with the implementation of a judgment of the Federal Shariat Court delivered in 1990 that declared that life imprisonment for committing blasphemy was against Islamic injunctions.

Landmine victims seek justice. In October, the PHC disposed of a petition seeking the demining of the merged tribal districts and asking the authorities to address the reservations of residents about landmines. The petition, filed by a group of lawyers, stated that during 2019/20 at least 178 landmine explosions had taken place in South Waziristan alone, leaving 800 residents dead, 250 paralysed and 77 visually impaired.



ENFORCEMENT OF LAW

Law and order

Dozens of citizens, politicians, law enforcement personnel and militants were killed and many more hurt in various incidents of violence across KP during 2021. The table below gives the total number of crimes against persons registered in 2021:

<i>Nature of crime</i>	<i>Total cases</i>
Rape	370
Gang rape	0
Murder	303
Child rape	270
Honour killings	119
Acid attacks	3
Blasphemy	33
Police encounters	109

Source: KP Police, in response to HRCP's request for information.

Police personnel: As of the end of 2021, the number of police personnel in the KP police department were 123,578.

Policemen killed: At least 19 policemen were killed during 2021 while on duty in various districts of KP. At least ten of them were target killed by assailants, including six policemen escorting or guarding polio vaccination workers – two in Mardan and one each in Karak, Dera Ismail Khan, Peshawar and Kohat. Five policemen were killed in two separate attacks in Peshawar and Lakki Marwat when their police vans were attacked by unidentified gunmen with guns and bombs. Two policemen were killed in an IED blast in Bajaur, one on traffic duty in Peshawar and two in the city when they raided a house to arrest a proclaimed offender. None of the attackers was either identified or reported arrested.

Military personnel killed: At least 19 military personnel, including 15 army soldiers and four Frontier Constabulary (FC) soldiers were killed during 2021 while on duty in various KP districts. Seven army soldiers were killed in South Waziristan during a military operation against terrorists in September, five in North Waziristan including one during a military operation against terrorists, two in an IED blast and two in an attack by militants on their checkpost in North Waziristan. Two army soldiers were killed on the Bajaur border in August by firing from inside Afghanistan in August. Two FC soldiers were killed in an IED attack in Bajaur in October.

Politicians killed, injured or harassed: Unknown gunmen on

motorcycles shot dead local Awami National Party (ANP) leader Abdul Ghani Khan and injured two others, including his son, in an attack on his car in Bajaur in June. Bannu district president of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Malik Ishfaq Khan was gunned down by unidentified armed motorcyclists while he was sitting in a shop with a friend in October. Unidentified assailants shot dead Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Fazal) (JUI-F) leader and nominee for local government elections in Dera Ismail Khan, Muhammad Ilyas, in November. ANP legislator Shakeel Umarzai escaped an assassination attempt near Peshawar in January in an attack by unidentified gunmen on his car, but his driver was killed. Jammāt-e-Islami (JI) leader Khalilullah Jan and his son were shot by unidentified men in Bajaur June but escaped with injuries. In January in Mansehra, the police raided the house of JUI-F leader Mufti Kifayatullah to arrest him for criticising the military, but he was not at home. In July the KP government announced it was withdrawing police security from 29 politicians including former chief ministers, ministers and other politicians facing threats.

Militants/terrorists killed: At least 40 persons, described either as 'militants' or 'terrorists' by the authorities, were killed in KP in 2021 by security forces in 16 separate official raids or attacks. Of these, 37 were killed by military personnel and three by police. All 16 operations were described as intelligence-based operations. Of those killed, 16 were reported as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants including one Nooristan alias Hasan Baba, a 'high-value target' allegedly involved in the murder of over 50 troops over the years, and one Safi Ullah allegedly involved in the murders of three female NGO workers and two government engineers. At least 20 of the militants were killed in the district of North Waziristan, eight in South Waziristan, six in Dera Ismail Khan, two in Bajaur and one each in Lakki Marwat and Buner districts.

Murders and violence against officials and citizens: At least 19 professionals and citizens were killed in KP in target killings, including a judge of a Swat anti-terrorism court along with his wife, grandson and daughter-in-law, an Ahmadi homeopathic doctor and a Sikh homeopath in Peshawar, four women aid workers in North Waziristan, a young doctor in North Waziristan, a former head of a peace committee in Mohmand, a female teacher in Lower Dir, a youth in Peshawar and an eighth grader in Peshawar, a wheelchair-bound man in Charsadda, a social activist in Malakand, and a proclaimed offender in Kohat. Three young children were killed on the outskirts of Peshawar while playing with an explosive device. A grenade was hurled at a girls' school in North Waziristan, but no student was hurt. A group of about a dozen persons stormed the Oghi Civil Hospital in Mansehra smashing windows and doors and beating up doctors and other staff for carrying out the post-mortem of a boy, who had committed suicide, without his family's consent.

A mob set a police station in Charsadda on fire in November after officials refused to hand over a blasphemy accused arrested for allegedly

burning Quranic pages. The police arrested at least 194 Afghans in Peshawar in August on charges of rioting, damaging public property and shouting slogans against Pakistan while celebrating Afghan Independence Day.

Jails and prisoners

The continued difficult conditions and facilities for inmates continued to keep prisoners in KP jails miserable in 2021. The table below gives statistics on KP prisons for 2021:

<i>Statistics</i>	<i>Number</i>
Total jails	38
Sanctioned capacity	12,326
Convicted prisoners	2,655
Prisoners on death row	347
Under-trial	10,161
Male prisoners	12,837
Female prisoners	172
Juvenile prisoners	154

Source: KP Home and Tribal Affairs and KP Prisons Department, in response to HRCP's request for information.

Overcrowded prisons: During 2021, at least eight of the total 14 central district jails in KP housed more inmates than their sanctioned strength, the KP Assembly was informed in September. Overcrowded prisons included Peshawar (3,139 inmates against a sanctioned capacity of 2,820), Dera Ismail Khan (446 against 350), Bannu (999 against 690), Mardan (2,101 against 1,998), Kohat (665 against 170), Timergara (429 against 300), Lakki Marwat (283 against 96) and Swat (562 against 273).

Separate jails for women: The special assistant to the chief minister on prisons said in September that there were over 160 women prisoners in jails in the province of which 35 were convicted and the under trial. Admitting they suffered from insufficient facilities, he said, the government would establish separate jails for women as part of the jail reforms.

Doctors for inmates: The PHC chief justice in July directed the government to fill vacant posts of doctors in all provincial prisons and establish minor surgical units within them to handle medical emergencies.

Bail after eight years: In July, the PHC granted bail to a Christian inmate, Shakil Masih, who had been in jail for over eight years without trial as the records of his alleged crime and detention had gone missing from

Khyber. Masih was arrested in 2013 on charges of murder.

Enforced disappearances

The issue of missing persons continued to reverberate in KP during 2021. In September, a provincial assembly member from North Waziristan brought up the issue in the KP Assembly, saying that over 40 persons had gone missing in KP during 2021 but the government seemed curiously disinterested in investigating the disappearances.

In February, relatives at a press conference in Peshawar expressed concerns over the prolonged disappearance of their family members and demanded they be presented in courts for trial. Some, including women and children belonging to Swat, alleged that their relatives had been picked from homes and workplaces in 2009 but still not presented before any court. They lamented that the courts had ordered the release of 270 missing persons, but most had still not been freed.

In July, a public consultation with relatives of missing persons, politicians, lawyers and human rights defenders, organised in Peshawar by Defense of Human Rights, an advocacy group, demanded the government prioritise the recovery of missing persons and to put them on trial if charged. The meeting lamented there was no closure to an appeal lying before the Supreme Court by the KP government seeking an annulment of a verdict by the PHC declaring internment centres holding wanted people without trials as illegal and their shutdown.

In February, the ANP held province-wide protest rallies against enforced disappearances of people in KP, demanding the government take urgent action for their safe recovery. Rallies were held in Peshawar, Mardan, Charsadda, Buner and Nowshera.



FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

Freedom of movement

The Covid-19 pandemic remained a key cause of restrictions on freedom of movement for different durations in various regions of KP during 2021, which affected millions. In March, the authorities imposed ‘smart lockdowns’ in areas of Bajaur district for two weeks after detecting an upsurge in cases of Covid-19. In March, a ‘smart lockdown’ was imposed in four localities in Peshawar after a surge in positivity rates. In April, the government suspended intercity public transport for two days a week (Saturdays and Sundays) across KP for a month to help curb Covid-19.

In April, the authorities imposed a week-long total lockdown, except essential services, in Mardan district after the detection of hundreds of cases. In April, the army and police started joint patrolling in Peshawar to ensure implementation of standard operating procedures (SOPs) including unnecessary movement to prevent virus transmission. Over 300 persons were arrested and over 100 shops sealed for violating SOPs. In May, all business activities were banned and a complete travel ban was imposed across KP from 8 to 16 May, including Eid holidays, to counter virus spread.



In April the army and police started joint patrolling in Peshawar to ensure implementation of standard operating procedures.

In May, trade with Afghanistan through Torkham remained suspended for three days as Khugakhel tribesmen inside Pakistan blockaded the main road leading to the crossing, demanding jobs for their youth and a

share in profits from the customs terminal built on the lands they had sold. In May, the Pakistan government suspended all pedestrian movement from Afghanistan across the Torkham border in reciprocation of a similar restriction by the Ashraf Ghani government on pedestrians from Pakistan. The restriction remained in force for five months until October and affected hundreds of thousands of people on both sides with over 8,000 daily wagers and more than 3,000 drivers losing jobs on the Pakistani side alone.

Several protest demonstrations were held on both sides of the border against the curbs. In August, after the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, the new regime in Kabul closed the border crossings with Pakistan, leaving thousands of people from both sides stranded.

The restriction was lifted after a few weeks. In February, the administration imposed a curfew in Wana in South Waziristan to aid a search operation for the perpetrators of an attack on security forces in which five soldiers were killed. The curfew lasted two days. In June, the entry of several clerics into Khyber district was banned from surrounding regions to pre-empt sectarian hate speech and social disturbance.

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

There were some serious incidents in KP in 2021 related to freedom of religion and belief including blasphemy cases and forced conversions as well as court-related action against attackers of a temple.

Attack on a Hindu temple: In 2021, there was significant progress in a suo motu notice by the Supreme Court aimed at restorative justice in the case of an attack on a Hindu shrine in Karak district on the last day of 2020. The government in January arrested around 50 instigators of a mob of hundreds of people involved in the attack and registered various cases against them. As ordered by the court, the government rehabilitated and restored the shrine at a cost of PKR33 million. In October, the Supreme Court ordered the government to recover this amount from the attackers. Those arrested were charged with crimes including defiling place of worship, hurting religious sentiments, robbery, hurt, arson, mischief, assault and terrorism.

Blasphemy cases: At least five persons were charged with blasphemy in KP during 2021 and in two cases the accusations led to violent mob acts. In November, a mob attacked and set on fire a police station in Charsadda demanding that a man arrested for allegedly desecrating the Quran be handed over to them after being arrested. After being denied, the mob turned violent and vandalised the station. The police managed to shift the accused, reportedly a mentally ill person, to another location for safety.

In August, the police arrested two brothers in Abbottabad for allegedly

desecrating the Quran. The police filed a first information report (FIR) against them under Section 295-B after a mob turned up at the police station and demanded the accused be handed over to them for instant punishment. The same month in Abbottabad, a transgender person was arrested and charged with blasphemy for alleged desecration of the Quran. In June, the police arrested an Afghan national in Buner for blasphemy after a crowd demanded that he be arrested and punished for allegedly speaking ill of holy personages.

Forced conversion: In August, a Christian family in Swabi alleged that their daughter was kidnapped, forcibly converted to Islam and married off to her abductor. Her parents said their daughter was only 14 years old and was studying for her ninth-grade exams when she went missing and was later found to have been taken in the *nikah* (marriage) of a Muslim after conversion.

Freedom of expression

Prominent incidents related to the violation of freedom of expression in KP during 2021 included the murder of a journalist and a ban on a popular social media app. Waseem Alam, the joint editor of local newspaper *Sada-e-Lawaghir*, was shot dead in Karak in April. He was returning home on a motorcycle when fired upon by unidentified assailants who fled. In May, three constables in Haripur attacked and assaulted a TV journalist Zaheer Abbas after he filmed them attacking some persons. Abbas was badly injured and required medical treatment. The policemen were later arrested after protests by journalists. In September, the TTP issued a warning to journalists asking them to refrain from calling them a 'terrorist outfit' or they would be treated as 'enemies.'

In March, internet regulator Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) banned popular social media app TikTok across Pakistan after the PHC accepted an application by a group of Peshawar-based citizens to act against allegedly 'objectionable material harmful to society' circulating on the platform. The PTA directed internet service providers to immediately block access to app after which TikTok became inaccessible.

The ban remained in place until November when PTA lifted it after protracted negotiations with TikTok and agreement on a mechanism to respond to official concerns. In November, the government told the KP Assembly that its Directorate of Information had released advertisements worth PKR1.44 billion to 66 local and national newspapers operating from the province in 2018-20. This included PKR1.07 billion released to 66 newspapers in Peshawar, PKR250 million to 24 dailies published from Islamabad and Rawalpindi and PKR100 million to newspapers published from other districts of KP.

Freedom of assembly

Several public protests, rallies and demonstrations were held in KP in 2021 by parents, politicians, political workers, tribesmen and farmers to highlight various grievances. In October, the parents of over 130 students killed by terrorists during the Army Public School attack in 2014 held a protest demonstration in Peshawar against the federal government's proposed amnesty to the TTP and warned they would expand their protest if the proposal went ahead. They held photos of their murdered children and demanded punishment for those who failed to protect their children.



In October, the parents of over 130 students killed by terrorists during the Army Public School attack in 2014 held a protest demonstration in Peshawar.

Several public protests took place in various merged districts of KP in 2021 against the high-handedness of the authorities. In April, dozens of residents of Makeen in South Waziristan protested the killing of two of their youth by paramilitary troops whose bodies were placed before the office of the inspector general of the FC. The protest was called off after the inspector general agreed that the heirs of the deceased would get PKR2 million in compensation in each case and jobs for eligible members of their families. The FC would also vacate the residential compounds of the tribesmen and FIRs would be lodged against the personnel who had killed the youth. There would also be an end to the unnecessary use of drone cameras.

In May, clashes between protesters demanding an end to harassment and security personnel left eight people wounded in Sadda town of

Kurram. Personnel of FC opened fire on protesters at a check post after which they attacked the offices of the district administration. A curfew was imposed and telecom services suspended. In the same month, 11 persons were injured when police clashed with protesting Khugakhel tribesmen after they blocked the main road leading to Torkham in Khyber in reaction to arrest of more than 40 of their tribesmen. The tribesmen were demanding compensation for their land acquired for construction of a customs terminal at Torkham. In July, the local tribal elders staged a protest demonstration outside the district commissioner's office against withdrawal of security from them in Bajaur. The protestors threatened to stop cooperation with the authorities if their security was not restored for elders, lawmakers, political leaders and traders, given the threats to them.

In August, two policemen and a civilian were injured when the police tried to disperse protestors blocking a road outside the residence of local ruling party National Assembly member in Bajaur for halting construction work on a road. In August, tribesmen blocked the busy Peshawar-Torkham highway for several hours to protest a coercive search operation conducted by the security forces in Zakhakhel area in Khyber. In November, scores of porters and daily wagers held a demonstration at the Torkham border in Khyber to protest restrictions, including visas, imposed on their cross-border movement.

Protest over murders: In March, the tribesmen of the Janikhel area of Bannu held a three-week sit-in demanding arrest of the killers of four of their youth while placing the bodies of the victims in front of the local police station. The bodies were found three weeks after the young men went missing from a trip. Later, a prominent tribal leader, Malik Naseeb Khan, spearheading the sit-in was also killed. The tribesmen's attempt to march to Islamabad along with the bodies was disrupted by the police with use of force including baton-charges and tear-gas.

Protests by political parties: Several demonstrations were held by political parties in KP during 2021 to protest violations of rights and demanding political freedoms. In February, the ANP held protests in several cities of KP, including Peshawar, Mardan and Charsadda, against enforced disappearances in different districts. In February the Pakistan Democratic Movement held a public meeting in Batkhela in Malakand addressed by, among others, Maulana Fazlur Rehman of JUI-F, Bilawal Bhutto of the PPP, Mahmood Achakzai of PKMAP and Haider Hoti of the ANP. They decried what they said was the erosion of political freedoms and deteriorating economic conditions.

In February, the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM) held a public meeting outside Peshawar addressed by its leaders Manzoor Pashteen and Mohsin Dawar. They demanded the resolution of the socio-political challenges of the residents of the merged districts and the freedom of their colleague Ali Wazir from jail. In November, the PML-N, JUI-F and Qaumi Watan Party held various demonstrations in Peshawar to protest

'rising inflation' and the 'back-breaking price hike'. In November, a protest rally of JUI-F in Peshawar protested what it said was the growing influence of the establishment in politics.

Freedom of association

Various associations representing different stakeholders remained active in KP during 2021 to press for their rights. In May, police in Peshawar baton-charged university faculty protesting measures announced by the government, including a reduction in allowances. Several teachers were injured and at least eight detained for blocking traffic and causing inconvenience to residents. In August, the Peshawar police briefly detained over 20 owners and principals of private schools protesting against the government for non-implementation of a voucher scheme launched in 2014 to enroll out-of-school children against a PKR500 monthly tuition fee for each freshly enrolled student.

In November, students of various educational institutions in Peshawar joined together in a rally demanding that the federal government lift the long-running ban on student unions. They demanded the restoration of unions so they could raise their voice for their rights in an organised way. In April, doctors working in Covid-19 rapid response teams based in Peshawar threatened to strike if their services were not regularised. The KP Contracts Doctors Association said doctors working in the rapid response teams were working on contractual basis.

It said by April 2021, over 90 health workers including 57 doctors had died in KP due to the virus by contracting it from patients and demanded PKR7 million for the heirs of each of the deceased medics. In July, the Peshawar police broke up a protest rally of the officers of the KP government's 34 directorates and attached departments by using tear gas and water cannons and arrested 16 protesters. The Attached Departments Officers Associations demanded a special allowance along the lines of the executive allowance paid to officers of the Pakistan Administrative Service, Police Service of Pakistan and Provincial Management Service.

In March, transgender persons and rights activists demanded the allocation of a quota in provincial government departments and district government jobs for transgender persons and those with disabilities on the pattern of seats reserved for women. They said that persons living with disabilities and the transgender community faced serious problems due to lack of representation in the assemblies and Senate. In October, the lawyers' community boycotted the courts in different cities of KP and held rallies against spiralling prices of daily-use commodities and petroleum products in the country.



DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT

Political participation

Political participation in the KP Assembly during 2021, according to data on its website, remained energetic. The assembly was convened at least six times by the governor. During 2021, the KP Assembly introduced 52 bills of which 39 were passed and signed into law. MPAs from various political parties tabled 71 resolutions, 14 privilege motions and at least 60 call-attention notices. In September, Mohsin Dawar, a member of the National Assembly from North Waziristan who has also been associated with PTM, along with a corps of nationalist leaders, announced the launch of the National Democratic Movement, a new political party. The party said it would 'struggle to promote a secular federal democratic parliamentary system in the country.' In December, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) registered the party as an independent party eligible to participate in local, provincial and national elections. Manzoor Pashteen and many others have reportedly remained opposed to the idea of turning the PTM into a political party.

In July, a constitutional writ petition was filed in the PHC for the implementation of unmet federal promises of PKR100 billion annually for the development of the newly merged districts and a committed 3 percent share to them under the National Finance Commission award.

Local government

KP finally held the much-awaited local government elections in 2021, which were due in 2020 but delayed for Covid-related reasons and legal challenges to the KP Local Government (Amendment Act) 2019. According to the ECP, which supervised the polls, the first phase of the elections was held on 19 December 2021 in 63 tehsils of 17 districts, including Bajaur, Bannu, Buner, Charsadda, Dera Ismail Khan, Hangu, Haripur, Karak, Khyber, Kohat, Lakki Marwat, Mardan, Mohmand, Nowshera, Peshawar, Swabi and Tank. Elections were held to elect candidates to more than 14,000 general and reserved seats, plus four city mayors and 63 tehsil chairs.

According to *Dawn*, the results of 47 of the 63 tehsils were declared by the ECP. Re-polling was ordered in several polling stations in 16 tehsils after various violations were recorded. In the tehsils where results were announced, the JUI-F won 17 seats of mayor/chairperson with the PTI coming second by securing 12 seats. Independent candidates grabbed the third highest number of seats at seven, followed by ANP at six, PML-N at three and JI, PPP and Tehreek-i-Islahat Pakistan bagging one seat each. In an evaluation report, the Free and Fair Election Network termed the elections 'orderly, lawful and transparent but fell short of complete compliance with procedural formalities.' The second phase of the KP local elections was later announced for 27 March 2022.

RIGHTS OF THE DISADVANTAGED

Women

There were some positive developments related to the rights of women in KP during 2021 but many others were consistent with routine violations against them. In January, the KP Assembly passed the landmark KP Domestic Violence against Women (Prevention and Protection) Bill 2021. The law makes the abuse of women by family members an offence punishable with five-year imprisonment and fine. It seeks to prosecute domestic violence against women including physical, psychological and economic abuse.

The law provides for the establishment of district protection committees headed by women. In November, the PHC declared illegal bodily searches of women under any circumstances by male police personnel. At a hearing of a bail plea by a woman inmate, the court ruled that women detainees could be subjected to bodily searches only by women staff. In September, the KP government decided to set up separate jails for women. The special assistant to the chief minister for prisons said these would be established as part of the jail reforms for the 160 women prisoners in KP jails, of which 35 were convicted and 125 were under trial.

In September, the KP Assembly became the first legislature in Pakistan to set up a baby feeding and daycare centre to facilitate women legislators. The speaker inaugurated the centre in the presence of members of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus, UNICEF and the health and planning and development departments of the government.



In September, the KP Assembly became the first legislature in Pakistan to set up a baby feeding and daycare centre to facilitate women legislators.

A fortnight after an Aurat March congregation held in Islamabad on 8 March, International Women's Day, a district and sessions court in Peshawar accepted a petition by a group of five male lawyers to proceed against the organisers of the march for alleged blasphemy. The court ordered the police to register an FIR against the accused.

In June, the PHC rejected a petition filed by a group of human rights activists led by HRCF senior member Nasreen Azhar, challenging the court order for registration of the FIR. The PHC bench rejected the petition on the grounds that no cause of action had arisen to move the high court as no actual action had been taken by the police against any of the Aurat March organisers. There were multiple cases of varying kinds of violence against women in KP during 2021.

Murder: In February, four women aid workers were gunned down in the Mirali area of North Waziristan. The workers were ambushed by two gunmen as they were driving through a village. In February, a man in Chitral shot dead a woman relative and injured his wife and mother-in-law. In May, a couple were killed in the name of honour in Mansehra by the woman's husband. In June a newly married couple was killed for 'honour' in Dera Ismail Khan by male relatives of the girl's family.

In June, a district and sessions court in Peshawar sentenced to death the main accused in the famous murder case of Asma Rani, a medical student killed in 2019 for spurning a marriage proposal. In July, a couple was hanged to death in Mansehra by the male relatives of the girl's father, murdered in the name of 'honour' for marrying for love. In August, a couple was killed for 'honour' in Battagram. In November, a teenage girl in Charsadda was killed by a boy for spurning his marriage proposal.

Rape: In January, a married woman in Mardan was abducted and gangraped by five persons as she returned home. In September, three persons gangraped a teenage girl in Haripur after she left her house after a quarrel with her family. In November, a senior civil judge was arrested on allegation by a woman petitioner who claimed he had raped her at his home in Lower Dir.

Torture: Five policemen of Saidu Sharif police station were arrested after their suspension for beating up women in custody in an alleged theft case. The action was taken after a video of the beating went viral on social media and drew protests. In October, the police in Swabi recovered a woman chained at home by her family for three years. The woman's father and two brothers were arrested for torturing her over the years after she came home divorced 12 years ago.

Abduction: In June, the police in Shangla arrested three persons for the abduction and sale of a woman along with her two children. The woman was abducted in Shangla and trafficked to Ziarat where she was sold for PKR400,000. The 'purchaser' was among the arrested.

Harassment: In April, after completing of an official inquiry, the KP Ombudsperson for Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace recommended removal from service of the chairman of the Political Science Department at Islamia College University, on charges of harassment of a girl student. In August, the police lodged an FIR against the male clerical staff of the Battagram Education Office for harassing two women assistant district education officers.

Transgender persons

The rights of transgender residents of KP during 2021 continued to be characterised by general indifference by both the state and society. In February, a group of persons in Peshawar abducted a transgender person as she returned from performing at a marriage function. They gang-raped her, filmed and tortured her severely. In March, the police in Haripur arrested two persons for allegedly shaving the head of a transgender person before sexually assaulting her.

In April, the police in Peshawar arrested four persons for sexually assaulting a transgender person as she returned from a music programme. The accused also filmed the assault. In October, transgender persons in Peshawar demanded registration of FIRs against the people involved in several cases of violence against them and demanded government protection. At a press conference, they said incidents of violence against them in KP were increasing, forcing many to flee. They complained that the police often refused to file FIRs against the accused which ended up allowing impunity to their perpetrators and allowed their persecution to continue.

Children

Children had another rough year in KP with multiple cases of violence against them recorded in 2021. Several cases of sexual assaults of minors were reported. These included a man in Kohat arrested in January for raping his daughter for four years before being caught, seven persons arrested in Kohat in January for gang-raping a 13-year-old boy, a man arrested in February from Haripur for raping a seven-year-old boy, a man arrested from Swabi in March for sexually assaulting a five-year boy, a four-year-old girl found raped and strangled in Kohat in March, a 14-year-old boy gang-raped by five men in Dera Ismail Khan in May who filmed the assault which went viral, a man in Shangla arrested in July for assaulting a 13-year-old physically challenged girl, a man in Haripur who assaulted a nine-year-old girl in October before fleeing, and a man arrested from Haripur in November who sexually assaulted a seven-year-old mentally challenged girl.

In March, a seventh-grade student died in mysterious circumstances in the custody of Peshawar police after being arrested for allegedly threatening a shopkeeper with a gun. In April, a woman was arrested

from Balakot after throwing her two minor sons into the Kunhar River over alleged differences with her husband. In March, three children were killed in two separate landmine explosions in North Waziristan and South Waziristan. In September, the police in Shangla arrested seven members of a jirga, including a mosque imam, for approving a case of the banned practice of *swara* in which girls are given in exchange to settle social disputes. The jirga had decided to marry a 19-year-old boy to the girl of a family he was in love with but by forcing to give away his 12-year-old sister to the brother of the girl he was to be married to.

Except Peshawar and Abbottabad, none of the KP districts have nursery wards in public sector health facilities to provide specialised treatment to newborn babies during the first critical 28 days of their birth to avoid mortality, according to a *Dawn* report published in March. Nursery wards exist in three hospitals in Peshawar. Pakistan ranks second in terms of the global neonatal mortality rate, averaging 42 neonatal deaths per 1,000 live births. In April, the government supported a resolution moved by the opposition in KP Assembly to frame specific laws and procedures on adoption of children in the province. In October, an opposition member submitted the KP Prohibition of Corporal Punishment Bill 2021 to the KP Assembly Secretariat, aimed at formally outlawing all forms of violence against children in educational institutions and workplaces.

In October, a fourth-grade girl moved the PHC against her expulsion by a private school in Mardan after protesting allegedly corporal punishment and humiliation by one of the teachers. In October, religious leaders from across KP pledged to promote the rights of girls. According to a statement issued after a dialogue on ending child marriages jointly organised by the Council of Islamic Ideology, the Women's Parliamentary Caucus and the Child Welfare and Protection Commission, keeping girls in school was one of the best ways to prevent child marriage.



In October, a fourth-grade girl moved the PHC against her expulsion by a private school in Mardan after protesting allegedly corporal punishment and humiliation by one of the teachers.

Labour

After facing widespread criticism and pressure, in March 2021 the KP government reversed its unpopular 2019 decision of increasing the retirement age of its employees from 60 years by three years to 63 years. In February 2020 the PHC had declared the decision illegal, but the KP government challenged this before the Supreme Court which ruled in its favour.

In April, the KP Assembly passed the Civil Servants (Amendment) Act 2021, to reverse its decision. In January, the provincial finance minister said an increase in the retirement age of employees could save PKR140 billion in pensions in 10 years. In January, the KP Higher Education Department directed all government universities in the province to abolish pensions for future employees. In May, the KP chief minister announced a 25 percent increase in the salaries of provincial government employees from 1 June. He also announced an increase of PKR4,000 in the minimum monthly wages of daily wagers, fixing it at PKR21,000 from the previous PKR17,000 per month. In March, the government said it had developed a PKR68 billion economic development plan to create jobs in the newly merged districts of KP. This would focus on strengthening businesses, mines and minerals, small and medium enterprise, skills development, tourism, agrobusiness and green economics sectors to create jobs in the tribal districts. In June, the KP cabinet approved the regularisation of 2,500 former servicemen working in the police department who were hired on contractual basis in 2009 to fight militancy. In September, the government said it would legislate to regularise the services of more than 3,000 contractual employees hired for 120 pre-merger development projects.

Persons with disabilities

Persons with disabilities (PWDs) in KP sought relief in KP in 2021 against their plight and were promised help. In November, the government said it would enact the KP Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act 2021, for full medical rehabilitation of PWDs, their inclusion in the community, allocation of a 4 percent job quota in public sector departments, ensuring their educational facilities, and making buildings accessible for them in the province.

In August, a seminar in Peshawar urged special priority for PWDs as their health issues had surged during the Covid-19 pandemic. Activists said the existing facilities in KP were insufficient for the rehabilitation of PWDs and that they were being neglected in protection against Covid-19.

In September, a large group of PWDs congregated in Peshawar, seeking implementation of a provincial job quota and recruitment of skilled teachers in special persons' schools. They also demanded that focal persons in districts facilitate them in communication with government

departments. In October, a convention of social and human rights activists in Swat demanded the representation of PWDs in the federal, provincial and district governments. The demand was endorsed by representatives of the PTI, ANP, JUI-F, PPP, PML-N and PKMAP.

Refugees and IDPs

In August, the Taliban seized power in Kabul amid a chaotic pull-out by the international community and exodus of both wealthy and poor Afghans. Thousands of refugees transited through Pakistan with the wealthiest of them arriving by air in Islamabad and moving out to third countries. Over the last few months of 2021, thousands of refugees streamed through Peshawar into KP.

The authorities seemingly kept the transit controlled by issuing visas to them on arrival. In September, the federal interior minister refuted reports that Pakistan had set up refugee camps along the Afghan border. He said that in the three weeks after the Taliban takeover, about 4,000 Afghans had entered Pakistan with valid travel documents and while an equal number of Afghans returned to their country. He said Pakistan had helped evacuate over 10,000 international and Afghan residents from Kabul on humanitarian grounds and offered to issue 30-day transit visas to anyone seeking to travel beyond Pakistan.

In August a report by *Dawn* said that many Afghans seeking to return home after the Taliban takeover were facing multiple tiers of the immigration process, operated by at least three departments – including the Federal Investigation Agency, NADRA and National Logistics Cell – at the Torkham border. It said the returnees were being asked to pay bribes ranging from PKR5,000–30,000 for prompt passage. Another media report in October referenced Afghans living at Gohati and Gandaf refugee camps as saying they had no plans to return to Afghanistan until peace was restored. The two camps housed around 60,000 Afghans before the Taliban takeover but the number had gone up due to the arrival of their relatives and other groups.



SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

Education

The Covid-19 pandemic continued to have a deep impact on the educational system in KP during 2021. All education institutions remained closed at the start of the year till 18 January. To prevent the spread, educational institutions across Peshawar were closed for four weeks in March and April while closure was also enforced in nine other districts showing an average positivity rate above 15 percent including Mardan, Charsadda, Swabi, Kohat, Malakand, Swat, Lower Dir, Nowshera and Buner. Following closures enforced by the government, private schools joined public schools in delaying annual examinations scheduled in March and April.

Children out of school: In October, a survey issued by the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) showed that 39 percent of the 11.7 million children in the 5–16 age bracket in KP were out of school. Of these, more than a million live in the newly merged districts. According to the survey, conducted as part of BISP’s National Socio-Economic Registry Census with the help of elementary and secondary schoolteachers, children not attending school in KP totalled 4.7 million.

The number of such children in KP’s settled districts has gone up from 2.1 million in 2018 to 3.7 million in 2021 despite PKR632 billion education expenditure during the period. Results showed that out-of-school girls in KP were at 2.9 million or 53 percent of the total 5.4 million girls aged 5–16. Of the 6.2 million boys in this age bracket, 1.7 million were out of school.

Illiteracy in newly merged districts: Over 52 percent people of the around five million population of the newly merged districts of KP are illiterate while of the literate population, only 22 percent have studied to primary level, 10 percent up to middle level and just 7 percent up to matric level. This was revealed in August in the results of a survey jointly conducted by the Planning and Development Department, the Merged Areas Governance Programme and UNDP.

The results show only 3.5 percent have studied up to intermediate level, less than 2 percent have obtained a bachelor’s degree, 1.1 percent a master’s degree and barely 0.1 percent an MPhil or PhD degree. South Waziristan has the highest illiteracy rate at 61.2 percent while North Waziristan has 55.5 percent, Orakzai 55.2 percent, Mohmand 54.2 percent, Bajaur 54 percent, Khyber 50.8 percent and Kurram 37.7 percent.

There are 4,952 government primary schools in the newly merged districts, including 2,116 for girls and only 551 middle schools including 213 for girls. There are only 363 high schools in these districts.

Shortage of seats for tribal area students: There is not a single university inside the territorial limits of the merged tribal districts of KP. After the merger of these districts with KP in 2018, the FATA Reforms Committee had mandated the doubling of the reserved scholarship quota for FATA-domiciled students in five universities of Punjab and one in Sindh. This was enacted in 2019. In early 2021, Bahauddin Zakariya University and University of Bahawalpur reduced the number of reserved seats for tribal area students, leading to weeklong protests by tribal students outside the Governor House in Lahore.

After negotiations, the governor accepted their demands including continuing the scholarships scheme for students from the merged districts in Punjab until 2027 with universities bearing 50 percent of the cost of scholarships and the KP and Punjab governments 25 percent each. It was agreed that 200 of the 1,000 scholarships would be reserved for women students and that the University of Punjab would establish a sub-campus within the merged districts.

In June, the elementary and secondary education minister informed the KP Assembly that a uniform curriculum had been developed for primary classes in the province. He said a uniform curriculum for middle classes was underway while that for higher secondary classes would be developed in 2022. In August, the Elementary and Secondary Education Department decided to hire teachers through parent-teacher councils as stopgap arrangement to meet their shortage in KP.

In the first phase 1,300 teachers were scheduled to be hired on one-year contracts for government primary, middle and high schools. PKR400 million was allocated for the hiring. In October, the government ruled out privatisation of public sector colleges in KP after protests broke out in several colleges led by teachers and joined by students, which lasted for several days.

Health

The Covid pandemic continued to affect KP in 2021 as in the preceding year but with an overall higher death rate. However, proportionately the recovery of infected people was much better in 2021 than in 2020. The government struggled to convince people to get themselves vaccinated as the supply of vaccines dramatically improved in 2021. The mutation of the coronavirus into more contagious variants, especially Delta in the summer and Omicron in the winter, exacerbated the challenge of inoculation.

A total of 181,402 persons tested positive for Covid-19 infections in KP during 2021 against 58,701 in 2020, according to the National Command and Operations Centre. Of these, 5,930 died in KP against 1,649 deaths recorded in 2020. A total of 174,897 infected persons recovered in KP from infections during 2021 against 53,708 recoveries recorded in 2020.

At the end of 2021, there were only 2,786 active Covid-19 cases in KP. By the end of February, the government had registered about 65,000 health workers to provide vaccination services in the KP districts. In March, the number of vaccination centres in KP had crossed the 500 mark. In April, the government announced a three-month public health emergency across KP, which was extended by another three months in July.

In March and April, a two-week lockdown was imposed in all districts with a positivity rate of over 10 percent. Peshawar and Mardan recorded a positivity rate of over 25 percent. In April, all private hospitals in Peshawar and Swat announced they were starting free services for Covid patients under the Sehat Sahulat Programme including admission, ventilator, medical oxygen, diagnosis and medicines.

In May, KP detected the first case of the Indian-origin Delta variant in a Covid patient in Peshawar and in June the first case of the South Africa-origin Delta variant. In July the government launched a door-to-door drive to inoculate people at home and boost the vaccination rate. By the end of November, the first dose of vaccine had been administered to 12 million (52 percent) of adults and second dose to seven million (38 percent) residents of the 24.2 million target population of KP.

Full KP coverage under scheme: In January, the government launched the third phase of the Sehat Sahulat Program (SSP) to extend the health programme to the last remaining six districts of KP, making residents eligible for free medical treatment facilities in enlisted public and private sector hospitals. The scheme would cost PKR18 billion annually to cover medical expenses of up to PKR1 million per family per year.

In May, the Health Department said it would include liver transplants under the plan. In June, a report in *Dawn* said that private hospitals in KP had earned PKR8 billion compared with PKR2 billion by public sector health facilities from the income generated through free treatment of patients under the SSP during the last five years.

The government spent PKR10.5 billion on the free treatment of 423,525 patients in KP in this duration. Private hospitals secured 78 percent of this amount and government health facilities 22 percent.

In July, the Health Department released PKR2 billion in funds to the SSP to begin free liver transplants in KP. In October, the department said it was including treatment of dengue haemorrhagic fever under the SSP. Over the course of 2021, private hospitals in KP treated 71 percent patients and public hospitals 29 percent under SSP.

Only one case of polio was recorded in KP during 2021 compared to 84 in 2020, marking a remarkable development in containment of the poliovirus. In November, the government successfully inoculated a target population of 15.6 million residents aged between six months and

15 years against measles and rubella, which had recorded an uptick during the early part of the year. After the eruption of dengue cases in KP in September, the health department screened over 26,000 suspected cases of which more than 8,000 tested positive.

Housing and public amenities

In 2021, KP faced a shortage of around one million housing units despite the launch of some housing schemes by the government, the provincial assembly was told in September. The housing minister said that to overcome the shortage, he had directed the deputy commissioners of all districts in KP to identify unoccupied state land for consideration of housing schemes.

In October, the provincial cabinet approved the KP Land Use and Building Control Authority Act 2021 to check unplanned urbanisation and protect agricultural lands from illegal construction activities in the province. The cabinet also ordered updating the master plans for six largest cities in KP as well as developing master plans for 20 districts by end of 2022.

In January, the district administration of Peshawar banned 181 private housing societies and land transfers in them for functioning in violation of prescribed regulations of Peshawar Development Authority. Of the 181 housing societies 123 are in Shah Alam tehsil, 25 in City tehsil, 24 in Saddar tehsil and nine in Matani tehsil.

In September, the KP Board of Revenue said it had retrieved over PKR60 billion worth of 4,100 *kanals* of government land from encroachers in 30 districts of KP with the help of the relevant authorities.

Environment

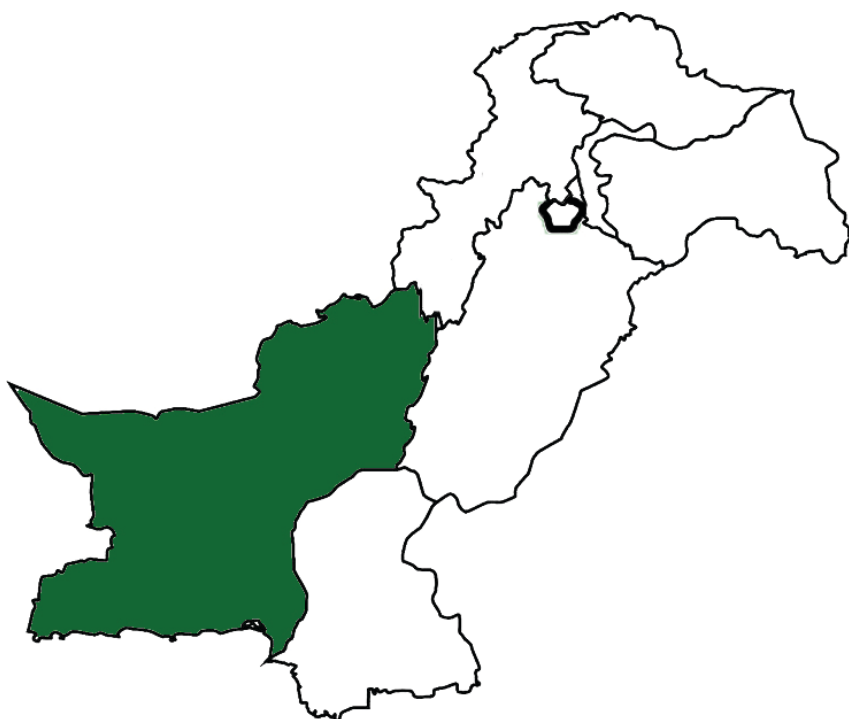
25 persons were killed mostly by the monsoon rains and flash floods that hit KP in 2021. These included eight children, three women and 14 men after roofs or walls of houses collapsed in Khyber, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Karak and Mardan. Heavy rains and windstorms triggered flash floods and landslides, causing widespread damage to properties and vehicles and blocking roads.

In January, the Peshawar authorities seized over 8,000 kg of polythene bags and sealed 32 shops during a crackdown. Eight shopkeepers resisting the operation were also arrested. The KP government claimed an over 6 percent increase in the tree-covered area of the province in 2021, but this has not been adequate to expand the designated forest area after the completion of its flagship Billion Trees Tsunami Afforestation Programme.

According to the Environment Department in March, only the tree-

covered area in KP has increased after implementation of the programme while the designated forest-covered area remains the same. Afforestation was carried out over 286,309 hectares through 160 million plants.

BALUCHISTAN







KEY TRENDS

- Pressure from civil society organisations working on information, media and peace resulted in the Balochistan Assembly passing a number of laws including a right to information law, but delays in making rules affected implementation, rendering such efforts ineffective.
- Journalists were harassed, abducted and killed with impunity in the province and no concrete steps were taken by the government to hold the perpetrators accountable.
- People in Quetta remained afraid of the Eagle Squad, which was established to protect them, especially after the extrajudicial killing of Faizan Jattak.
- Cases of enforced disappearances increased in Balochistan, along with the number of protests against such disappearances.
- Gwadar, the port city of Balochistan, saw unprecedented protests by residents of the city and adjoining areas, who demanded basic amenities such drinkable water and an end to illegal fishing by the trawler mafia. The area remained cut off from the rest of the country because continuous protests blocked routes to the port city.
- Former Senator Usman Kakar sustained a mysterious head injury at his Quetta home in June and died soon after in Karachi. The Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party termed it an assassination. His funeral prayers were attended by tens of thousands of people.
- In a dramatic move, Jam Kamal Khan's government was removed by a no-confidence motion in October.
- Militant groups unleashed 81 attacks in the province, killing around 136 and injuring as many as 345.
- In April, the Chinese ambassador narrowly escaped an attempt on his life in a bomb blast in Quetta.
- Responding to student protests, the governor of Balochistan promulgated the Balochistan Criminal Law Amendment in November, which prohibited protests and sit-ins in the province, and stipulated that violators would be arrested without warrants for three to six months.
- In November, the provincial government barred Manzoor Pashteen, Ali Wazir and Mohsin Dawar from entering Balochistan.
- To improve working conditions for women and eradicate gender discrimination, the government announced the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy 2020-24.

- Chief Minister Abdul Quddus Bizenjo launched the second phase of the Balochistan Education Support Programme after assuming office.
- After the abduction of two university students, the University of Balochistan was shut down amid a public outcry.



OVERVIEW

The year 2021 concluded without any improvement in the human rights situation in Balochistan. Rather, it witnessed an increase in violence, particularly violence perpetrated by security forces. Baloch separatists and Islamist militants were also behind a significant number of attacks. The extrajudicial killing of a student, Faizan Jattak, in May by the Eagle Squad of the Quetta Police—trained by the Pakistan Army to fight terrorism in the province—prompted protests, public outcry and media attention. Later, in October, two children were killed by a mortar shell allegedly shot by personnel of the Frontier Corps (FC) in Kech district.

The two incidents contributed to mass protests in the province, forcing the government to take action against security personnel. The Balochistan High Court (BHC) ordered the filing of a first information report (FIR) against FC personnel and suspended officials of the district administration for their inaction. However, these actions were ad hoc, meant more to de-escalate protests than to address the core problem of excesses committed by security forces.

Massive protests took place across the province from Quetta to Gwadar during the year. One set of protests was led by students of medical colleges campaigning for recognition of their institutions by the Pakistan Medical Commission. Young doctors held frequent protests and strikes. They were accused by some of being self-serving, but they insisted that they were protesting to improve the healthcare system of the province. On the other hand, there were protests by citizens against the negligence of doctors in operation theatres. Another set of important protests was held by the families of missing persons, who kept the issue alive in the province and across the country. Additionally, there were many protests by grieving families whose loved ones had been killed by security forces.

In August, the people of Gwadar started mass protests against severe shortage of water and electricity and threats to livelihoods in the form of deep-sea fishing trawlers. These protests were fuelled by the news that five Chinese fishing trawlers had been detained near Gwadar on suspicion of illegal fishing. The protestors blocked the roads for several days before agreeing to end the protests. After a month, protests resumed on 30 September under the leadership of Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman, the local leader of the Jamaat-e-Islami in the port town. This time, the protestors held a massive sit-in to block the coastal highway to protest against the aforementioned problems. These also ended without any relief for the people.

The year ended with a historic sit-in, where thousands registered their lack of trust and disapproval of the absence of government attention in Gwadar, particularly against the backdrop of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects. There was no meaningful response in the form of any policy change by the government to address the root of the problem.



RULE OF LAW

Laws and law-making

One of the most significant pieces of legislation in 2021 in Balochistan was the Balochistan Right to Information Act 2021. Balochistan was lacking an effective right to information (RTI) law and civil society organisations had campaigned for several years to get this legislation passed.

With this law in place, journalists and civil society members can ask for information from all government departments, make government dealings transparent, and highlight human rights violations. While the law was passed in February, the provincial government had not made rules for implementation till the end of the year, nor was an information commission—required under this law—formed. Civil society is now campaigning to pressurise the government to take steps to implement the law.

Other significant legislation included the Balochistan Minimum Wages Act. This law directed the government to establish a minimum wage board, which will ensure that minimum wage is paid to labourers all over Balochistan. Using this law, the government made efforts to remove any ambiguity over the definition of labour, making it harder for employers to underpay their employees. However, as with the RTI law, the government has not formed rules for implementation.

Likewise, another important piece of legislation was the Balochistan Public Private Partnership Act 2021. Under this law, the government established a framework to facilitate and regulate the involvement of the private sector in infrastructure development in the province. A public-private partnership policy was also announced in December 2021 to ensure the participation of the private sector in the development of the province.

Administration of justice

In 2021, the BHC disposed of 6,700 cases, which was 28 percent higher as compared to 2020. The number of pending cases in the BHC remained around 4,000 at the end of 2021, which was not much different from the previous year. Moreover, the district judiciary of Balochistan disposed of 54,191 cases during 2021, which was 9 percent higher as compared to 2020. The number of pending cases in the district judiciary at the end of 2021 remain unchanged from 2020 at 16,000.

In August, Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan took oath as the new chief justice of the BHC. The outgoing chief justice Jamal Mandokhail was elevated to the Supreme Court. The lawyers' community and civil

society expressed delight at the new appointment, given his clean track record and impeccable reputation. He ordered the filing of an FIR against FC personnel, who were allegedly involved in the death of two children in Kech district. Human rights defenders expect Justice Afghan to take up human rights issues without any pressure in the near future.

Usman Kakar's death inquiry commission

Former Senator Usman Kakar died in Karachi after suffering a mysterious head injury at his Quetta home in June. Soon after his death, the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party termed it an assassination and demanded a judicial inquiry into the matter. Subsequently, the Government of Balochistan established a judicial commission under the Balochistan Tribunals of Inquiries Ordinance 1969, which was tasked to probe Kakar's death.

This was one of the most high-profile inquiries in the province in 2021. However, the judicial commission failed to reach any conclusion because apparently no one came to present statements or testify in this case. This was disappointing for all those who had demanded an inquiry into the death of Kakar.



Former Senator Usman Kakar died in Karachi after suffering a mysterious head injury at his Quetta home in June.



ENFORCEMENT OF LAW

Law and order

The table below gives the total number of crimes against persons registered in 2021:

<i>Nature of crime</i>	<i>Total cases in 2021</i>
Murder	400
Rape	30
Gang rape	1
Rape of minors	40
Honour killings	42
Domestic violence	127
Acid crimes	2
Blasphemy	5
Police encounters	11

Source: Balochistan Police, in response to HRCP's request for information.

Criminal activity was on the rise in the province during the year. There were many instances of mobile phone and motorbike snatching at gunpoint and many vehicles were stolen. According to the Quetta police, there were 9,699 crimes in 2021 and of these, over 2,552 people were arrested who were involved in kidnapping, murders, drugs and robberies.

The police also claimed that 121 abductees were recovered from kidnappers. However, the most high-profile case of kidnapping was that of Malik Ubaid Ullah Kasi, a leader of the Awami National Party. He was kidnapped from Kuchlak in June and his body was found with torture marks in Pishin. The police failed to recover him alive but five men involved in his kidnaping died in an allegedly staged police 'encounter'. In January, militants belonging to the Islamic State kidnapped and killed 11 coal miners, all of whom were Hazaras. This act of terrorism took place in the mountains of Mach area of Balochistan.

The Hazara community held a multiple-day protest against this incident in Quetta and demanded that Prime Minister Imran Khan visit their camp. However, the prime minister termed this demand 'blackmailing' and refused to visit the protestors. Later, a number of security and civilian officials were transferred on account of negligence in relation to the attack.

Journalists and media personnel were once again subjected to violence

in 2021. There were two cases of journalists who were killed in Balochistan. The first was the case of Abdul Wahid Raisani, a sub-editor working for *Daily Azadi*, who was gunned down outside his home in Bank Colony in Quetta in April.

Initially, this killing was termed a motorcycle-snatching attempt gone wrong. Later, it was discovered that it was a case of personal enmity but the culprit was not arrested. The second case was that of Shahid Zehri, a journalist working for Metro News 1 in Hub, who was killed in a bomb blast in October. The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility for the attack and alleged that Zehri was working as a facilitator for Pakistani security agencies. 57 women were killed and a total of 129 cases of violence against women were reported from Balochistan in 2021 as per statistics provided by the Aurat Foundation. Moreover, 47 cases of honour killing were reported throughout the year. The majority of these cases were reported from the Naseerabad district, which is notorious for this heinous trend.

Three high-profile cases of violence against children were reported in 2021. The first case took place in Hoshap in April, where locals alleged that an FC soldier had sexually molested a ten-year-old child. Later, the FC soldier was arrested by the district administration. The second case took place in Gwadar in August. A suicide attack was carried out in Gwadar targeting the vehicle of Chinese personnel, who remained unhurt. However, two children playing nearby lost their lives in the attack, which was claimed by the BLA. The third case took place in October, when two children died in a blast in Hoshap town in district Kech. Government officials claimed that the children had been killed when they picked up a bomb accidentally, thinking it was a toy. However, the family of the victims claimed that FC personnel had fired a mortar shell on them, which resulted in their death.

The family of the victims held a protest in Turbat and then moved to the red zone in Quetta. This protest was called off after a few days when the chief justice of the BHC took notice of the matter. He ordered the filing of an FIR against FC personnel and suspended government officials for their inaction. Political activists raised the issue of extrajudicial killings, especially of Younis Anwar, general secretary of the Gwadar Mahifeer Ittehad; Akbar Barkat; and Yasir Zafar, a Baloch student at Karachi University who was gunned down in his hometown of Buleda, district Kech. These incidents found no mention in the mainstream media and were not followed up either.

Police manhandling citizens in Balochistan has become a common occurrence. There were several complaints of violent behaviour by the Eagle Squad from residents of Quetta throughout the year. In May, the Eagle Squad reportedly killed a young student, Faizan Jattak. Jattak's vehicle had mistakenly hit the motorcycle of a patrol team of the squad. Subsequently, Eagle Squad personnel chased Jattak and shot him point-

blank from a few hundred metres away. This murder triggered massive protests on social media and, as a result, all Eagle Squad members involved in the incident were arrested. By the end of 2021, no headway was made on the case and no update was provided on the arrested police personnel.

In 2021, Balochistan had two success stories for the inclusion of women in the police force. The first was the establishment of the first female police station in Balochistan, comprising all-female staff to deal with women complainants in Quetta. The second case was that of Pari Gul Tareen, who became the first female assistant superintendent of police to be posted to a field command position as part of the Balochistan police.



Pari Gul Tareen became the first female assistant superintendent of police to be posted to a field command position as part of the Balochistan police

Jails and prisoners

The table below gives data on prisons in Balochistan:

<i>Statistics</i>	<i>Number</i>
Total number of jails in Balochistan	11
Total sanctioned capacity of prisons in Balochistan	2,664
Total prison population (including male, female and juvenile inmates)	2,555
Total number of death row prisoners	59
Total number of under-trial prisoners	1,369
Total number of convicted prisoners	1,133

Source: Balochistan Prison department, in response to HRCP's request for information.

In 2021, the Balochistan government claimed they had built a high-security jail with different barracks for confinement of hardcore criminals and terrorists, though the exact location of this jail was not revealed. Sixty percent of prisoners across the province are under-trial.

The conditions of jails were generally poor. This was revealed in surprise visits paid by Chief Justice Afghan. During a visit to the District Jail Quetta in August, Justice Afghan asked prison officials to seek the services of a heart specialist for heart patients among inmates. He also asked the prison authorities to shift convicted prisoners from hospital wards back to the prison.

In 2021, the Balochistan government claimed to have established a biometric information management system for prisoners; this reportedly works in Quetta and some major jails but not in jails across the province. The government also announced it would start drug rehabilitation centres in five jails with the help of the Anti-Narcotics Force.

Moreover, the Health Department with the support of the World Health Organization (WHO) announced the setup of psychiatric telemedicine centres for counselling and treatment of mentally ill prisoners in the jails of Balochistan. While human rights defenders allege that secret detention centres exist in Balochistan, no one acknowledges their existence, least of all the authorities

Enforced disappearances

The issue of enforced disappearance dominated the human rights debate in the province. The rights organisation Voice for Baloch Missing Persons held their camp throughout the year in Quetta and Karachi. According to the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances, 1,108 people had been reported missing as of 31 December 2021.

In February, a large group of protestors held a week-long sit-in in Islamabad over the issue of missing persons of Balochistan. The protest was called off only after the prime minister agreed to meet with representatives from the protestors. Later, the prime minister met with a three-member delegation of missing person's families. He asked his principal secretary to probe the status of the missing persons. However, no progress was made.

Protests erupted once again when two students were picked up from the hostels of the University of Balochistan and forcibly disappeared. The protestors closed down the university in protest on 7 November and it remained closed as of 31 December. This issue was also raised in the provincial assembly where members demanded the release of the students. However, at the time of writing, both students remained missing.

There were several other cases of enforced disappearances in Balochistan

in 2021. One was the case of the abduction of the brother of Dr Sabiha Baloch, the first female chairperson of the Baloch Student Action Committee in June. Mansoor Qambrani, a member of a mountaineer group, was abducted in June. Later released, he was again abducted in September. In June two students named Qasim and Bilal disappeared from Bolan Medical College Quetta. Later in the year, two youngsters Sameer Murad and Rustam Hassan were abducted from Kech and Waseem in Khuzdar.

Death penalty

The only case of the death penalty awarded was to an FC sepoy for killing Hayat Baloch, a Karachi University student, last year in Turbat. This penalty was awarded by a district court in January but had not been implemented by the end of 2021, possibly because of an appeal against the verdict in the BHC.



FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

Freedom of movement

Citizens continued to report hurdles during travel because of hundreds of check-posts throughout the province; they complained about hours-long delays at the Kharri check-post. Protests in Gwadar disrupted communication. The 21-day-long protest led by Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman kept the main highway, linking Gwadar to the rest of the province, blocked.

With growing concerns about security and measures to curb militancy, the security landscape remained a grave concern in the province. In two different incidents, security personnel reportedly killed a woman and injured her husband and two children in Hoshap, Turbat. Furthermore, as per estimated figures released by the Pakistan Institute for Peace and Security in 2021, separatist and religiously motivated groups carried out 81 attacks in Balochistan alone in which 136 people were killed and 335 were injured.

Contrary to expectations from the elected ruling party, the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), freedom of movement continued to be violated in the province. Crackdowns against different political workers and students continued. However, the government handled the Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman led protests in Gwadar through talks. In November, the government barred Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) leaders Manzoor Pashteen, Mohsin Dawar and Ali Wazir from entering the province for 90 days.

After the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, there was an influx of Afghan refugees from the Chaman border crossing point. Most of these refugees settled in Quetta. Some of them even travelled as far as Karachi. In September, the Balochistan government deported 200 Afghan refugees because they had entered illegally. However, most refugees were allowed to remain in Balochistan. There was also a significant number of Hazara refugees who took temporary shelter in Hazara Town and Marriabad areas of Quetta. However, the condition of these refugees was deplorable and no major programmes were started for their relief.

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

Sectarian violence in the province remained a pressing issue. Religiously motivated groups such as the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K) and other small groups carried out at least ten attacks in Balochistan.

Of these, four were carried out against the security forces, three against civilians, and one each against Hazara Shias, a madrassa and a religious

political party. In one of the major attacks carried out by IS-K, 11 coalminers were killed in January. Of the 11 dead, 10 belonged to the Hazara community. The attack on the Hazaras resulted in fear among community members and disrupted their free movement and trade.



In one of the major attacks carried out by IS-K, 11 coalminers were killed in January. Of the 11 dead, 10 belonged to the Hazara community.

Freedom of expression

Self-censorship remained the norm throughout the year as journalists and media outlets continued to receive threats from both state and non-state actors, and the crackdown on dissent amplified. Specifically, human rights defenders were censored when they spoke up against enforced disappearances and human rights violations by the state. Journalist Kiyya Baloch's article on two missing students from Quetta University was taken off soon after its publication in one of the leading newspapers of the country. In September, the Government of Balochistan ordered all the heads of government departments to set their ring tones to 'Pakistan Zindabad'. Many journalists and activists considered this a violation of freedom of expression.

A step towards expanding the digital capacity of the province was the Balochistan Digital Media Policy. The provincial government introduced this policy in January to ensure digital access of citizens. The policy outlines seven agendas to work on. One of its aims is to ensure easy and reliable internet connectivity in all major towns and districts of the province. In a positive development, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, after clearance from the interior ministry, ordered the restoration of internet services in six areas of Balochistan – Turbat, Kech, Awaran, Panjgur, Surab and Kalat – where mobile internet services had remained suspended because of security concerns.

Freedom of assembly

In an attempt to discourage protests in the province, the government promulgated the Criminal Law Amendment Ordinance under which protesters could face imprisonment for up to six months for holding rallies or staging sit in on roads in the province. The act was widely criticised as a move to curb freedom of assembly through peaceful protests.

The province continued to simmer with intermittent student protests. Students protested against alleged irregularities committed by the Pakistan Medical Council in the online entrance test for admission to Bolan Medical College. The police filed an FIR against many students and arrested them. Later the students were released and continued their protest against the filing of the FIR. The government withdrew the FIR after a couple of days. In addition, the Young Doctors Alliance continued to protest against government irregularities. The protest resulted in denying patients access to healthcare which worsened the prevalent health crisis and turned it into a human rights concern.

Similarly, ahead of the budget session, the government responded to opposition members of the assembly sternly. Nine members, including the head of the opposition, were booked under Section 17 of Pakistan Penal Code. In November, the PTM held a political rally in Quetta to demand the release of MNA Ali Wazir. The PTM was allowed to hold the rally, which took place peacefully and without any major hurdle. However, Mohsin Dawar was not allowed to enter Quetta to attend the rally.

Freedom of association

In 2019, the BHC had directed the Labour Welfare Department to cancel the registration of 62 trade unions and private organisations. With no ease in curbs on freedom of association, trade unions continued to suffer in 2020 and 2021. Student unions, which are banned across the country, remained banned. Despite the fact that Senator Sana Baloch had brought the attention of the government to lifting the ban on student unions in 2019, no progress to that end was made in 2021.

In addition to the strict registration policy governing the operation of non-government organisations (NGOs) in Pakistan, the registration of NGOs in Balochistan is especially difficult as they have to comply with the Balochistan Charities (Registration, Regulation and Facilitation) Act 2019. Movements, political parties and student organisations in Balochistan that are critical of the state and security apparatus are dealt with a heavy hand.



DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT

Political participation

Balochistan's share of seats in the National Assembly is only 20 seats which forms 6 percent of the total. This has often been criticised by the provincial government. In addition, the blocking of computerised national identity cards (CNICs) in Balochistan has barred many citizens from casting their votes – NADRA had blocked around 150,000 CNICs across the country, of which 23,552 were blocked in Balochistan. The issue of restoring these CNICs was kept on the backburner during 2020 and continued in 2021 as well.

The BAP-led government faced numerous issues in the last months of 2021 (BAP is believed to have been created overnight by the establishment to control the politics of Balochistan). After intense opposition, the government had to resign.

The opposition jointly moved a no-confidence motion against Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan in October. Following a bitter deadlock between the treasury and opposition members, the Jam Kamal-led government resigned in the face of growing opposition. The BAP-led ruling government was severely criticised for mishandling student and Young Doctors Alliance protests. Opposition members also criticised the budget which Jam Kamal said to be a pro-poor budget.

Apart from these hurdles, the BAP government continued to confront issues from the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), an alliance of 11



The PDM started holding rallies in October 2020 and continued its protests across the country in 2021.

opposition parties led by Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam Fazal (JUI-F)'s chief Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman. The PDM started holding rallies in October 2020 and continued its protests across the country in 2021.

Moreover, trouble for ruling party increased when Jam Kamal removed many ministers, including Aslam Bhootani, holding the portfolio of local government, with many others. After the successful no-confidence motion, Quddos Bizenjo, former speaker of the assembly, assumed the office of chief minister.

Local government

The tenure of local governments in the province ended in 2019. The Election Commission of Pakistan announced that elections for local governments would be held soon after the term had ended. It hinted that the elections would be held based on the old delimitation of constituencies, which drew criticism from the opposition parties, leading to further delay.

Moreover, acting on a petitioner's request, the BHC halted the local government elections without giving a definite date as to when they would be held. In 2020, the government's response to holding local government elections appeared lukewarm and no further development was observed.

However, in August, the Election Commission of Pakistan gave a one-month period to the Balochistan government to hold local bodies elections. However, there was no move on the issue of holding these elections in Balochistan until 2021. It may be safe to say that the provincial government has used its powers to delay the local government elections



RIGHTS OF THE DISADVANTAGED

Women

Women's representation, protection and legislative efforts in Balochistan continued to shrink. The Balochistan Assembly has only 11 reserved seats for women and there were no legislative developments in 2021 with regard to women.

Balochistan has passed a number of laws to protect, improve and increase participation of women in various sectors including politics. It passed the Women Protection against Harassment at Workplaces Act in 2016, and in 2020 the government approved the Balochistan Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Policy for 2020–24.

This year, to implement this policy, the government launched the Governance and Policy Project to improve gender integration and gender equality as per Sustainable Development Goal 5.

However, women seemed to have lagged behind in terms of having a share in legislative process in the province. The Balochistan Assembly passed 29 acts in 2021. Of these, none pertained to women rights. Apart from this, access to basic health remained a key concern.

The province's maternal mortality rates are the highest in the country. As per the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2018, only 56 percent of women in Balochistan have access to antenatal care from a skilled provider and only 38 percent of the births in Balochistan are assisted by a skilled care provider.

Transgender persons

The province has the lowest transgender population (109 as per 2017 census), whose standard of living remains low. Moreover, they are not protected by any legislative cover. Given the lack of media coverage, violence against transgender community is rarely highlighted.

The province apparently did not record any incident against transgender community. However, in terms of having access to Covid-19 vaccination, the community lagged far behind; the primary hindrance in getting vaccinated was the struggle of community to register with NADRA – this includes cumbersome documentation that discourages most of them from applying for CNICs.

Children

Access to child healthcare continued to be a grave human rights concern in the province. As per the Pakistan Health and Demographic Survey

2018, almost every second child (over 47 per cent) in Balochistan is stunted and less than one third of children in the province are likely to receive all basic vaccinations.

Continued conflict in the province also blocked access to early child health. A study published in BioMed Central's *Conflict and Health Journal* showed that the conflict-hit parts of Balochistan had much lower coverage levels for maternal and child health services than peaceful parts of the province. *Six-Month Cruel Numbers 2021*, a report released by Sahil, a child rights organisation, reported serious child rights abuses in Pakistan. The report revealed that almost ten children are abused in Pakistan every day. However, Balochistan had the lowest ratio (3 percent) as compared to other provinces.

Early child marriages continued to be reported. In early June, a Child Marriage Restraint Act was sent to the cabinet but it could not be approved till the end of the year.

In December, the Population Council and United Nations Population Fund jointly carried out a political economy analysis of child marriage in Pakistan, focusing on Balochistan in particular. According to this, more than 21 percent of women get married in Balochistan before reaching their eighteenth birthday. In terms of early marriages, Turbat had the highest ratio.

Labour

In pursuance of a stable condition for labour, through an amendment to the Bonded Labour System Bill in 2020, the government prohibited bonded labour in the province. Violation of the law can lead to one year's imprisonment and a fine of PKR100,000. Despite this, violations of labour rights continued in Balochistan in 2021. In November 2021, HRCP filed a petition in the BHC. Following the petition, 43 bonded labours belonging to the Hindu community of Hyderabad were released from the Ornach area in district Khuzdar.

Mine workers

Conditions for coal miners in Balochistan remained grim in 2021. In different incidents, including an attack by extremist group IS-K, 104 miners were killed in the province. In March, two back-to-back incidents of suffocation and methane explosion occurred in Harnai district in which around 11 miners lost their lives. The IS-K led attack killed 11 miners, and in two different attacks around six coal miners lost their lives. According to data maintained by HRCP, 71 miners were killed in accidents in various coalmines in Balochistan, while 29 were injured. In addition, 10 miners in Mach were killed by unknown assailants on 3 January.

The table below gives the details of 41 mining accidents in 2021:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Place of incident</i>	<i>Killed</i>	<i>Injured</i>
4 January	Chamalang	1	-
22 January	Chaghi		2
30 January	Dukki	1	-
06 February	Dukki	-	2
09 February	Chamalang	1	2
18 February	Harnai	4	-
22 February	Dukki	1	-
08 March	Quetta	1	-
12 March	Quetta	6	-
16 March	Harnai	7	-
21 April	Dukki	-	8
25 April	Dukki	1	-
28 April	Dukki	1	-
28 May	Dukki	1	-
4 June	Dukki	1	-
6 June	Chamalang	1	-
17 June	Dukki	1	-
21 June	Chamalang	1	-
22 June	Dukki	1	-
27 June	Harnai	1	-
12 July	Quetta	2	5
12 August	Quetta	13	-
25 August	Harnai	4	-
17 August	Dukki	1	-
25 August	Quetta	3	-
25 August	Dukki	1	-
4 September	Dukki	1	-
21 September	Mach	1	-
22 September	Chamalang	2	-
2 October	Dukki	2	-
11 October	Dukki	-	2
18 October	Dukki	1	-
19 October	Dukki	2	-
13 November	Dukki	1	-

15 November	Dukki	-	4
3 December	Dukki	1	-
5 December	Dukki	1	4
12 December	Dukki	1	-
13 December	Dukki	1	-
29 December	Mach	1	-
30 December	Dukki	1	-

Source: HRCP media monitoring cell.

According to estimates from the Pakistan Central Mines Labour Federation, 100–200 miners die on average in a year, with 116 such incidents recorded in Balochistan in 2020. Estimates by the National Commission for Human Rights show that, on average, 84 coal miners die annually in the province.

The constant increase in deaths of coal miners is a grave human rights violation in the province. Poor working conditions have been a critical issue for coal miners. Lack of training and availability of equipment have worsened the situation. Pakistan is still struggling to ratify International Labour Organization Convention 176, which specifies a maximum depth that is safe for miners.

In January 2020, the IndustriALL Global Union urged the Government of Pakistan to ratify the convention to ensure safer working conditions for miners.



The constant increase in deaths of coal miners is a grave human rights violation in the province.

Child labour in coal mines

Child labour and sexual abuse of child labourers remains a serious issue for provincial governments to resolve. In 2019, taking notice of the issue, the provincial government passed a resolution to eradicate child labour in coal mines.

As a positive development, Balochistan Assembly passed the Balochistan Payment and Wages Act 2021, which aims to prohibit and regulate child employment vis-à-vis eliminate child abuse in the province.

Fisherfolk

Fishing is a major source of living for almost 70 percent of people living in the coastal areas of Balochistan. The climate crisis and massive infrastructural development such as CPEC projects have endangered the means of livelihood of the community.

In 2021, fisherfolk in the coastal areas of Balochistan continued to suffer. Their biggest concern, after climate-induced disasters, remained illegal fishing by trawlers. During the 'Gwadar Haq Do Tehreek', Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman continued to raise a voice against illegal fishing.

The growing interest of China in fishing in Gwadar has fuelled fears of among fisherfolk. However, after the 28-day-long protest by residents of Gwadar, the prime minister promised to take strict action against illegal trawlers fishing in Gwadar during his visit to Quetta in December. The provincial government has not been able to end the grievances of fisherfolk in Balochistan. The Fisheries Department, which is entrusted with the responsibility to regulate fishing in the province, is often blamed for its underhand dealings with the trawler mafia.

The elderly

The Balochistan government enacted the Senior Citizens Act in 2017, aiming to give relief to senior citizens in the province. Implementation of the act in true spirit remains a concern. The government remained indifferent to the need for a policy to ensure that elderly persons lived a secure life. Access to pensions continued to pose a problem.

Senior citizens are required to go through a cumbersome process of documentation before receiving pensions. Senior citizens still struggle to get separate lanes in waiting areas and are made to stand in queues for hours.

Persons living with disabilities

The estimated number of persons living with disabilities (PLWDs) in Balochistan is 140,000. However, only a very small number of PLWDs

are registered with the Balochistan Welfare Department. To protect the rights of PLWDs in Balochistan, the government passed the Persons with Disabilities Act in 2017. The act aimed to protect their rights, including easier access to public places, which remains difficult.

In 2021, in a positive development, the Balochistan government planned to initiate a special fund worth PKR2 billion in the financial year 2021/22 for PLWDs. Under the name of KUMAK, the provincial government planned to award a monthly stipend to PLWDs to encourage, support and enable them to work and become a productive part of society. As a result, PLWDs across the country receive a stipend of PKR10,000 yearly. They also receive financial assistance through the Benazir Income Support Programme.

In addition, the government needs to increase the job quota with respect to PLWDs in government departments. The Balochistan Persons with Disability Act 2017 ensured a 5 percent quota for PLWDs in government jobs. Besides, it covers many areas which are crucial for PLWDs, but the act has yet to be fully implemented.

Refugees

In July 2021, Pakistan refused to accept more refugees, given the threat of growing violence in its neighbouring country. Pakistan hosts almost 3 million Afghan refugees, a major proportion of whom live in Balochistan. There are 324,238 registered Afghan refugees living in Balochistan.

Refugees have been considered an issue by the nationalist parties of the province. For instance, nationalist parties such as the Balochistan National Party (Mengal) took up the issue after the 2018 elections, demanding that refugees be repatriated and claiming the centre was using the 'refugee card' as a tactic to outnumber the Baloch population in the province.

Apart from this, refugees continue to suffer the problem of lack of a legal identity. Due to the political opposition to settlement of Afghan refugees in Balochistan, there is reluctance in the government to give Afghan refugees proper settlement rights in Balochistan. Half the refugees are unregistered in the country.

After the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, there was a major influx of Afghan refugees in Balochistan from Chaman border crossing point. However, the condition of these refugees was deplorable and no major programs were started for their relief. The winter was harsh for them and they braced it with the help of some individuals, but not at an organised level.



SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

Education

The education system in the province has been restored after year-long lockdowns, given the growing threat of Covid-19. It has seen some progress in terms of receiving attention from stakeholders. The government allocated PKR8.463 billion in the fiscal year 2021/22 for educational development. Finance Minister Zahoor Buledi said that under the slogan of 'Read Balochistan Will Grow Balochistan', the government had allocated PKR1,500 million for the establishment of 100 new middle schools in the province.

According to Alif Ailaan, 11,627 primary schools are registered in Balochistan, of which 1,271 are middle schools and 947 are high schools. There were no further revelations of new ghost schools in Balochistan. The government did not do much to make functional the non-functional schools identified in previous years. Likewise, there was no reporting of government schools being captured by security forces in the year 2021. One of the biggest challenges in 2021 remained out-of-school children. According to UNICEF, 60-70 percent of children of school-going age are out of school in Balochistan. The majority are girls (78 percent), whereas 67 percent of boys are estimated to be out of school in the province.

Balochistan has the lowest literacy rate in the country. Overall literacy is estimated to be 43 percent whereas female literacy is significantly low. Despite many promises made by the government, insufficient budget allocations, lack of infrastructure, and most importantly scattered populations and teacher absenteeism continued to plague the sector in 2021. In 2021, however, in a strict move to overcome these challenges, the Balochistan Education Department cracked down on teacher absenteeism, suspending 2,000 teachers in 2021. However, the issue with spending funds on the establishment of new infrastructure is the potential misuse of money. A major part of resources is spent on constructing school buildings. The allocation of funds for this purpose can involve corruption and even construction of unnecessary buildings that are later abandoned and used by the local people as rest places or marriage halls.

In the fiscal year 2019/20, the federal government decided to cut the budget for higher education by 45 percent. The decision had a serious impact on students at public sector universities across the country, including Balochistan. It also impinged on the prime minister's fee reimbursement programme, which allowed underprivileged students to study at universities free of cost.

In December 2020, Chief Minister Jam Kamal had approved a five-year education plan, but it lacked a mechanism for execution. Similarly, after Kamal's removal from the office, Chief Minister Mir Quddoos Bizenjo

launched the Balochistan Education Support Programme 2, worth PKR4 billion. The plan aims to uplift education in the province. The five-year plan launched by the Jam Kamal government remained ineffective as long as he was in office.

Moreover, the main public sector university of Balochistan, Balochistan University in Quetta, was forced to remain closed for an undecided period of time. Students had shut it down in protest against the abduction of two university students from their hostel.

Health

The situation in public sector hospitals remained dire even in post-pandemic. Given frequent protests by young doctors, OPDs remained shut for several months which caused problems for under-privileged patients. However, the pandemic forced the government to increase the health budget for the fiscal year 2020/21. The budget was increased by 31 percent to PKR31.405 billion as compared to the previous year's budget of PKR23.981 billion. This was a good step, although paramedical staff remained concerned about the lack of personal protective equipment during the year.

Balochistan has a comprehensive 'Well and Healthy Balochistan 2018–30' policy prepared with the assistance of the WHO, which aims to standardise and make access to healthcare easy for all.

To control the increase in common diseases like diarrhoea and malnutrition, the Balochistan Rural Support Programme initiated a project in collaboration with Nutrition International to reduce cases of childhood diarrhoea, which is one of the leading causes of malnutrition.

The Government of Balochistan established medical emergency response centres under the People's Primary Healthcare Initiative Balochistan. Set up at a cost of PKR3.92 billion in February 2019, the project has established 14 emergency centres on two highways in the province to provide lifesaving first aid to victims of highway accidents.

No HIV cases were reported from the province in 2021. However, in 2020, the head of Balochistan's AIDS Control Programme, Dr Afzal Zarkoon, revealed that 1,523 HIV patients had been identified in Balochistan. The figures were low compared to other provinces, but this still represents a surprising increase in cases.

Land grabbing

Land grabbing was not reported from the province. This could be due to lack of coverage of the issue in the media. However, fisherfolk from Damb Bunder raised their voice against encroachments and land grabbing. In the past, there had been displacement of people of Gwadar

due to land grabbing by security forces. However, there was no such development in the year 2021. In fact, due to the massive protests in Gwadar last year, the number of checkpoints were reduced in the city, thereby reducing the areas grabbed by those checkpoints.

Environment

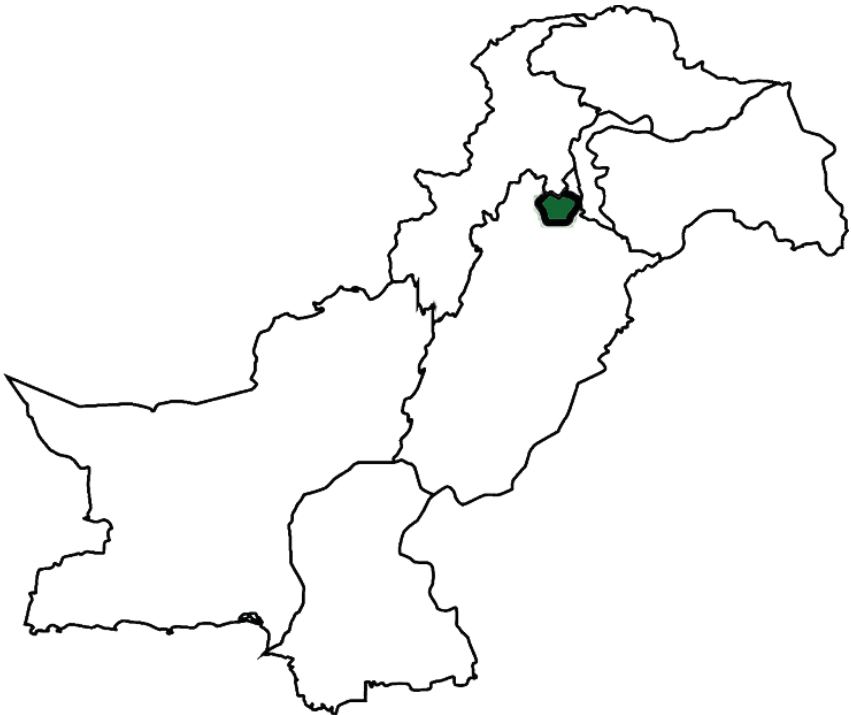
During heavy rainfall in July during monsoon this year, at least 21 people lost their lives. The province has also been prone to climate change effects. Jam Kamal Khan followed in the footsteps of the federal government in pursuance of the 'Billion Tree Tsunami'. In February, he claimed that around 4.2 million trees would be planted in the province by the end of 2021. However, the drive was too slow to meet the desired target. The current tree cover in the province is 1.4 percent, according to the 2019 Forestry Sector Review of Pakistan.

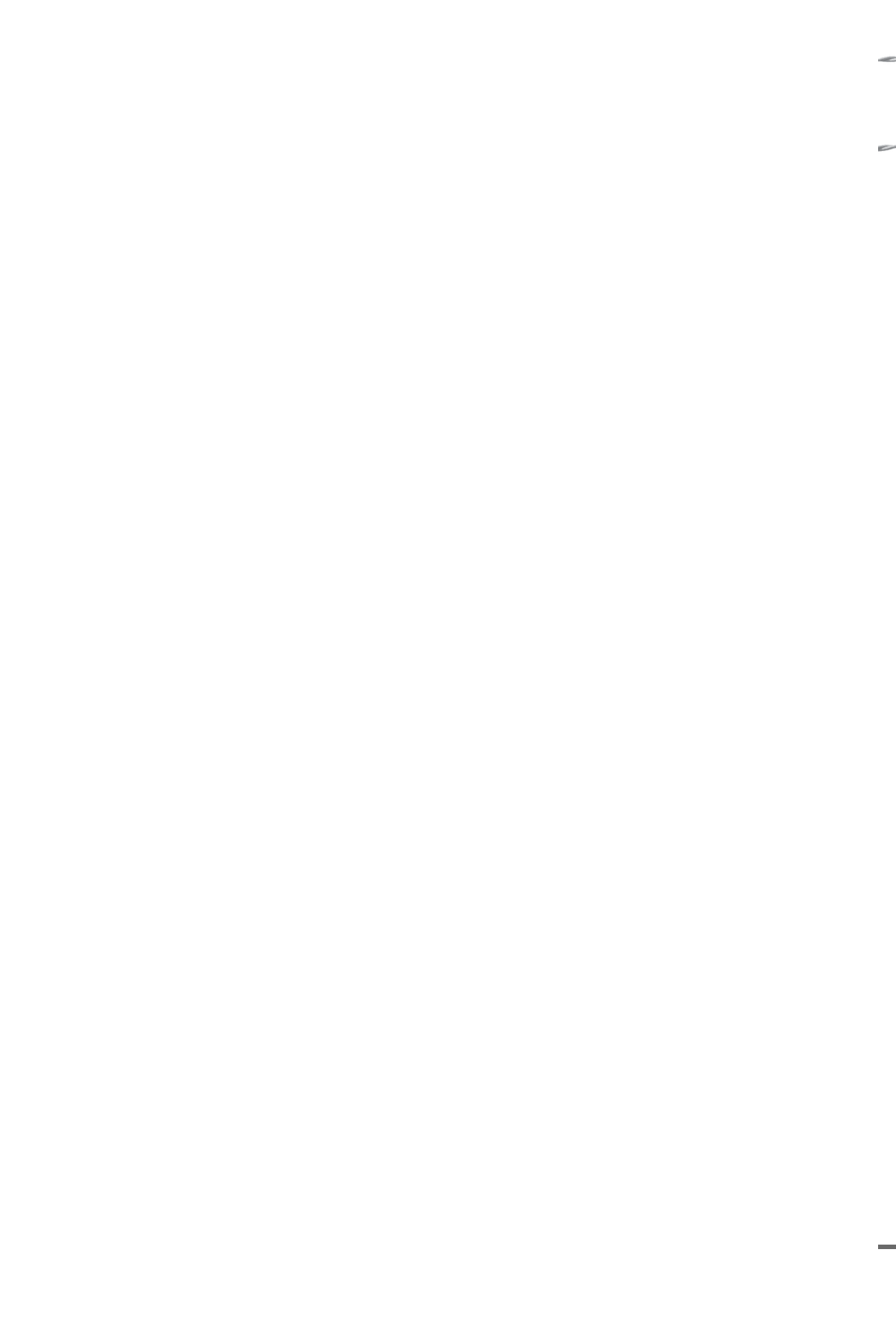
Similarly, access to drinkable water has always been a pressing issue, given the arid environment of the province. According to a study titled 'Drought Trends in Balochistan', Barkhan district had a prolonged drought (22 months) from 1999 to 2021. Quetta remains vulnerable because of insufficient drinkable water. The study further revealed that precipitation had fallen drastically in the province and that a large proportion of the population would not have access to drinking water by 2025. In July, irrigation minister Aslam Bizenjo warned that the Balochistan government would stop the supply of water from Hub Dam to Karachi if Sindh did not release the full water share of Balochistan.



Access to drinkable water has always been a pressing issue, given the arid environment of the province.

ISLAMABAD CAPITAL TERRITORY







KEY TRENDS

- In 2021, Islamabad witnessed two waves of Covid-19, in March and in July. According to government statistics, there were 108,666 confirmed cases in the year, with 967 deaths and 107,376 recoveries.
- The Ministry of Human Rights drafted some progressive laws but the Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Bill 2020 and the Prohibition of Forced Conversions Bill 2021 could not be passed due to objections from the Council of Islamic Ideology.
- The National Commission for Human Rights and National Commission on the Status of Women got their new chairperson appointments after a gap of two to three years.
- On 9 February, the Islamabad High Court was stormed by lawyers protesting the demolition of their chambers by the civic authority.
- In May, HRCP, the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists, and Pakistan Bar Council outrightly rejected the proposed Pakistan Media Development Authority Ordinance 2021, deemed draconian in scope and likened to a 'media martial law.'
- Media personnel such as Absar Alam and Asad Ali Toor were attacked and physically injured while outspoken journalist Hamid Mir was removed from his TV channel for criticising the military.
- A few protests, such as the sit-in organised by All-Pakistan Government Employees Association and students protesting against in-person exams in June, turned violent.
- On 20 July, 27-year-old Noor Mukadam was found brutally murdered at Zahir Jaffer's house in Islamabad's F-7 area. This event, following on the heels of murders of other women in the preceding weeks, shocked civil society and sparked nationwide protests, calling on the state to provide justice.
- In a landmark judgement, the Supreme Court barred the use of capital punishment for mentally ill prisoners. It was hearing the appeal of three prisoners on death row who were suffering from schizophrenia.
- In August 2021, the Prime Minister officially launched the much-disputed Single National Curriculum for primary schools and seminaries, claiming that this initiative would reduce social disparities related to quality of education.
- Despite the state's assurances that Afghan refugees would be given asylum, reports of harassment of refugees from the border and cumbersome documentation requirements were a cause of concern for civil society.



OVERVIEW

The year 2021 saw the passage of various acts and appointment of new chairpersons for the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) and the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW). However, fundamental freedoms such as freedom of expression and assembly were frequently threatened; state authorities continuously repressed journalists, medical professionals, government employees and students when they took to the streets to agitate for their rights.

Freedom of the press was especially targeted: journalists Absar Alam and Asad Ali Toor were attacked in their houses by 'unknown assailants'; however, no arrests were made despite available CCTV footage. Hamid Mir was also taken off air for criticising the country's military. The Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) outrightly rejected the proposed Pakistan Media Development Authority (PMDA) Ordinance 2021 that the federal government intended to impose, likening it to a 'media martial law.'

After the Taliban occupation of Kabul, the state made assurances that Afghan refugees would be granted asylum and their visa requirements eased; however, reports of harassment at the border became cause for concern.

The tragic murder of Noor Mukadam triggered a wave of protests calling for the state to recognise Pakistan's femicide crisis and provide justice.



The tragic murder of Noor Mukadam triggered a wave of protests.



RULE OF LAW

Laws and law-making

In 2021, the National Assembly passed 61 bills and 58 acts of parliament. The Ministry of Human Rights (MOHR) made some efforts to draft progressive legislation, responding to the demands of civil society and relevant stakeholders. This included the passage of the Protection of Journalists and Media Protection Bill 2021 by the National Assembly on 9 November 2021.

One section that has been welcomed is the establishment of an independent commission for the protection of journalists and media professionals. Yet, an international media rights watch dog and many commentators have criticised the vague provisions in the new law (Section 6) that lay down restrictions that were ‘tantamount to censorship and intimidation’ and envision criminal prosecution of journalists if they do not comply.

The Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Bill presented in the Senate by Senator Sherry Rehman was supported by Minister for Human Rights Dr Shireen Mazari, and unanimously approved by the Senate in July. If passed by the National Assembly, this bill would provide a comprehensive definition of torture, while including custodial sexual violence within the ambit of custodial torture, and would give the NCHR jurisdiction to investigate cases of torture. In December, the bills was deferred by the National Assembly’s Standing Committee on Interior till the next sitting.

The MOHR proposed a few laws to strengthen the rights of the child and protect women. These included three important bills related to the rights of children: the Juvenile Justice System (Amendment) Bill 2021, the Islamabad Capital Territory Child Protection (Amendment) Bill 2021 and the National Commission on the Rights of the Child (Amendment) Bill 2021. These bills proposed better protection of children through provisions such as raising the minimum age for child labourers from 14 to 18 years.

In September 2021, the Senate unanimously approved the Islamabad Capital Territory Domestic Workers Bill, 2021, where the minimum employment age was amended from 16 to 18. The year 2021 saw the passing of the Anti-Rape (Trial and Investigation) Act 2021, which called for the establishment of special courts to conduct fast-track trials in rape cases, but this law was criticised by human rights organisations for proposing chemical castration as punishment for perpetrators.

The Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Bill 2020 and the Prohibition of Forced Conversions Bill 2021, both laws drafted by the

MOHR, could not be passed as one remained stuck in the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) while the Parliamentary Committee to Protect Minorities from Forced Conversions has rejected the other. The CII cited fears that the domestic violence bill would destroy the institution of family, and expressed deep concern over the 'un-Islamic injunctions' in the bill. As for the second bill, the Minister for Religious Affairs said that the 'environment was unfavourable' for such legislation.

The Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs, Ali Mohammad Khan, said that setting an age limit for conversion of religion was un-Islamic and unconstitutional. Clerics in the CII also rejected the Prohibition of Forced Conversions Bill.

No fewer than 32 ordinances were laid before the House during the year, of which perhaps the Electoral Reforms Ordinance was the cause of most dismay for the opposition as well as the Election Commission of Pakistan, in particular the introduction of electronic voting machines and the decision to extend voting rights to overseas Pakistanis. Instead of considering their reservations, the government responded by dismissing those and criticising the commission.

Administration of justice

According to the Law and Justice Commission, the following cases were pending, disposed of and instituted in the courts during 2021:

<i>Name of courts</i>	<i>Pendency on 1 January 2021</i>	<i>Instituted during 2021</i>	<i>Disposal during 2021</i>	<i>Balance on 31 December 2021</i>
Supreme Court of Pakistan	46,695	18,075	12,838	51,766
Federal Shariat Court	178	118	139	157
Islamabad High Court	16,247	9,433	7,918	17,456
District Judiciary Islamabad	48,229	90,292	87,661	50,940

Source: Law and Justice Commission.

Attacks on the judiciary manifested itself in the form of Qazi Faez Isa's case which was dismissed by the Supreme Court on 26 April. Similarly, Justice Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui's petition against his removal by President Arif Alvi, on the recommendation of the Supreme Judicial Commission two years ago, dragged on in the Supreme Court until November when his license as an advocate was finally reinstated and he was permitted to return to law.



The Islamabad High Court (IHC) was stormed and damaged by lawyers protesting the demolition of their chambers by the Capital Development Authority (CDA)'s Enforcement Wing.

On 9 February 2021, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) was stormed and damaged by lawyers protesting the demolition of their chambers by the Capital Development Authority (CDA)'s Enforcement Wing. They laid siege to the courtroom and the chamber of IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah, virtually keeping him hostage for about three hours.

They barged into offices, broke windows and even the doors of the Chief Justice Block. The police registered a first information report (FIR) against 21 lawyers under various sections of the Pakistan Penal Code and Anti-Terrorism Act. The Supreme Court Bar Association condemned the demolition of lawyers' chambers.

On 9 February 2021, President Arif Alvi issued an unprecedented two-line ordinance to reappoint prosecutor general of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Syed Asghar Haider, for an indefinite period, drawing criticism from the opposition that claimed the person-specific ordinance had made NAB even more controversial.

In May, IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah revived the process of judicial accountability after a gap of over a decade, enabling auditors to examine financial affairs of the judiciary. The first audit conducted has led to accusations against former chief justice of the IHC Anwar Khan Kasi for misusing public funds.



ENFORCEMENT OF LAW

Law and order

The table below gives the total number of crimes against persons for 2021:

<i>Nature of crime</i>	<i>Total cases in 2021</i>
Murder	150
Rape	49
Gang rape	1
Rape of minors	12
Honour killings	-
Domestic violence	16
Acid crimes	2
Blasphemy	8
Police encounters	1

Source: ICT Police, in response to HRCP's request for information.

In January, Prime Minister Imran Khan constituted a five-member committee to monitor the law-and-order situation in the context of protests planned by multiple organisations—most importantly, the Pakistan Democratic Movement—in the federal capital. The Supreme Court imposed a ban on protests at Islamabad's D-chowk, and a new police unit was constituted in October to exclusively deal with protests in the federal capital. The case of Federal Ombudsperson for Protection against Harassment of Women Kashmala Tariq's son's alleged involvement in a fatal car crash that killed two, and quick dismissal of charges by the court in February, garnered widespread coverage.

On 14 June, HRCP expressed concern over the continued reports of deaths in police custody, including that of a minor, Hasan Khan, in Islamabad. In September, the senior superintendent of police suspended the station house officer and a Muharrar of Lohi Bher police station after a suspect, Afghan national Shireen Khan, committed suicide by hanging himself in the police lock-up. This remains an entrenched pattern that must be reversed.

In April 2021, an anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Islamabad removed terrorism charges against the five police officers involved in killing Usama Satti. The 21-year-old student was killed on 2 January when police personnel opened fire on him for not stopping his car in sector G-10. However, the IHC restored the charges later in July and referred the case to the ATC. The accused were dismissed from the police in light of the accusations.

Despite the government's anti-rape law and the subsequent formation of crisis cells and special sessions courts for the hearing of rape cases, Dawn News reported in May 2021 that an 80 percent acquittal was recorded in rape cases in Islamabad.

According to official statistics of the sessions court, in March the court convicted the accused in only one case out of 13 cases it decided. Likewise, in April, accused were acquitted in 13 out of 14 cases. In most of these cases, faulty investigation, lack of proper supervision by senior officials, meagre resources for low-paid investigation officers and weak prosecution were the reasons for such a higher percentage of acquittal.

Enforced disappearances

In February 2021, Prime Minister Imran Khan said in an address that he wanted 'not a single missing person' in the country. Despite this claim, enforced disappearances tripled in 2021 according to data from the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances (COIED). The commission released an annual performance report stating that they disposed of 6,117 cases until 31 December 2021. The following table gives a further breakdown of enforced disappearance cases taken up by the COIED:

Province	Number of cases reported in 2021	Disposal of cases up to 31 December 2021						Total cases disposed of in 2021	Remaining pending cases as of 31 Dec 2021
		Returned home	Internment centre	Prisons	Dead body found	Traced persons	Deleted*		
Punjab	57	730	91	165	67	1,053	175	64	266
Sindh	44	729	41	256	59	1,085	435	63	170
KP	213	537	778	107	61	1,483	267	210	1,417
Balochistan	1,108	1,095	2	11	31	1,139	155	929	352
Islamabad	13	156	20	30	8	214	55	19	46
AJK	2	10	3	12	2	27	23	10	10
GB	--	--	1	-	-	1	5	-	3
Total	1,460	3,257	936	581	228	5,002	1,115	1,319	2,264

* Closed due to not being cases of enforced disappearances, incomplete address, withdrawal by complainants or non-prosecution.

Source: Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances.

In an unprecedented move, the IHC imposed a fine of PKR10 million on the authorities for their failure to trace the whereabouts of missing person Ghulam Qadir, who has been missing for six years. Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani warned the authorities that if they failed to recover the missing person in a month, they would face a departmental

inquiry in addition to the fine. On 20 January, the IHC observed that the prime minister and his cabinet were responsible for 'enforced disappearances' in the federal capital territory. The court was hearing a petition by the mother of Imran Khan who was missing since 2015, and sought a list of prime ministers who had held the office since 2015.

Jails and prisoners

In March, the Supreme Court declared that a murder convict, who had spent 28 years behind bars amid rejection of his appeals, was a juvenile at the time of the commission of offence and thus entitled to benefit from a 2001 presidential ordinance regarding special remission in death sentence.

On 16 July, an under-trial prisoner from Adiala Jail, who had attempted suicide in April, tried to take his own life again while he was being brought back in police custody to the lower courts after a medical examination. On the same day, three other under-trial prisoners attempted to escape after injuring a fellow prisoner in a police van.

Death penalty

In October, the law ministry proposed amendments to the Criminal Law Reforms, whereby it suggested replacing the word 'death' with 'remainder of life' in offence 9C of the Control of Narcotics Substance Act and Section 127 of the Railways Act. This suggestion was welcomed by civil society, including the Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan Androulla Kaminara who said that these proposed amendments were in line with the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which calls for the death penalty only to be applied to the 'most serious crimes.'



FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

Freedom of movement

The interior ministry placed opposition leader of the National Assembly Shehbaz Sharif on the exit control list on the recommendation of NAB on 18 May 2021, while giving him the option to review the decision within 15 days.



To contain the spread of the virus, five residential sectors were sealed, and a complete ban on indoor activities was imposed.

The new variant of Covid-19 reached its peak in March, where 2,600 patients were reported in Islamabad in just one day. To contain the spread of the virus, five residential sectors were sealed, and a complete ban on indoor activities was imposed. In October, the police decided to block the Faizabad Interchange to stop the outlawed Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan from entering the federal capital, after they announced a long march from Lahore to Islamabad to pressure the government to release their leader Saad Hussain Rizvi.

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

Intolerance towards minorities by the state and the society remained a cause of concern in the reporting period. In two separate incidents of targeted religious attacks in September, gunmen opened fire at people, despite a high alert declared due to Imam Hussain's Chehlum. In January, an ATC issued death sentences with regards to sharing blasphemous content on social media.

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) reported that Rana Nouman Rafaqat and Abdul Waheed operated fake profiles and disseminated blasphemous material on social media, while Nasir Ahmad had uploaded blasphemous videos to a YouTube channel – all three were

tried and awarded death sentence. The fourth accused, Professor Anwaar Ahmed, was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment and a fine of PKR 100,000 for disseminating allegedly blasphemous views during a lecture at the Islamabad Model College where he was an Urdu teacher.

The Ahmadiyya community continued to suffer human rights violations related to their freedom to profess their beliefs during 2021. The following table provides a detailed breakdown of these violations at a national level:

<i>Description of events in 2021</i>	<i>Number</i>
Number of Ahmadis booked for 'posing' as Muslims	30
Number of Ahmadis booked for using Islamic epithets	5
Number of Ahmadis booked for preaching	25
Number of Ahmadis charged under PPC 295-C (blasphemy law)	12
Number of Ahmadis booked in other cases on religious grounds	31
Number of Ahmadis killed allegedly for their faith	3
Number of Ahmadis assaulted	9
Number of Ahmadiyya places of worship set on fire or damaged	7
Number of burials of Ahmadis denied in cemeteries	6
Number of Ahmadis' graves desecrated and damaged	70

Source: Ahmadiyya community, Rabwah.

Incidence of blasphemy accusations also continued throughout the year. According to the Centre for Social Justice, the highest number of people accused of blasphemy were Muslims (45) followed by Ahmadis (25). However, religious minorities were affected by the abuse (over 46 percent) more than their share in the population which is about 3.5 percent.

The following table provides a breakdown of blasphemy accused victims by religion and gender:

<i>Religion</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Transgender</i>	<i>Total</i>
Muslim	42	2	1	45
Christian	3	4	0	7
Hindu	7	0	0	7
Ahmadi	25	0	0	25
Total	77	6	1	84

Source: Centre for Social Justice (based on media monitoring).

The Centre for Social Justice also reported that the highest incidence of blasphemy cases occurred in Punjab, as shown in the following table of blasphemy cases in 2021 segregated by region:

<i>Territory</i>	<i>Cases</i>
ICT	7
Punjab	68
Sindh	3
KP	5
AJK	1

Source: Centre for Social Justice (based on media monitoring).

Freedom of expression

With Pakistan having fallen three places on the World Press Freedom Index in 2021, attacks on media and press freedoms worsened, highlighting the need for mechanisms that investigate such cases and hold the perpetrators accountable. A Pakistan Press Foundation report titled *Attacks on Media in Pakistan January-October 2021* observed an alarming trend during the year when not only physical attacks against media continued with impunity but restrictions on freedom of expression also grew.

The report recorded at least 27 incidents where media personnel were assaulted in connection with their work, including both armed attacks and beating of journalists. A research study by media rights watchdog Freedom Network revealed that a chilling pattern had emerged in the use of the criminal defamation section of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016 as such cases were registered against 56 percent of the two dozen Pakistani journalists and information practitioners who had a brush with PECA between 2019 and 2021.

The government framed social media rules under PECA in 2020, drawing backlash from digital rights activists who termed the laws draconian. After a review by an inter-ministerial committee, the rules were passed in September. The Removal and Blocking of Unlawful Online Content (Procedure, Oversight and Safeguards) Rules, 2021, allowed Pakistan's telecom regulator to block any website or platform that propagates 'immoral and obscene content.' These rules pose a threat to freedom of expression online and allow the government to have complete monopoly over social media in Pakistan.

In May 2021, HRCP, the PFUJ and Pakistan Bar Council outrightly rejected the proposed PMDA Ordinance 2021 that the federal government intended to impose, warning that the upending of the current media regulatory regime under this ordinance would destroy all public media

as it exists in Pakistan today. They also decried the proposed establishment of media tribunals to hand down punishments of up to three years in jail and PKR25 million in fines to content producers for violating the repressive new provisions, terming the proposed ordinance nothing less than a ‘media martial law.’ Later, on 9 November, the passage of the Protection of Journalists and Media Protection Bill 2021 by the National Assembly was hailed as a welcome move but with certain caveats including Section 6 (see *Laws and law-making* above).

On 28 August, the government issued a notification barring all employees from using social media platforms without permission. While it may be reasonable to bar government employees from sharing sensitive information, denying them the right to express their opinions was found to be arbitrary and disproportionate by civil society and activists alike.

In April, senior journalist Absar Alam was shot and injured outside his house. Before this incident, the Insaf Lawyers Forum had accused him of criticising the army on Twitter, and an FIR was lodged against him by the police. A month later in May, another journalist, Asad Ali Toor, was beaten up by ‘unknown assailants’ who broke into his house and assaulted him. In his statement to the police, he reported that the two men had identified themselves as being from the ISI.

The following month, Hamid Mir was taken off the air on Geo TV after he made a fiery speech in a meeting organised to protest against Asad Toor’s attack in which he had used strong words against the military. There were several protests against these incidents from journalists’ bodies and civil society, but to this date no one has been arrested despite available CCTV footage.

Several outspoken journalists faced harassment on social media. On 7 August, two journalists known for their dissenting views on state policies – Imran Shafqat and Amir Mirwere – taken into custody by the FIA in the space of one day. IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah suspended the FIA’s notice issued to journalist Bilal Ghauri, and sought an explanation from the FIA for not following the order issued in November 2020 regarding the process of summoning the accused in cyber-crime cases. The counsel of Bilal Ghauri claimed that the FIA had once again misused PECA, and summoned the accused to court without informing them of the reason.

On 4 December, prominent human rights defender Idris Khattak was handed a 14-year sentence for violating the Official Secrets Act. Note that Khattak remained forcibly disappeared for eight months before being charged under the said Act. This case is testament to how easily the Official Secrets Act can be weaponised against human rights defenders.

Earlier, in January, the Peshawar Court had rejected an application

requesting that Khattak's case be heard by a civilian court. Similarly, in November, HRCP expressed concern over reports that the ongoing trial of Professor Muhammad Ismail on fabricated charges of sedition and terrorism continues to be marked by failure to ensure due process.

Freedom of association

On 13 April, several rights-based organisations took issue with Prime Minister Imran Khan's insensitive remarks on the causes of sexual violence, and in a statement said that his remarks promoted rape culture. The government's decision to ban indoor and outdoor dining in light of new Covid-19 variants had rendered thousands of workers jobless by 2021. On 29 April, the All Rawalpindi Restaurants Association criticised the government for lack of compensation for workers, and demanded that those who lost their jobs should be paid out of social security funds so they can celebrate Eid-ul Fitr.

Space for non-government organisations (NGOs) continued to shrink in 2021. Representatives of national and international NGOs attended the virtual launch of a report by the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum in April. They pointed out problems with the development sector in Pakistan, where project implementation was suffering because of problems such as the difficulty of obtaining clearances and no-objection certificates for activities from different government offices, and the lack of coordination among various arms of the government including the banking sector and tax collection body.

Freedom of assembly

Of the many assemblies that took place in Islamabad during 2021, a few turned violent, such when the police fired around 1,000 tear gas shells against members of the All-Pakistan Government Employees Association in February during a sit-in at the Pakistan Secretariat against disparity in salaries and lack of benefits.

In the aftermath of this incident, Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed's insensitive remark that the police were testing the tear gas sparked outrage among civil society. In January, a protest by the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences' (PIMS) medical staff took place against the privatisation of the hospital.

Residents of Islamabad also came out on the streets against Usama Satti's death in a police encounter in Islamabad on the night of 2 January. During the second week of February, sit-ins and protests took place against the enforced disappearances of Baloch youth. The Pakistan Medical Association demonstrated on 9 April and staged a hunger strike against new laws and regulations for Pakistani medical students, but they dispersed when PPP senator Sherry Rehman told them that she would raise their demands at a parliamentary forum.

Aside from that, teachers, private school owners and students protested against school closures multiple times between April to mid-June, demanding restoration of academic activities.



Teachers, private school owners and students protested against school closures multiple times between April to mid-June.

On 27 May, a large number of journalists and civil society members protested against the attack on blogger and journalist Asad Toor, condemning violence against journalists and state censorship. The Hindu community also demonstrated in front of the Indian High Commission, demanding an inquiry into the death of 11 Hindu migrants and family members in Jodhpur.

When the government announced in-person exams in June during the fourth Covid-19 wave, students came out in droves to protest. Teachers also disapproved of these measures, stating that most students were unfamiliar with online exams, and that the education ministry should cancel or delay board exams due to the drastic increase in Covid-19 cases.

During these protests, state authorities detained a dozen students, and used teargas and batons to disperse the demonstrators. On 26 August, the PFUJ organised a demonstration against the PMDA Ordinance alongside lawyers, journalists and civil society members, but they were stopped from staging sit-ins.

On 5 September, a protest was held against the extrajudicial killing of a local trader by the police the preceding night; protestors blocked Kashmir Highway and demanded an immediate inquiry into the matter. On 10 September, lawyers staged a demonstration against the proposed appointment of Justice Ayesha Malik to the apex court, claiming that such an appointment is in violation of seniority.

Teachers protested in Islamabad during November against the handing over of the Federal Directorate of Education to the Municipal Corporation Islamabad, putting the colleges under the administrative control of the Federal College Education.

A large number of employees from different parts of the country gathered outside the Supreme Court on 15 December and raised slogans against the sacking of government employees. Protest against forced marriages, forced conversions and enforced disappearances also took place in December on International Human Rights Day.

Other protests that took place in Islamabad during 2021 were those that were observed nationwide, such as the annual Aurat March, rallies to express solidarity with Palestine in August and solidarity with Kashmir in May, and protests calling for an end to femicide.

Political participation

There were continued attempts by the government to marginalise the role of parliament in 2021 by repeatedly issuing one ordinance after another. The fear of NAB investigations without due cause also paralysed decision-making, negatively impacting the economy. In July, Petroleum Secretary Dr Arshad Mahmood complained to the Senate Standing Committee on Petroleum that government officials were not taking initiatives, so much so that the decision to utilise spare capacity to generate more electricity was not being taken.

National commissions reinstated with new leadership

This year, a number of national commissions that were previously defunct, either due to lack of resources or absence of leadership, were made functional with new appointments. The post of chairperson of the NCHR had been vacant since 19 July 2019, and in November 2021, Rabiya Javeri Agha was appointed as chairperson of NCHR by the president. The president also approved the appointments of the NCHR members, after which the NCHR held its first board meeting on 10 December.

Similarly, the NCSW had been without chairperson since November 2019 and in 2021, Nilofar Bakhtiar was appointed the new chairperson. In October, the NCSW carried out a series of consultations with civil society across the country to gather a broad range of opinions to devise a strategic plan. It must be noted, however, that all national commissions have reported lack of resources and short staffing as a roadblock in realizing their respective mandates.

Local government

The federal government issued the Islamabad Local Government Ordinance on 13 November to hold new local government polls after the dissolution of Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad. The CDA trade union organised a protest in response.

Local body representatives also challenged the ordinance in the IHC in December, terming the direct election of the mayor and removal of the post of deputy mayor as illegal, as well as the formation of a council of unelected persons to run a local government against the law.



RIGHTS OF THE DISADVANTAGED

Women

The uproar against the Islamabad chapter of the Aurat March since 2020 refused to subside in 2021 as the Peshawar High Court, under the Justice of Peace Provision, directed on 26 March that an FIR be charged against the organisers on grounds of religious offence, although that had been categorically debunked. In June, the prime minister faced a torrent of criticism for remarking during an Axios HBO interview that the rise in sexual violence against women in Pakistan was linked to their attire. This was the second time during his tenure that the prime minister had publicly made such a reductive association between rape and clothing.



Imran Khan faced a torrent of criticism for remarking during an Axios HBO interview that the rise in sexual violence against women in Pakistan was linked to their attire.

On 20 July, 27-year-old Noor Mukadam was found brutally murdered at Zahir Jaffer's house in F-7. This event, following on the heels of the murders of Maria Shah (in Shikarpur), Saima Ali (in Peshawar) and Qurutulain Baloch (in Hyderabad) the preceding weeks, shocked civil society and sparked nationwide protests that demanded the state acknowledge that Pakistan has a femicide crisis which must be dealt with as such.

Also in July, a video surfaced on social media in which Usman Mirza was seen abusing and harassing a young couple, forcing them to strip naked and recording inappropriate videos of them, in a room full of other men. The Islamabad police arrested Mirza and registered an FIR against him soon after the video went viral. Six other people were also indicted in the case as it was revealed that the group of suspects were a criminal ring that filmed such videos for blackmailing.

Transgender persons

In March, news of Pakistan's first transgender-only madrassah in Islamabad was published. Set up five months earlier by 34-year-old Rani Khan, a transgender woman, this madrassah provides a safe space for transgender persons to learn the Quran without fear of ostracism.

Another positive development was the inauguration of the first Transgender Protection Centre in Islamabad under Section-6(a) of the 2018 Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act. This facility, officially opened in October, is the first of its kind that would provide legal aid, psychological counselling, and health and rehabilitation services for transgender persons. At the opening event, Human Rights Minister Dr Shireen Mazari said that such centres would also be established in other cities to ensure transgender persons' rights.

In November, Jamaat-e-Islami senator Mushtaq Ahmad Khan presented an amendment bill which sought a prohibition of gender reassignment surgeries on the misconception that the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act legalises homosexual marriages, and recommended formation of medical boards at the district level to determine eligibility for these surgeries.

Children

In October, the Federal Shariat Court declared that the tradition of *swara* was un-Islamic. *Swara* is a widely prevalent form of forced child marriage practiced in jirgas and panchayats where girls (often minors) are given in marriage to end disputes. It remains to be seen whether this ruling will effectively curb this deeply entrenched practice or not. In the same month, the same court also determined that setting a minimum age limit for girls' marriage by the state was not against Islam as holding the limit at 16 years would help girls to at least get a basic education.

Labour

In August, the IHC held a hearing on a matter related to the implementation of labour laws, in which the ICT Labour Department's director was summoned to explain why labourers' complaints had not been addressed. However, it was pointed out that the department's limited staff and lack of proper resources severely limited capacity in addressing these complaints, underscoring the need to properly equip the labour department so that implementation of labour laws may be ensured.

The elderly

Despite the passage of the Maintenance of Old Parents and Senior

Citizens Act in 2019, to create a commission that would address the rights of the elderly, and the Parental Protection Ordinance 2021, to protect housing rights of the elderly, the welfare of senior citizens remains an issue that requires far more critical engagement.

According to the MOHR, 25.2 percent of parents in Islamabad have been physically assaulted by their children, while 31.8 percent elderly men and 16.7 percent elderly women have been mistreated by their children. A holistic approach, in which the state educates and sensitises society to create an environment where the rights of the elderly are protected, is essential.

A study conducted by the British Council and HelpAge International found that Pakistan is one of 15 countries worldwide with over ten million older people, with currently seven percent of the population over 60 years old. This study further emphasises that senior citizens' rights to an adequate standard of living, right to social protection and right to dignity are at risk.

Persons living with disabilities

In a landmark judgement, the Supreme Court declared in February that Kanizan Bibi, Imdad Ali and Ghulam Abbas—three mentally ill prisoners—should not be executed, adding that death row prisoners with mental illnesses should be considered exempt from capital punishment.

This historic judgement will benefit many mentally ill people, especially those from marginalised communities, that are often unable to understand the reasoning behind their sentence. The Supreme Court gave several recommendations to the federal and provincial governments, such as directives to establish high security forensic mental health facilities in teaching and training institutions of mental health and to constitute medical boards for mental health evaluations of condemned prisoners.

The judgement also underscored the insensitivity of outdated terms such as 'unsound mind' and 'lunatic' in relevant legislation, and directed that these be replaced with more appropriate terms such as 'mental illness' or 'mental disorder.'

Refugees

According to UNHCR, around 4,000 Afghans fled to Pakistan, Iran and Tajikistan in the lead-up to the Taliban's takeover of Kabul from 1 January to 22 July 2021. By 22 September, that number rose to 35,400, of which at least 10,800 were estimated to be the number of Afghan refugees that had fled to Pakistan. Although the prime minister had publicly announced that Pakistan would help Afghan refugees in the wake of

this humanitarian crisis, civil society organisations observed that the government had yet to formulate a coherent policy for assisting Afghan refugees, leading to an extreme lack of clarity among border patrol and the police. Moreover, refugees who were better connected were able to seek asylum more easily than more vulnerable refugees who were left to fend for themselves.

Reports of harassment were also common, such as extorting money, refusing entry, and even violence. Refugee camps suffered from poor hygienic conditions, and cumbersome documentation requirements led to slower processing of visas and transit.

Public debate on this issue was also ousted, with reports of civil society members being harassed by state authorities when they attempted to assist refugees. Instead, 'secret briefings' were held on the matter, relegating the issue to the military domain.

On 13 October, Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry announced that the government had approved a code of conduct for visa issuance to Afghan nationals, thereby easing visa restrictions to encourage their legal entry. The visa process for Afghan nationals was also made available online for those wishing to seek a visa from the Pakistan Embassy in Kabul.



SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

Education

In August, the prime minister officially launched the much-disputed Single National Curriculum (SNC) for primary schools and seminaries, claiming that this initiative would reduce educational disparities. In November, Minister for Education Shafqat Mahmood echoed the prime minister's statement, urging that the SNC must be implemented across the country as it was a milestone to end educational disparities. He further said that the prime minister had directed the education ministry to implement the SNC for classes six and above over the next six months instead of over the next two years as originally planned.

It is worth noting however that the SNC was rejected by the Sindh education ministry which cited education and curriculum are provincial subjects and termed the imposition of SNC as overly hasty. The SNC drew strong criticism from education experts and human rights defenders for its lack of inclusivity, over-emphasis on Islamic religious content at the expense of religious minorities, and poor pedagogy.

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2021 found that nearly 19 percent of all school-age children in Pakistan remained out of school. This has increased compared to their 2019 findings of 17 percent, a possible reason for which could be the corresponding increase in poverty which also amounted to around 19 percent of the total population.

Eighty-one percent of children were enrolled in government schools, 19 percent in private schools and one percent in madrassahs. These figures reflect a shift of 4 percent enrolment to government schools compared to ASER's 2019 findings. Government schools may thus face challenges in accommodating this influx of students in terms of adequate resources. Early childhood education enrolment, which previously stood at 39 percent in 2014, has also witnessed a marginal decline to 38 percent in 2021.

However, ASER found that tele-school sessions increased from 35 percent in March 2021 to 57 percent in November 2021. This, coupled with a reported 68 percent access to learning support from family members, indicates that distance learning, especially during a pandemic, has potential to bridge the home-school divide, and must be explored further to increase access to education.

Health

In 2021, Pakistan witnessed two waves of Covid-19, in March and in July. According to government statistics, there were 108,666 confirmed Covid-19 cases in the year of 2021, with 967 deaths and 107,376 recoveries.

Government facilities were converted to vaccination centres and the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) took a detailed stock of the situation in the country vis-à-vis the vaccination status and Covid-19 positivity rates across Pakistan in a meeting on 31 December.

After this meeting, NCOC permitted those cities with a vaccination status of above 55 percent to resume regular business activities and in-person gatherings while adhering to Covid-19 protocols. Those cities with a lower vaccination status had to abide by stricter restrictions. When the PTI government privatised PIMS, the largest public sector hospital in ICT, under the Medical Teaching Institute Ordinance, lower-income groups who depended on it for medical care found that they could not avail tests and medicine free of cost anymore as they were only exempted from paying doctors' fees.

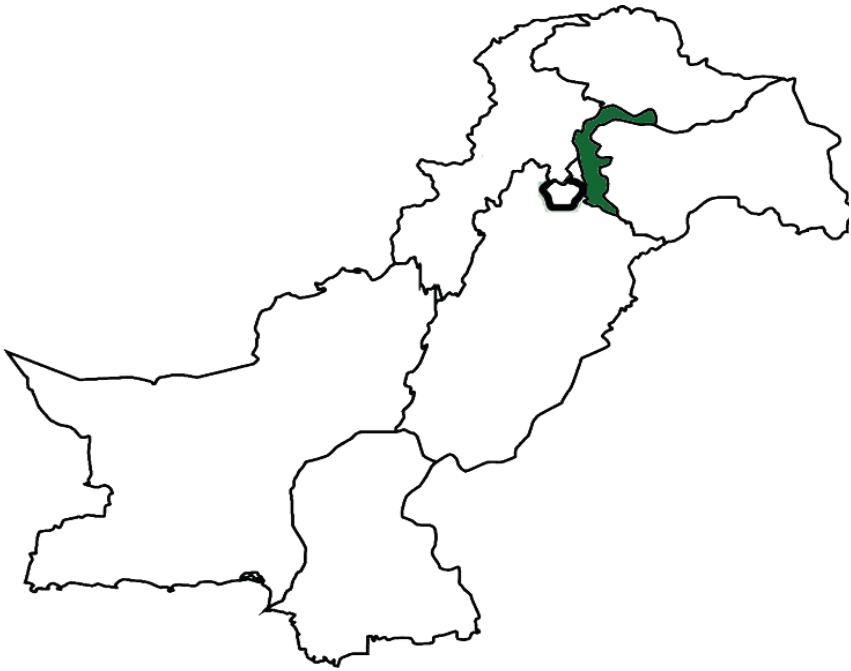
It was expected that the Board of Governors constituted would promote good governance, but it failed to fulfil basic requirements such as creating a mechanism for issuing staff salaries. Health workers also went on a 72-day strike, that too during a resurgence of Covid-19 infections.

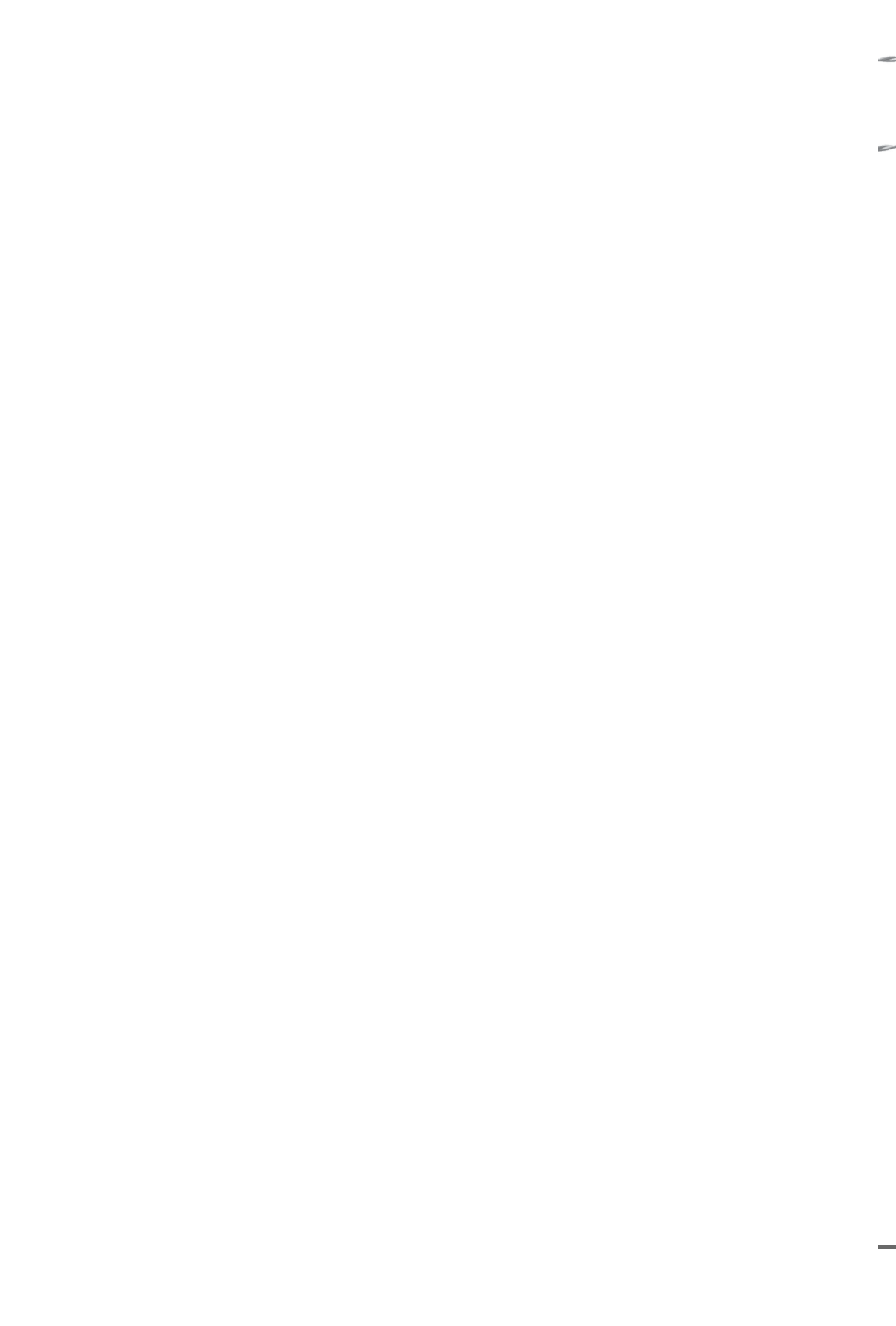
As a result, this ordinance was lapsed in July after negotiations with Special Adviser to the Prime Minister on Health Dr Faisal Sultan. In March, the federal government allowed provinces and private entities to import Covid-19 vaccines, raising concerns about pricing and accessibility of vaccines, particularly to lower income groups and those not residing in urban centres.

Housing and public amenities

At the end of October, the CDA violated the Supreme Court's stay order that *katchi abadis* not be destroyed by demolishing a *katchi abadi* in G/11-4 in Islamabad. As a result, more than 60 families, including old men, women and children, were left homeless in the cold weather. Most of the residents were sanitation workers and domestic servants by profession.

AZAD JAMMU
AND
KASHMIR







KEY TRENDS

- This was a general election year in AJK and the region elected its tenth legislative assembly.
- The elections largely remained peaceful except for a few incidents of violence that left at least three people dead and around six security personnel injured.
- Political parties levelled allegations against the federal government of influencing the electoral process through pre-poll rigging. For the first time in history, a sitting prime minister of Pakistan participated in the election campaign of his party's local chapter, while the federal minister for Kashmir affairs was caught distributing cash among voters during the election campaign.
- New election laws tightened the space for dissent. Political parties supporting the idea of an independent state of Jammu and Kashmir remained excluded from the electoral process.
- The higher judiciary in AJK functioned without judges. For the first six months, the Supreme Court of AJK had only one judge instead of three while the High Court had only one judge instead of nine for the entire year.
- Reports of rape and sexual harassment targeting women and children continued to surface, although the majority of rape cases likely went unreported, especially in rural areas.
- The Line of Control largely remained peaceful during the year as India and Pakistan agreed to restore the 2003 ceasefire agreement on 26 February. No civilian deaths were reported, although six civilians were injured during an exchange of cross-border fire.
- Another year passed without holding local government elections in AJK. The last local government elections were held in 1991.
- The right to access to information has been acknowledged and protected as a fundamental right under the Interim Constitution Act 1974 (13th Amendment). However, legislation on the right to information has yet to be enacted. A writ petition lodged by journalists and civil society in the AJK High Court remained pending.
- The year witnessed some of the worst road accidents caused by poor road infrastructure and outdated public transport as well as floods and avalanches.



OVERVIEW

Even though many administrative and legislative powers were devolved to Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)'s elected government through the 13th Amendment in the region's interim constitution, major decision-making powers are still vested with the prime minister of Pakistan's office. Pakistan continues to bear a large part of the region's financial and security responsibilities.

The AJK government remains in denial when it comes to human rights violations and there is no mechanism to record these at the government or non-government levels. Local as well as national media covered only political activities of the region and paid little attention to the state of human rights. As a result, human right violations largely remained missing from official records.

Due to self-censorship as well as lack of attention given to matters related to AJK in the national print and electronic media, human rights violations largely went unreported. Local media was curtailed through the Azad Jammu Kashmir Press Foundation, a semi-government welfare-cum-regulatory body headed by a serving high court judge. The newly enacted cybercrime laws added an extra layer to the existing invisible sphere of censorship. Consequently, no significant documentation is available to formally gauge the state of human rights in the region.

Elections in AJK were held on 25 July. While the Line of Control (LOC) remained largely silent after the ceasefire agreement was reimposed in February, some incidents of violence took place in cities and towns during elections rallies and other protests.



RULE OF LAW

Legislative system and law-making

The 13th Amendment to the AJK Interim Constitution Act 1974 passed in 2018 abrogated the law-making powers of the AJK Council – a supra-constitutional body headed by the prime minister of Pakistan – and converted it into an advisory council. Many of the subjects previously under the Council’s dominion have either been devolved to the AJK Legislative Assembly or shifted to the prime minister of Pakistan under Section 21, subsection 7. Interestingly, the prime minister of Pakistan, as chairman of the AJK Council, devises laws for AJK through the federal cabinet, which has no representation from AJK at all. Neither do the people of AJK have any role in electing the prime minister of Pakistan.

In 2021, the AJK Assembly conducted 12 sessions and remained in session for 35 days, while as per the constitution, the assembly should remain in session for at least 60 days during a year. A total of 33 laws were passed and amended during the year, including some very important laws regarding human rights. These include the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Juvenile Justice System Act 2021, the Criminal Law (First Amendment) Act 2021 and the controversial Azad Jammu and Kashmir Regulation of the Services of Certain Categories of Contractual, Ad Hoc or Temporary Government Employment (Terms and Conditions) Act 2021.

The Juvenile Justice System Act 2021 improved the questionable investigation and trial system for juveniles in AJK. The act proposed designated juvenile courts at tehsil, district and session level, an investigation officer not below the rank of a sub-inspector and rehabilitation centres for juveniles in prison. The act also ensures the privacy and wellbeing of juveniles during investigation and in custody and prison.

The Criminal Law (First Amendment) Act 2021 suggests increasing the punishment and penalties for certain categories of crime against citizens. The controversial Azad Jammu and Kashmir Regulation of the Services of Certain Categories of Contractual, Ad Hoc or Temporary Government Employment (Terms and Conditions) Act 2021 regularised around 4,300 ad hoc and temporary government employees in grades 1 to 18, mostly appointed on political grounds, without completing due process. Political parties and youth organisations widely protested against this act as it minimised job opportunities and undermined competitive recruitment system for government jobs.

Administration of justice

The judicial system of AJK includes a Supreme Court at the top, which is

an appellate bench consisting of three judges including a chief justice. With its headquarters in Muzaffarabad, the Supreme Court has circuit benches in Rawalakot and Mirpur. High court and courts for special purposes also have their camp presence at divisional level while district and sessions courts as well as courts of sub-judge function at the district and tehsil level respectively.

The chairman of the AJK Council, i.e., the prime minister of Pakistan, on the recommendation of the president of AJK appoints the chief justices of the high courts as well as the Supreme Court. Other judges of the superior courts are appointed by the AJK president on the advice of the council after consultation with the chief justice of both higher courts. Judges in lower courts are appointed through the public service commission.

The Supreme Court functioned for the first half of the year with only one judge as it took more than a year for both AJK and the federal governments to develop a consensus on the appointment of judges. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)-led government in Muzaffarabad as well as the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-led government in Islamabad wanted a fair share in these appointments. Both judges were appointed after developing a 'mutual understanding' between Muzaffarabad and Islamabad. However, some lawyers expressed reservations against the new inductions (note: these appointments are never challenged at any forum).

The AJK High Court also functioned with only one judge instead of nine throughout the year. As a result, the number of pending cases, especially those related to marital relationships and family matters, increased manifold. According to high court records, the only judge in the high court heard 19,369 cases and disposed of 3,193. The lower courts heard 103,824 cases and 50,382 were disposed of.



ENFORCEMENT OF LAW

Law and order

AJK is a relatively peaceful region with a lower crime rate as compared to other administrative units of Pakistan. In October this year, the police established the first female-run police station of AJK in Rawalakot district while a community policing centre was set up in Muzaffarabad.

The police annual report depicts a clear decline in the total number of cases registered this year as they dropped to 8,983 as compared to 11,965 during the previous year. It is believed that people hesitate in registering cases with the police for crimes against women, especially rape, attempted rape and harassment. Police also hesitate to share clear data on crimes against women and children. Cases of harassment at the workplace are often reported in local newspapers but these are not reflected in the police record. On 22 March, a district judge in Bagh ordered the registration of a first information report (FIR) against five police personnel and a sixth private person for torturing and abusing a man. On 21 December, a large number of people staged a demonstration during a token shutter-down in Abbaspur town to protest against the recent killing of a resident of their area in a car-snatching incident in Rawalpindi.

The number of murder cases, violence against women, rape, burglary and narcotics were higher in 2021. A total of 74 murder cases, one gang rape and 13 rape cases were registered this year.



A token shutter-down in Abbaspur town to protest against the recent killing of a resident of their area in a car-snatching incident in Rawalpindi.

Jails and prisoners

As of 31 December, 874 people were imprisoned in different jails of AJK. Of them, 18 are juvenile, with 17 women and two infants accompanying their mothers; 99 prisoners, including two women, have been sentenced to death and their appeals are at different stages. No prisoner on death row has been executed in the last two years in AJK.

AJK has two central jails in Muzaffarabad and Mirpur as well as five district jails in Bagh, Poonch, Plandri, Kotli and Bhimber. Three districts—Neelum, Jhelum Valley and Haveli—lack district jails; prisoners are either kept in judicial lockups or shifted to the nearest jails.

The jail infrastructure is inadequate and fails to meet the needs of prisoners. Central jails in Muzaffarabad and district jails of Bagh, Rawalakot and Plandri were destroyed in the 2005 earthquake and reconstruction has not been completed yet. These jails are in makeshift buildings while the rest of the jails are in old buildings and the spaces allocated for prisoners inside the jails are insufficient. Currently, under-age boys and girls are kept in the same premises as adults, which is against the law.

Enforced disappearances

The issue of enforced disappearances is not as intense in AJK as it is in other provinces. No new case of involuntary disappearance was registered in AJK this year. None of the 16 missing citizens, according to the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances' record, have been produced before any court of justice or commission.

On 10 February, a video of three youth living in Muzaffarabad refugee camps surfaced on social media, protesting against the proposed resettlement of Kashmiri refugees from AJK camps to Sujawal district in Sindh. Those young men went missing but were recovered a few days later. Their families have refused to register any case or release any information related to this incident. Unfortunately, no official record or media report was available on this issue. The only record available was a video wherein they are shown as having been tortured brutally.



FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

Freedom of expression

Freedom of expression in AJK stayed under threat in an environment of invisible censorship. Local media covered the political activities of mainstream parties that support the region's accession to Pakistan. Rallies and protests of nationalist parties and groups supporting complete independence were missing from the national as well as local print and electronic media and could be seen only on social media.

In recent years, the government of AJK has passed several laws to curb freedom of expression – particularly if it related to the political status of the regions – including cybercrime laws.

Media houses, think tanks and other organisations need permission from either the AJK Council or the federal Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan to operate in the region. Compliance with the official Pakistani narrative is achieved through a mixture of structural censorship and self-censorship.

This year, 26 cases were registered under the cybercrime laws, mostly against journalists and activists who tried to expose corruption in the public exchequer. The actual number of cases is believed to be even higher because no official figures are available. It is widely believed that law enforcement agencies, politicians and public office bearers have all misused these laws to crack down on their critics and opponents.

On 1 March, Dunya News reporter Syed Taqi ul Hasan and his fellow journalists were assaulted by members of the ruling PML-N while covering an allegedly illegal construction by Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider.

Later, the police arrested eight journalists, including Naem Chughtai, Syed Taqi ul Hasan, Siddique Lone and Hamza Katal. The journalists were affiliated with an organisation called the Young Journalists Forum.

On 17 August, another Samaa TV reporter, Maqsood Ahmed, was tortured by the police outside the Muzaffarabad Cricket Stadium. He was filming a clash between spectators and police outside the stadium. Despite showing his press card, the police tortured him.

Crackdown on civil society protests

In 2021, numerous clashes and police crackdowns on civil society protests were reported. In January hundreds of protesting teachers were tortured by the police in the capital Muzaffarabad, leaving several teachers seriously injured and dozens arrested. They were protesting for



Hundreds of protesting teachers were tortured by the police in the capital Muzaffarabad

a raise in their salaries. In January again, a strike was called in the Poonch division against a steep increase in flour prices. Leaders of the strike campaign were arrested a day before the strike in Rawalakot and Bagh. Three youth were arrested for making announcements in Rawalakot, while six leaders of the Public Action Committee were arrested in Bagh. During the strike, clashes broke out between police and protesters at Azad Pattan in which several civilians and police personnel were injured.

In March, a protest was organised by the Ghamir Revolutionary Youth Movement in Ghamir near the LOC, against the lack of basic services including mobile phone service. Police dispersed the protest with baton charges and teargas shelling. Six protesters were arrested.

In June, students protested in Abbaspur against load-shedding of electricity and other issues; the police resorted to baton charging and teargas shelling, and then registered two separate cases against 35 students under the Anti-Terrorism Act. About eight students were detained at the Rawalakot police station for several days.

In July, one civilian was killed and 15 others injured when the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) police opened fire in Neelum Valley. The KP police personnel had been called in to maintain law and order during the elections. However, a dispute arose between the AJK administration and police and KP police personnel during the booking of the return bus, after which the KP police opened fire on AJK police personnel and the assistant commissioner.

A young passer-by, Atiq-ur-Rehman, came into the line of fire and died

on the spot. Some AJK police personnel were also injured. The police personnel responsible were later released and handed over to the KP police.

State of civil society organisations

Since 2015, the Government of AJK has been squeezing the space for civil society organisations and non-government organisations (NGOs). After the National Action Plan was extended to AJK, the government imposed several restrictions on civil society organisations, including tightening the no-objection certificate and registration process. Consequently, numerous local and national NGOs rolled back their operations and terminated their staff. There is no number available for how many NGOs were registered or obtained no-objection certificates for their activities in recent years.

Religious intolerance and blasphemy laws

Mob lynching on charges of blasphemy is almost non-existent in AJK. However, incidents of filing cases under the blasphemy law sometimes occur, especially during the Islamic months of Moharram and Rabi ul Awal.

In January, a citizen named Humayun Pasha was arrested for removing certain religious posters in Mirpur. He was arrested under Section 16 of the Maintenance of Public Order Act. Pasha was accused by citizens of having insulted holy figures. He was assaulted by a group of lawyers and workers of the Tehreek-i-Labbaik Party (TLP) before the police took him into custody. According to the police report, he was attacked by some prisoners when he was sent to District Jail Mirpur. He was released on bail on 30 September after spending 200 days in jail.



DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT

Elections

This was a general election year in AJK and the region elected its tenth legislative assembly after the previous assembly completed its tenure. The previous assembly consisted of 49 members and after adding four more general seats through a constitutional amendment, the new assembly has 53 seats, including 45 directly elected general seats, five seats reserved for women, and three seats reserved for clerics, technocrats, and overseas Kashmiris respectively. Twelve out of 45 general seats are elected by Kashmiri migrants settled in mainland Pakistan.

The tenth general elections of the AJK assembly were held on 25 July 2021. The Election Commission recorded a 62 percent turnout. Amid allegations of interference from the Government of Pakistan, the incumbent PTI won a clear majority in the assembly by securing 26 seats. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) won 11 seats and the PML-N filled six.

After the allocation of reserved seats, the PTI obtained 32 out of 53 seats in the assembly. During the last three terms of assembly, Pakistan's main national political parties have dominated the political arena and space for local political parties has been further squeezed as the AJK-based Muslim Conference and Jammu Kashmir People's Party could take only one seat each.

The elections largely remained peaceful, although some isolated incidents of voting interference were observed and reported on polling day. Three political workers were killed during clashes between political parties as well as with security forces. All political parties made allegations of rigging but did not mount a sustained challenge to the election result.

On polling day, two PTI workers were killed in a clash with PPP activists at a polling station in the Kotli district, five policemen were beaten up in different areas and four army personnel died in a road accident while returning from election duties. In Bagh district, polling was suspended after clashes between PTI and PPP workers left several injured. A young passer-by was killed in Sharda Town after the elections when KP police personnel, who were on election duty in AJK, opened fire on the local police and assistant commissioner for not providing them transport for their return journey.

In an unprecedented move, the prime minister of Pakistan participated in PTI rallies and addressed public gatherings in AJK during the election campaign. The federal minister for Kashmir affairs was found distributing funds among voters. The Election Commission ordered an FIR against him and banned him from participating in the election



In an unprecedented move, the prime minister of Pakistan participated in PTI rallies and addressed public gatherings in AJK during the election campaign.

campaign. Nonetheless, he, along with other federal ministers, openly participated in election activities. These activities further strengthened the idea of federal influence in the AJK elections. The hardliner TLP was initially banned by the AJK government from running an election campaign and the district administration was instructed not to allow any political activity and gathering by this party, but later the TLP was allowed to take part in the elections.

Curbs on dissenting political ideologies

Political activities in AJK are indirectly controlled by the federal government. Political parties supporting the idea of Kashmir's accession to Pakistan are allowed to take part in the electoral process.

A new electoral law, the Election Commission Act, was introduced through an amendment to AJK's constitution in 2018 and amended in 2021 to control the election process and exclude nationalist parties such as the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front from taking part in the electoral process.

Under the new law, a candidate, when submitting nomination papers for the polls, is required to sign an affidavit acknowledging that s/he favours 'Pakistan's ideology, the ideology of annexation of the disputed Kashmir region with Pakistan and the integrity and sovereignty of Pakistan.'

Under the AJK Elections Act 2020, candidates participating in the AJK elections must formally endorse 'the ideology of Pakistan' and Jammu

and Kashmir's accession to Pakistan. Candidates disagreeing with the ideology of accession to Pakistan were disqualified from participating in the election process.

Recent legislations have extended the constraint to political parties in AJK. These newly enacted laws have further squeezed the already limited spaces for political groups with dissenting ideologies. So far, the Election Commission has registered 32 political parties, none of which carry the ideology of an independent Kashmir state.

Local government polls

Another year passed without local government polls in AJK. The last local government elections were held in 1991. Despite growing public demand and a court order to conduct local government elections as soon as possible, the government and major political parties showed reluctance to hold elections.

Consequently, the newly elected government has also appointed several party associates as heads of local government. Administrative and financial powers should ideally be devolved to the local tier but members of the AJK Assembly, whose main job is to legislate and not carry out development work, are currently administering development schemes. In the absence of local governments, the second tier of leadership comprises kinfolk of known political leaders while young political workers find little space to participate in the political process. Women experience limited economic opportunities, little scope for participation in politics, and lack of access to leadership positions at policymaking levels.



RIGHTS OF THE DISADVANTAGED

Sexual assault and violence against women and children

Cases of sexual harassment and rape often reported in the local media remained missing from the official record. It is believed that a majority of victims of harassment and rape avoid reporting such cases for cultural reasons, including victim blaming and an untrustworthy investigation and redressal system.

Only one case of gang rape and 13 cases of rape were reported in the entire region, while 282 cases of *zina* (illicit sexual relationship) were reported.

Youth and women's role in political activities

Although the prime minister of AJK formally lifted the decades-long ban on student unions in 2018, none of the five public universities and hundreds of colleges in AJK were able to hold elections in 2021. The only arena available for students to participate in political activities is through the student and youth wings of major political parties.

Only a few young people and women were awarded party tickets to contest elections this year. One woman was elected as a member of assembly on a general seat.

Environment

Natural disasters and accidents

AJK is prone to natural disasters and accidents associated with glaciers, floods and landslides. In March, a woman and her four children died in a remote snowbound hamlet in Neelum Valley after their house was struck by an avalanche.

In July, around 30 houses were destroyed and a couple went missing following a cloudburst-triggered flash flood in the Salkhala area of Neelum Valley. In July again, a woman and her two children were killed after lightning struck their mud house in Neelum Valley.

Road accidents

The poor road infrastructure often causes traffic accidents, which claim dozens of lives every year. The year witnessed some of the worst road accidents and natural disasters including floods, landslides and avalanches which killed around 110 citizens.

Eight people were killed and another six injured in two road accidents in the suburbs of Muzaffarabad in January. In May, 11 people died and 14 others were injured after a passenger coach fell into the river near Muzaffarabad. In July, six members of a family died after their vehicle plunged into the Neelum River in Neelum Valley.

In one of the worst road accidents in the year in November, 22 passengers, including women and children, died and 14 others were injured after a Rawalpindi-bound coach plunged into a ravine in Palandri district.

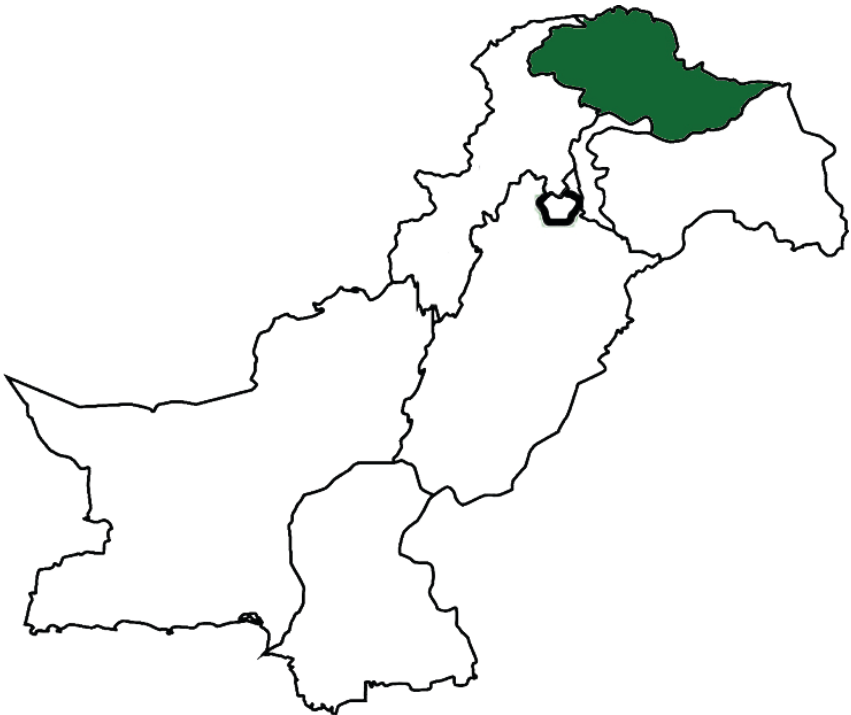
Manmade disasters

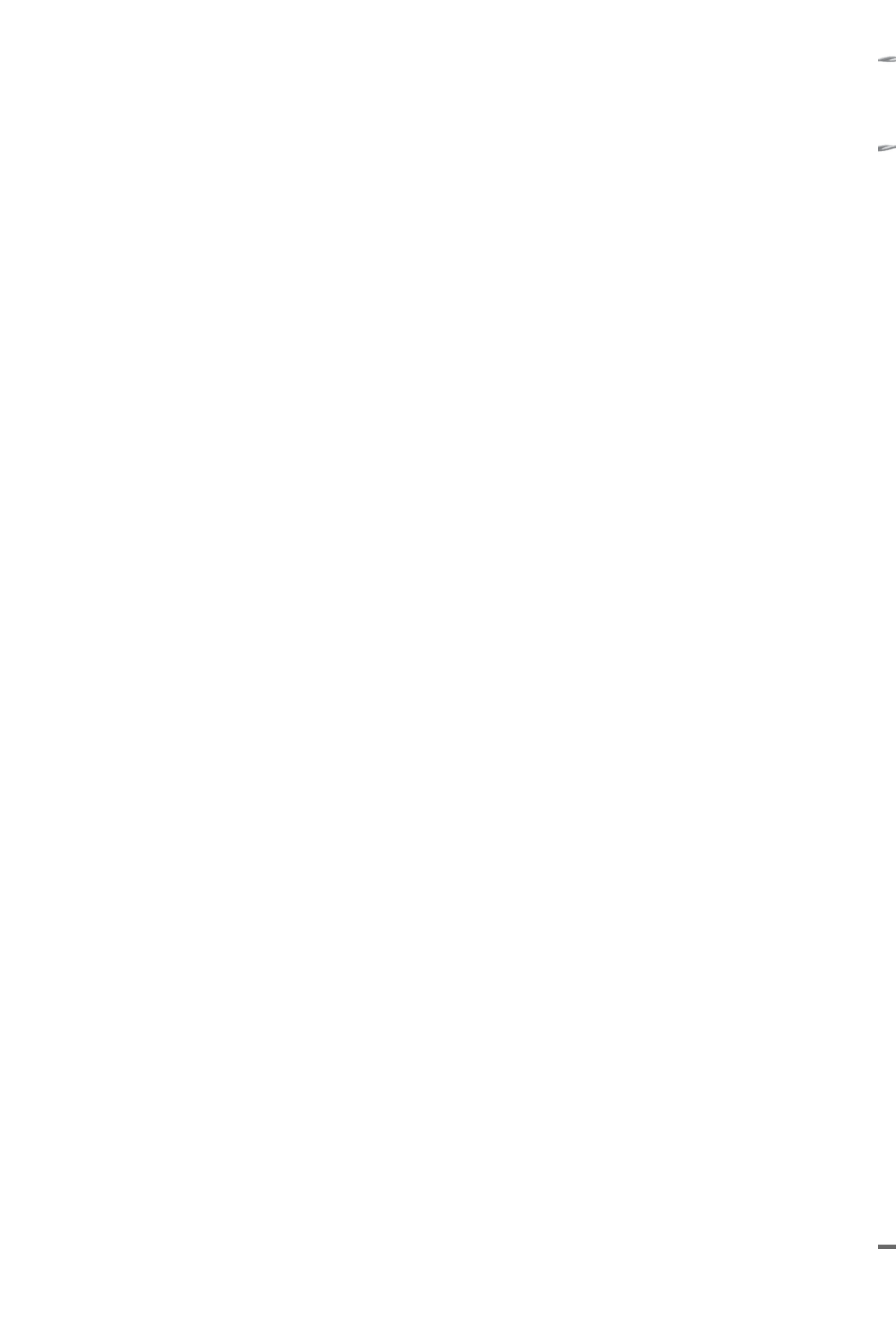
On 26 February, India and Pakistan agreed to restore the 2003 ceasefire agreement to stop crossfire along the LOC. In the first two months of this year, six civilians were injured in over 40 ceasefire violations. According to official figures, not a single civilian was killed on the LOC in 2021.

In previous years, cross-LOC shelling adversely impacted the local economy, especially the flourishing tourism sector, which creates thousands of jobs for youth. Despite massive allocations on record, actual spending on developing infrastructure and the construction of safety bunkers for people living near the LOC is minimal.

Absence of adequate health services such as first aid and a prompt ambulance service remains a challenge for people. Women and children living close to the LOC are the most vulnerable, especially when they have to share a narrow space bunker with other strangers for safety during cross-border shelling.

GILGIT- BALTISTAN







KEY TRENDS

- Ad hoc appointments were made in the higher judiciary in Gilgit-B.
- Community-owned lands in GB remained under threat from the government and elite capitalists as there were multiple incidents of usurpation of land by force or by violating customary laws.
- There were instances of murder and fanning of sectarian rhetoric in Gilgit.
- Cases of blasphemy and cyber-crimes increased.
- Curbs on freedom of thought and expression continued through banning book launches, threatening intellectuals, incarcerating political activists, and registering cases against journalists and social media activists.
- Local government elections have not been held for more than 12 years.
- New forms of violence against women emerged, like cyber harassment, harassment at workplace and murder of women which were painted as suicide cases.
- Signs of climate change became visible in the ecologically fragile region of GB in the form of flash floods and glacial lake outburst floods.



OVERVIEW

The status of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) as a liminal region within the polity of Pakistan remained unchanged during 2021. The anomalous status of this region remained a source of discontent for the local population.

In the election campaign in November 2020, Prime Minister Imran Khan had promised to make GB a province, and in 2021, Federal Law Minister Farogh Naseem sent an initial draft of proposed reforms to the prime minister, which is still under deliberation. However, political parties, particularly nationalists, have expressed their reservations on the proposed reforms because the draft is not based on consultations with the concerned stakeholders and local people. In the last five years, the issue of land rights with respect to community land has become serious, pitching local communities against the government and elite capitalism; this issue intensified in 2021.

A positive development this year was the emerging trend of people protesting for their right to basic civic amenities like electricity, quality wheat, health, water, road and internet connectivity almost every week across GB.



LAW AND ORDER

Laws and law-making

On 10 March, The GB Legislative Assembly unanimously adopted a joint resolution demanding that the federal government declare GB a provisional province of Pakistan, while ensuring its representation in the National Assembly, Senate and other constitutional bodies. Political analysts termed it a futile activity as the resolution of a regional assembly was not binding on the federal government.

In 2021, the GB Assembly passed four laws, namely the Gilgit-Baltistan Local Government Amendment Act, the Gilgit-Baltistan Health Department Regularisation (Doctors and Paramedics) Act, Gilgit-Baltistan Public Procurement Act and Gilgit-Baltistan Finance Act. These laws are important as doctors have been on strike demanding their regularisation, and these may help address their long overdue demands in GB.

Administration of justice

The issue of the appointment of judges in the Supreme Appellate Court of GB persisted throughout 2021. Currently, there are two judges (a chief judge and a judge) while the post of a third judge has been vacant for the last three years.

The High Court Bar Association passed a resolution on 7 August 2021, demanding that a bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan be established in Gilgit.

They also demanded that the vacant positions of judges in the higher judiciary be filled. It is pertinent to mention that judges in GB are appointed on an ad hoc basis in the Supreme Appellate Court. The chief justice of the Supreme Appellate Court is appointed from outside GB and is usually a retired judge of any high court or the Supreme Court of Pakistan.



ENFORCEMENT OF LAW

Law and order

The table below shows the number of criminal cases registered in GB in 2021:

<i>Nature of crime</i>	<i>Gilgit</i>	<i>Diamer-Astore</i>	<i>Baltistan</i>	<i>Total</i>
Murder	29	34	2	65
Attempt to murder	44	54	6	104
Hurt	60	45	23	128
Rape	1	1	-	2
Abduction of children	28	13	3	44
Assault against a public servant	31	23	5	59
Robbery	7	2	2	11
Burglary	112	4	16	132
Theft	250	45	24	319
Fatal accidents	26	3	13	42
Non-fatal accidents	52	14	36	102
Narcotics	52	4	13	69
Arms ordinance	132	112	9	253
Other cases	365	96	79	540
Total	1190	450	231	1871

Source: GB police (crime branch), in response to HRCP's request for information.

The incidence of death penalty sentences increased in 2021. On 4 November, the GB Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) awarded death sentences to eight people who were involved in the killing of nine people in two separate attacks in the Naltar valley of Gilgit district.

The ATC also sentenced two men, Muhammad Zaman and Fakhar Alam, to death (with additional sentences of 12 years' imprisonment and a fine of PKR500,000) for their involvement in the murders of Farjad Hussain and Muzzamil in Upper Naltar the previous year. In the same case, the ATC sentenced Asif Kamal to life imprisonment (with additional sentences of 12 years' imprisonment and fine of PKR300,000), and four other accused to 12 years of imprisonment. Three of the accused however were acquitted due to a lack of evidence.

On 24 November, a ruling was passed by the speaker of the GB Assembly in which he ordered the local administration to remove the name of Ghulam Shehzad Agha, Member GB Assembly, from the Anti-Terrorism

Act (ATA)'s Fourth Schedule list where his name had been included for the past three years.

Taliban commander re-emerges

In a video message from Babusar in July 2021, Habib-ur -Rehman, a local Taliban commander in Diamer, demanded that the government of GB and law enforcement agencies (LEAs) fulfil the peace agreement with his group which, according to him, was signed in Khanbari in Diamer district in 2019. The video went viral, creating panic among local people. It is important to highlight that Habib-ur-Rehman, who fled from the district jail Gilgit in 2019, is wanted in various high-profile cases, including the murder of nine foreigners in Nanga Parbat in 2013. He is still at large.

Blasphemy cases

GB has been witnessing an increase in cases of blasphemy for about five years now. Amir Ali from Sherqilla Ghizer was arrested in August by the local police for alleged derogatory remarks against sacred personalities of Islam. A campaign was launched on social media against renowned astrologist and local leader of PTI GB, Aga Beheshti, in September. In another instance, a protest was staged outside the district and session courts in Ghakuch, Ghizer, by Tanzeem Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat, against a blasphemy accused, Hareer Ashraf, two months before her release. She was acquitted on 1 July on the orders of the sessions court Ghakuch.

Tanzeem Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat also staged a protest in Ghakuch, district Ghizer, from 1 to 7 June against Nahida, a witness in Hareer Ashraf's blasphemy case who had withdrawn her statement against the accused, leading to Ashraf's acquittal. Both women have disappeared; it is likely they have taken shelter elsewhere for their security. Tanzeem Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat has challenged the verdict of the sessions court in the chief court of Gilgit.

Cybercrime

Cases of cybercrime in GB have increased in recent years. In 2021, some cases were referred to the cybercrime wing of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), which claimed they did not have the capacity to deal with such cases. There are neither judges nor courts in GB to deal with cases of cybercrime. A lack of awareness and a culture of silencing such cases have also worsened the situation, especially for women who fall prey to cyber-criminals. According to the FIA cybercrime wing GB, the department received 843 cases of cybercrime in 2021.

Terrorism, suicides and other crimes

On 8 April, a bridge was set on fire by unknown persons in Ghor Paen,

a village in the Diامر district of GB. This was the only suspension bridge that connects the village with the rest of GB. Earlier, on 19 November 2020, the only suspension bridge between village Khazko and Thalpan in Khiner valley of Diامر was also set on fire. No one has been apprehended so far in these incidents which locals term as acts of terrorism.

In 2021, cases of suicides were reported from Yaseen, Ishkoman, Gupis Ghizer, Gojal, Baltistan and other parts of GB. Attempted suicides were also reported. In one instance on 25 September, a levies officer named Zakir attempted suicide in the deputy commissioner’s office in Nagar, alleging that the latter had used abusive language against him.

The GB police department recorded the following cases of suicide in GB during 2021:

<i>District</i>	<i>Cases</i>
Skardu	8
Ghizer	19
Shigar	2
Total	29

Source: GB police (crime branch), in response to HRCP’s request for information

In 2021, cases of suicides were reported from Yaseen, Ishkoman, Gupis Ghizer, Gojal, Baltistan and other parts of GB. Attempted suicides were also reported. In one instance on 25 September, a levies officer named Zakir attempted suicide in the deputy commissioner’s office in Nagar, alleging that the latter had used abusive language against him.

Cases of honour killing or murder are often also presented as suicides; this trend has been steadily on the rise in GB over the past few years. A married female government teacher, for instance, committed suicide in the village of Gitch, district Ghizer, in September 2021. Mehmood Alam was allegedly killed on 5 August 2021 in Gatolti, Ishkoman in Ghizer district, but his death was also initially considered to be a suicide. This case is still under investigation. In another instance, a couple was killed in Juglote Gilgit in the name of honour in September. Although an FIR has been registered against the accused, he has not been apprehended yet.

Jails and prisoners

The jails in GB face many challenges such as staff shortages and lack of professional training. No welfare system or medical support exist for the staff and inmates either. The population of prisoners in GB’s jails are given in the table below These figures were shared on 11 December 2021

by officials of Central Jail Gilgit during a meeting of the prisons department with local civil society organisations in connection with rehabilitation activities in the jail:

<i>Name of jail</i>	<i>Imprisoned for life</i>	<i>Death row</i>	<i>Others convicted</i>	<i>Under trial</i>	<i>Total</i>
Central Jail Minawar, Gilgit	40	21	14	195	270
District Jail, Skardu	4	1	5	12	22
District Jail, Diamer	0	02	11	128	141
District Jail, Ghizer	0	20	5	27	52
District Jail, Astore	2	0	0	10	12
Total	46	44	35	372	497

Source: Central Jail Gilgit officials.

Noor Muhammad Wani and Feroz Ahmad Loan, two individuals from the Guraiz sector of Ladakh in Indian-held Kashmir, who are said to have been captured by Pakistan’s military for crossing the Line of Control in 2020, are in Gilgit Jail on charges of spying. They have requested the government to arrange for their release from prison via a social media post uploaded by Hasnain Ramal, a local activist, in 2021. According to them, they hail from poor families in the border area and are not spies.

A prisoner in Gilgit Jail sent a complaint to HRCP’s office in GB that, despite a referral to Islamabad for medical treatment, the government had not given him permission for the transfer. HRCP suggested to his family members that they submit an application to the Home Department of GB.



FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

Freedom of movement

The Fourth Schedule of the ATA continued to be used as a tool to gag dissenting voices in 2021. Dozens of political activists on the list were continuously monitored by LEAs and faced restrictions under this law, such as informing their local SHO about their social and political activities. A prominent example of this was in September when Ghulam Shehzad Aga, a sitting member of the GB Assembly from Baltistan, was barred from making a speech at a public meeting of his party in Skardu. Those on the Fourth Schedule list also had their computerised national identity cards blocked, depriving them of the right to travel within the country or abroad, and hence also depriving them of Covid-19 vaccinations.

Travel across national borders became a prominent issue after the Taliban took over Kabul, especially in the Wakhan Corridor in Afghanistan which borders GB. The Wakhi community in GB has a long historical, cultural and linguistic relationship with their Wakkhi kinfolk living across the border.

A couple of months after the takeover of the Taliban in Afghanistan on 18 August, residents of the Wakhan valley of Afghanistan, who hailed from the Gojal valley of Hunza, crossed the border and entered into the Chipurson valley of Hunza. Upon their arrival, they were arrested by the local police and handed over to the FIA in October 2021 under Section 14 of the Foreigners Act 1946. Later, they were allowed to live with their families in Gojal by the FIA.

However, according to a local human rights activist, some women from Gojal who settled in Afghanistan after marriage are still stuck in Afghanistan and need help from the Government of Pakistan for their evacuation. This is illustrated in the case of a woman from Kabul, whose mother submitted an application to HRCP's office in Gilgit on 20 September, requesting that their case be taken up with government officials for the evacuation of her daughter who was in this predicament.

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

In 2021, GB witnessed a rise in sectarian tension sparked by a debate between the leaders of two sects when Shia leader Agha Rahat Al-Hussaini posed the challenge of *mubahala* (invocation of God's curse) to the leader of the Sunni sect in his Eid-ul-Fitr prayer sermon in May. In response, Qazi Nisar Ahmed, the Ameer of Tanzeem Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat, issued several resolutions and demanded that Agha Rahat be booked under sections of the ATA. The issue was resolved with the intervention of elders from both sects and some politicians.

Earlier, in March, a van full of passengers was attacked by unknown assailants in Naltar Valley, killing seven passengers and injuring six others. All the victims belonged to the Sunni sect, leading to outrage and protests from Sunni Muslims across GB. The incident occurred after the murders of two Shia Muslims, Farjad and Muzamil, in May 2020.



A van full of passengers was attacked by unknown assailants in Naltar Valley, killing seven passengers and injuring six others

The Ahmadiyya community also complained about the shutting down of their welfare programmes in different districts of the region by the government. An assistant cleric of the Ismaili community's worship place in Gilgit was also attacked when unknown persons opened fire on him.

The year 2021 witnessed increasing restrictions on freedom of thought. On 31 January, the National Workers Front GB held a Zoom lecture on 'Gilgit-Baltistan: Land, Wildlife and Nation Question' with Dr Nosheen Ali, a researcher and professor of sociology at New York University. The lecture was in response to the announcement made by the GB government that it would establish national parks all over GB. Dr Ali had intended to visit GB, but before her arrival in Gilgit in July 2021, the sitting minister of communication posted a tweet claiming that she was a 'puppet' who would vitiate the image of GB at the behest of ill-wishers and powers hostile to Pakistan. On Dr Ali's arrival in GB, she was hounded and threatened by intelligence agencies.

In August, Madad Shah a renowned local social and political activist, was arrested by the local police in Yaseen due to his criticism of the local administration. In another incident in October, Shehnaz Bhutto, a local political activist, received threats when she highlighted a case of domestic violence in district Ghizer. Haji Ijlal, president of the Line Department Association, was suspended in August for his activism for the rights of employees of the line department. Dr Ejaz Ayub, president

of the Young Doctors Association (YDA) in GB, and a well-known cardiologist, was transferred to a remote area due to his activism .

Freedom of expression and association

Hasnain Ramal, a political activist, was arrested by the local police in May 2021 and remained incarcerated for more than two months for posting on social media against the alleged involvement of LEAs in sectarian violence in GB. He was arrested twice before in 2017 and 2019 for alleged social media posts against the state of Pakistan. His name is already on the ATA's Fourth Schedule. For the last four years, he has been facing charges under sections of the ATA in local courts.

In October, engineer Nasir Kapoor, the general secretary of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, was arrested from Gilgit. Similarly, Shehzad Agha a sitting member of the GB assembly, was banned from attending and speaking in public meetings by the local administration in Skardu as his name was also on the Fourth Schedule. During the last four years, cases of fake FIRs, character assassination, threats and campaigns against local journalists have increased in GB. 2021 also witnessed an increase in suppression of the freedom of expression by state and non-state actors.

A local journalist, Amjad Hussain Barcha, was arrested on 13 September by the local police when he posted on social media about the alleged harassment of female staff personnel by the DIG Range at the Police Training Centre in Gilgit. Barcha was picked up by the police in the middle of the night and kept in illegal detention for 24 hours without any FIR. He was released on the orders of the chief court of Gilgit the same day after his family filed a habeas corpus petition. Attempts were made to register an FIR against Manzar Shigri, a Gilgit-based senior journalist, when he criticised the local police for arresting Amjad Hussain Barcha.

Another Gilgit-based journalist, Mehtab-ur-Rehman, received threats during his coverage of a protest staged by the YDA outside the chief minister's secretariat in August 2021. Feroz Khan, a Ghizer-based journalist, received death threats in May when he highlighted the issue of expired food items in the local market and other issues of public interest. An FIR was registered against the president of the Union of Journalists and president of the Ghanche Press Club when they participated in a protest and sit-in staged by civil society in Ghanche to demand the induction of a gynaecologist in the district headquarter hospital on 10 August. Fida Ali Shah Ghizri, the owner of a social media page, *Phander Times*, received threats from a local government contractor when he highlighted an issue of public interest.

The journalist fraternity blamed the information department of GB for intimidating journalists by using government advertisements as a bribe for media houses and issuing 'press advice' on different occasions.

Journalists also informed HRCP that they had received press advice in June on the phone by the local information department, asking them to stop coverage of the launch of HRCP's report *State of Human Rights in 2020* at a press conference in Gilgit.

In April, Shams Lone, the provincial minister for food, threatened a local journalist, Aqil Hussain, who had criticised him in a post on social media. The GB government issued a notification in March, ordering LEAs to take 'stern action' against social media users engaged in highlighting sectarian issues. During 2021, more than six cable operators were booked on allegations of airing Indian TV channels locally.

In March, religious elements threatened Aziz Ali Dad, a prominent researcher, and Dr Ejaz Ayub, president of the YDA, with dire consequences. They had both criticised former cricketer Saeed Anwar's proselytising visits to Gilgit and Hunza in which he had addressed different gatherings, including an audience on International Women's Day at Karakoram International University (KIU).

The launch of a book, *Hunza Matters*, written by Dr Hermann Kreutzmann, a German researcher who has spent more than 45 years researching GB, was banned by the LEAs for allegedly being an anti-state activity. The book launch was to be held in Hunza on 13 July 2021. The organisers of the event, including intellectual Aziz Ali Dad, received threats as well, and civil society activists termed it a deliberate policy of the state to keep people in ignorance of their history and culture.

Freedom of assembly

In April, the local administration banned a seminar at a local hotel on the political status of GB, arranged by the nationalist party Karakoram National Movement on the pretext of Covid-19. The party official criticised the government for its hypocritical decision as it had allowed rallies and events on the occasion of Kashmir Day on 5 February and 23 March the same year.

Rehmat Ali, a political activist from Hunza, was arrested by the local police, who kept him in illegal detention for many hours after an argument with Frontier Works Organisation (FWO) personnel on the Karakoram Highway in Hunza in May. Manzoor Parvana, a former student leader and nationalist leader from Baltistan, was arrested from Dasu Kohistan in June and shifted to his native village Rondu Baltistan. He was released after protests by his supporters in Baltistan.

Tajamul Hussain was expelled from KIU on the recommendation of a committee formed by the vice-chancellor on the complaint of a professor from the Urdu Department for allegedly threatening him. Hussain blamed the university administration for expelling him because of his activism against fee hikes and for calling out the harassment of female students by male faculty members.

In May, Haji Gulber, minister of health, and Naseeb Khan, member of the GB Assembly, were threatened and maltreated by FWO personnel on Skardu Road while travelling from Gilgit to Skardu. In May again, Naib Khan, a social activist from village Sakwar near Gilgit, was arrested for his campaign against the administration for backing the land mafia.

In August, Section 144 was imposed to stop a protest in Ghakuch where the residents of Ishkoman Valley had announced a protest against the coordinator to the chief minister, Zafar Muhammed Shadam Khel, accusing him of torturing the manager of Atur-Multipurpose Cooperative Society in district Ghizer.

In September, 11 students of KIU were booked under sections of the ATA by local police after they convened a meeting for a conference to commemorate Youm-e-Hussain at KIU. They were expelled from the university. On the same day, the university administration closed the university, terming the environment on campus to be sectarian. Some of the students declared this action to be a curb on their right to freedom of assembly.

In October, retired army personnel were booked in Hunza by local police when they protested against a delay in payment of their monthly pension. In another case, protestors were booked under sections of the ATA for staging a protest in August, demanding an inquiry into the incident of a missing PIA Fokker airplane during its flight from Gilgit to Islamabad on 25 August 1989. The protestors were relatives of passengers of the missing plane.



DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT

The federal Ministry of Interior issued orders for deployment of the Frontier Constabulary in GB for the protection of wildlife, forest and environment on 5 January. Residents of GB termed this as a mistrust of local forces by the federation.

The last local government elections were held in 2004. Although the newly elected government of PTI in GB announced that local government elections GB would be held in 2021, it has not fulfilled its promise yet.



RIGHTS OF THE DISADVANTAGED

Women

In October, a case of domestic violence against a 12-year-old girl was reported in Upper Ghizer. She was beaten by her father, brother and two other relatives who had accused her of exchanging text messages with a local boy. In another case in September, a teacher from Ghizer, who was married to a man from the nearby village of Gitch, committed suicide by jumping into a river. Her family members accused her in-laws of using violence against her, which they claimed had resulted in her suicide. Her brother submitted a complaint to HRCP's office in Gilgit on 10 October with a request to help them seek legal remedy. HRCP referred the case to the local police.

In another case, the dead body of a 16-year-old girl was found in Ishkoman, Ghizer in October. A smear campaign was launched against Nadia Jalal, an athlete, who started a walk from Hunza to Gilgit on 8 August via the old Silk Route. A similar campaign was also started against a student of KIU who sang at a musical show during a sports gala in October. A propaganda campaign was launched against the wife of Noor Pamiri, a well-known social worker who runs the news portal *Pamir Times*, by a local journalist blaming her for promoting a 'western' agenda in GB. In June, three women were beaten brutally in Skardu in a dispute over a pasture by local young men. One of them had to undergo an abortion after severe physical injuries. Local police registered an FIR and arrested the culprits by identifying them from the video which went viral on social media.

A text message about the sexual harassment of a female student by Muhammad Naeem, vice-chancellor of Baltistan University, went viral on social media. Members of civil society in Baltistan protested against the incident for two weeks in October. The vice-chancellor rejected the allegation of harassment and demanded a fair inquiry by the FIA. However, this case has not been resolved yet. Harassment at the workplace was also a cause for concern in GB, a prominent case in point being the alleged harassment of women staff in the police training school in Gilgit by a senior police official (see *Freedom of expression* above). Many such incidents of harassment at the workplace and educational institutions are not reported due to fears of victim-blaming.

A protest was staged by the civil society outside the GB assembly secretariat in Gilgit against a local court for granting bail to those accused in the murder case of Adiba. Adiba was a 22-year-old married girl from Shimshal in Gojal, Hunza. After seven months of marriage, her dead body was found near a local river in Shimshal valley in May. Her in-laws declared it a case of suicide while her brother termed it a murder. An FIR was registered and all the accused were arrested, but they were released on bail after three months. Later on, the Chief Court GB issued an order

to cancel the bail of the accused persons and they were arrested again. The court also issued orders to reinvestigate the case as per the request of the aggrieved family in a petition in the Chief Court GB.

During the last five months of 2021, multiple cases of violence against women were reported in GB. There is no functional shelter home, public or private, for victims of violence against women. Zareena, a human rights activist and lawyer from Skardu, stated that she had tried to file a case in the sessions court in Skardu in 2021 demanding a shelter home for victims of violence there, but the local court did not even accept the case for hearing.

A prominent lawyer and human rights activist from Baltistan, Asif Naji, raised the issue of exploitation of girls who are offered money to marry men in other countries, particularly in the Middle East and UAE, but face physical and mental abuse after marriage. One such survivor from Gilgit told HRCP about her experience of contracting a marriage after a group of local people (unregistered or informal marriage bureaus) offered her money. After her marriage, she faced violence at the hands of her husband.

Children

The number of child abuse cases has increased in GB, but cases remained under-reported. A minor was killed in Saligan, Yasin, in July and another child went missing in the same month. The culprits have not been arrested yet in either case.

Two children from village Bargo, Gilgit were sexually abused by five young boys in August. An FIR was registered against the accused and the case is under trial. In the same month, an application was submitted to HRCP's office in Gilgit by two complainants after their eight-year-old and ten-year-old sons were sexually abused by a group of five local boys. HRCP referred the case to the child rights commission in GB for legal remedy.

A case of child abuse was reported by Naveed Ahmed, a social and political activist from Daniyore Gilgit, in April. According to Ahmed, a young man with a criminal record had raped a ten-year-old child in Danyore in Gilgit district. The accused was arrested by the local police and the case is under trial.

Child marriage, child abuse, child labour and violence against children have increased in GB. With urbanisation, child begging and garbage picking have also become common sights in GB's major towns. Although the GB government had announced that it would, in collaboration with UNICEF, establish a child protection unit in Gilgit in 2020, the unit that has been established in Gilgit is neither well equipped in terms of financial and human resources nor functional.

Labour

Soon after taking oath, the PTI government announced a ban on new recruitments in GB, which was received with widespread opposition. People accused the GB government of going back on its commitment of filling vacant positions in departments. Employees of all the line departments in GB staged a sit-in in Gilgit for three days in April, demanding the disparity in their allowances be addressed. The YDA also went on strike in March and staged a sit-in in GB, demanding the regularisation of their service rules and condemning the victimisation of their leaders. In Diamer district, the Graduate Alliance Diamer protested against the discrimination against local youth in the recruitment of jobs in Diamer's Basha Dam project.



The YDA went on strike in March and staged a sit-in demanding the regularisation of their service rules and condemning the victimisation of their leaders.

People living with disabilities

The Association of the Persons with Disabilities continued to voice the grievances of persons living with disabilities. It especially highlighted the usurpation of a hostel at the special education complex by the National Accountability Bureau. The building of the hostel was constructed for persons living with disabilities from remote areas of GB who were studying at the special education complex. The chief court of GB issued an order on 21 October 2020 asking the local administration to vacate the hostel within three months but it has not been vacated yet.

The Gilgit-Baltistan Persons with Disabilities Act 2019 for the rights of persons with disabilities has yet to be implemented because the rules of the act have not been finalised. Public and private offices, banks and mosques are not accessible to people living with disabilities, nor is their job quota filled as per the law in recruitment. According to the law, the quota for special persons in public sector recruitment is 3 percent.



SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

Health

The increasing rate of suicide remained one of the most pressing social problems of GB: 29 cases of suicide were registered by the police in 2021. According to experts, mental health problems was the main cause. There are multiple contributing factors (socio-economic and socio-political): for instance, the region does not have any psychiatric facility and there are very few trained psychologists operating in GB.

Though Covid-19 cases decreased to single digits in the first quarter of the year, there was a sharp increase in the latter half, attributed mainly to an influx of tourists from the rest of Pakistan and ineffective measures taken by the GB government. Furthermore, the vaccination drive was slow.

More than 100 general nurses and other paramedical staff, who were appointed on a contingency basis to cope with the crisis, had their contracts terminated in November 2020. On the other hand, strikes and sit-ins by young doctors in 2021 aggravated patient healthcare in GB.

Land rights

The issue of the land rights of local communities vis-à-vis the government has become very serious in the last couple of years. The local population blames the civil government, the administration and elite capitalists for grabbing community lands. Civil society claims that the nexus between the three has rendered local people more vulnerable to exploitation.

The year 2021 witnessed land-related disputes across the length and breadth of GB. In one incident, 100,000 *kanals* of barren land in Sakwar, Gilgit, became a source of dispute between the government and local community, according to the latter, which claimed that the government was trying to illegally acquire land for construction of government offices, including a police training school and police colony.

Headed by Naib Khan, the community staged a protest and sit-in in Sakwar against this usurpation of land in September. Similar cases were witnessed in Chilmish Das, Thakdas, Maqpoondas, Napur, Barmas, Kot Mohallah, Nayee Koe and other parts of GB. The opposition parties in GB have protested on many occasions, but the issue has not been resolved.

A patwari and naib tehsildar were arrested in Gilgit by the FIA in September, accusing them of working with the land mafia in Gilgit. The recent wave of land acquisition in the name of national parks has been rejected by residents of the region. The government of GB issued

notifications for the Himalayan National Park and Nanga Parbat National Park on 21 January, under Section 5 of the GB Wildlife Act 1975 and GB Forest Act 2019, banning all activities of local communities by declaring them 'restricted' areas. Another notification of wetlands (water bodies) as protected land under the GB Forest Act 2019 was issued on the same day. Local communities protested against the notifications and declared them a violation of community rights as it is these areas that provide their livelihood. In response to the local communities' and opposition parties' protests, the government of GB announced the denotification of these notifications, although this has yet to take effect.

A clash occurred between the people of village Nomal and security forces over Chilmish Das (barren land between Gilgit and village Nomal). The people of GB are concerned about the exploitation of natural resources and land by the government and big investors.

The establishment of the tourist resort Luxus Hunza at Attabad lake by Daniyal Lashari, from 2019 to 2021, created consternation among local communities as it is with the connivance of government machinery that such a huge infrastructure was allowed to be built in an ecological fragile area.

Similarly, the government machinery has silently allowed the construction of glamping sites in Deosai National Park, which is an infringement of the rules and regulations of national parks.

Environment

Heavy snow during the last winter session made residents' lives miserable. According to experts, the area has witnessed the heaviest snowfall in the last half century due to climate change. Moreover, despite continuous natural disasters every year, the incidence of which has increased since 2010, internally displaced persons affected by previous disasters, including the Attabad disaster of 2010, continue to live in dismal conditions.

On 18 May, a glacier lake outburst flood in Shishper caused an emergency in Hassan Abad, Hunza. Protective walls and land were hit and damaged by the flood. It also affected a portion of the Karakoram Highway in Hassan Abad. A similar incident occurred in Naltar valley on 6 July, causing damage to water irrigation channels, crops and forests. Four people were reported missing and found dead, and many were displaced.



Appendix 1

Human rights legislation in 2021

This appendix outlines selected laws passed in 2021 that pertain to human rights.

Ordinances

- The *Elections (Third Amendment) Ordinance, 2021* amends the Elections Act of 2017 to make it compulsory for a returned candidate seat to become vacant, if he willfully does not take oath within sixty days of the first sitting or within forty days of the commencement of the Elections Ordinance of 2021.
- The *Protection of Parents Ordinance, 2021* provides for the protection of parents from being expelled or evicted from houses by his children or spouse on grounds of being punished with rigorous imprisonment for term and/or fine.
- The *Elections (Second Amendment) Ordinance, 2021* amends enabling overseas Pakistanis to exercise their right to vote during general elections in their country of residence. The Ordinance also amends to procure electronic voting machines (EVMs) for casting of votes in general elections.
- The *Elections (Amendment) Ordinance, 2021* amends the language used in the Elections Act 2017 and adds provisions regarding the ballot cast.
- The *Pakistan Food Security Flow and Information Ordinance, 2021* establishes a centralised database with the mandate to collect information and formulation of policy related to essential food commodities.
- The *Public Properties (Removal of Encroachment) Ordinance, 2021* provides measures to remove encroachment from immovable public properties.
- The *Pakistan Nursing Council (Emergency Management) Ordinance, 2021* provides for the emergency management of the Pakistan Nursing Council.
- The *Punjab Employees' Social Security (Amendment) Ordinance, 2021* amends the Punjab Employees' Social Security Ordinance of 1965.

Federal legislation

- The *Elections (Second Amendment) Act, 2021* aims to make it possible for overseas Pakistanis to exercise their right to vote in Pakistan's general elections.
- The *International Court of Justice (Review and Reconsideration) Act, 2021* establishes the right of review and reconsideration of foreign nationals, regarding order and judgements of military courts.
- The *Muslim Family Laws (Amendment) Act, 2021* establishes the

rights of spouses and children over immovable property share rights of their deceased partners.

- The *Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act, 2021* ensures quick redressal of rape and sexual abuse crimes, in respect of women and children, through special investigation teams and due process.
- The *COVID-19 (Prevention of Hoarding) Act, 2021* provides for the prevention of hoarding in respect of scheduled articles in an emergent situation resulting from the coronavirus pandemic.
- The *Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2021* amends the Pakistan Penal Code to effectually tackle the pervading instances of rape and sexual abuse in respect of women and children through changes in the substantive law.
- The *Pakistan Single Widow Act, 2021* makes relevant provisions for the establishment of single widows in Pakistan.
- The *Islamabad Capital Territory Prohibition of Corporal Punishment Act, 2021* makes provisions for prohibition of corporal punishment against children.
- The *Islamabad Capital Territory Food Safety Act, 2021* provides for the safety and standards of food and for establishment of the Islamabad Food Authority.
- The *Islamabad Rent Restriction (Amendment) Act, 2021* further amends the Islamabad Rent Restriction Ordinance of 2001.
- The *Enforcement of Women’s Property Rights (Amendment) Act, 2021* amends the Enforcement of Women’s Property Rights Act of 2020.
- The *National Commission on the Status of Women (Amendment) Act, 2021* amends the National Commission on the Status of Women Act of 2012.
- The *Higher Education Commission (Second Amendment) Act, 2021* further amends the laws relating to the Higher Education Commission.
- The *Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Act, 2021* promotes, protects, and effectively ensures the independence, impartiality, safety and freedom of expression of journalists and media professionals.
- The *International Court of Justice (Review and Re-consideration) Act, 2021* provides for the right of review and re-consideration in giving effect to the judgement of the International Court of Justice.
- The *Mutual Legal Assistance (Criminal Matters) (Amendment) Act, 2021* amends the Mutual Legal Assistance (Criminal Matters) Act of 2020.

Provincial legislation

Balochistan

- The *Balochistan Vaccination (Amendment) Act, 2021* further amends the Balochistan Vaccination Ordinance 1958.

- The *Balochistan Payment of Wages Act, 2021* regulates the payment of wages to workers employed in all establishments.
- The *Balochistan Employment of Children (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 2021* aims to prohibit and regulate the employment of children to eliminate child abuse.
- The *Balochistan Minimum Wages Act, 2021* provides for the regulation of minimum rates of wages and various allowances for workers in different establishments to ensure decent living conditions for workers.
- The *Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898 Balochistan (Amendment) Act, 2021* further amends the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898 (Act No. V or 1898) in its application to Balochistan Province.
- The *Balochistan Right to Information Act, 2021* provides for ensuring transparency and access to information in Balochistan.
- The *Balochistan Food Authority (Amendment) Act, 2021* further amends the Balochistan Food Authority Act of 2014.
- The *Balochistan Food Fortification Act, 2021* seeks to address and alleviate nutritional deficiencies through food fortification.
- The *Pak-Oman Hospital Pasni Act, 2021* provides for the establishment of the Pak-Oman Hospital Pasni for the provisions of modern health care facilities to the people of the area at their doorsteps at the level of Secondary Health Care Services.
- The *Balochistan Continuation of Laws in Erstwhile Provincially Administered Tribal Areas Act, 2021* provides for the continuation of laws in the erstwhile Provincially Administered Tribal Areas of Balochistan.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

- The *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sentencing Act, 2021* lays down factors to be considered by Courts while passing sentences to improve consistency in sentencing.
- The *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Domestic Violence Against Women (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2021* aims to curb the menace of domestic violence against women in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- The *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Technical and Commerce Education Act, 2021* reconstitutes the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Technical Education in the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- The *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Absorption of Certain Employees Act, 2021* provides for absorption of employees of Degree Colleges of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Foundation.
- The *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government (Third Amendment) Act, 2021* amends the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government Act of 2013.
- The *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Universities (Second Amendment) Act, 2021* further amends the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Universities Act of 2012.
- The *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Universities (Amendment) Act, 2021* further

- amends the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Universities Act of 2012.
- The *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Witness Protection Act, 2021* provides for the protection of witnesses and other persons connected with criminal proceeding of sensitive nature.
- The *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Centre of Excellence on Countering Violent Extremism Act, 2021* provides for the establishment of a research-based Centre of Excellence on Countering Violent Extremism in the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- The *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Employees Social Security Act, 2021* provides benefits to certain employees and their dependents in the event of sickness, maternity, employment, injury or death.
- The *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Home Based Workers (Welfare and Protection) Act, 2021* provides for the protection and welfare of home-based workers and to regulate their working conditions and terms of employment, in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- The *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Probation and Parole Act, 2021* provides for the regulation of probation of convicts, their rehabilitation and reintegration and matters relating to parole in the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- The *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Regularisation of Services of Employment of Erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas) Act, 2021* provides for the appointment and regularisation of services of certain employees appointed on contract basis against project posts in the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas.
- The *Provincially Administered Tribal Areas Levies Force (Amendment) Act, 2021* amends the Provincially Administered Tribal Areas Levies Force Regulation of 2012.

Punjab

- The *Emerson University, Multan Act, 2021* provides for establishment of Emerson University, Multan.
- The *Punjab Enforcement of Women’s Property Rights Act, 2021* seeks to protect and secure the rights of ownership of women in the property.
- The *Institute of Management and Applied Sciences, Khanewal Act, 2021* provides for the establishment of Institute of Management and Applied Science.
- The *Punjab Overseas Pakistanis Commission Act, 2021* provides for reconstitution of the Punjab Overseas Pakistanis Commission.
- The *University of Child Health Sciences, Lahore Act, 2021* provides for establishment of the University of Child Health Sciences, Lahore.
- The *Punjab Educational Institutions (Reconstitution) Act, 2021* reconstitutes certain educational Institutions in the Punjab.
- The *Namal University, Mianwali Act, 2021* provides for the establishment of Namal University, Mianwali.
- The *University of Chenab Act, 2021* provides for the establishment of University of Chenab, Gujrat.

- The *Punjab Community Safety Act, 2021* ensures community safety measures in buildings, health, and fitness centers.
- The *Punjab Panah Gah Authority Act, 2021* establishes the Punjab Panah Gah Authority.
- The *King Edward Medical University Lahore (Amendment) Act, 2021* resulted in an extension the period of validity for a further period.

Sindh

- The *Education City (Amendment) Act, 2021* amends the Education City Act 2013 to incorporate what falls under “Project Director”, “Project Implementation Unit”, and what the Board consists of.
- The *Ziauddin University Examination Board (Amendment) Act, 2021* amends the Ziauddin University Examination Board Act 2018.
- The *Ziauddin University (Amendment) Act, 2021* amends the Ziauddin University Act 1995.
- The *Sindh Employees Social Security (Amendment) Act, 2021* amends the Sindh Employees Social Security Act 2016 to add a subsection for “self-employed worker” and “smart card”.
- The *Sindh Terms of Employment (Standing Orders) (Amendment) Act, 2021* amends the Sindh Terms of Employment (Standing Orders) Act 2015 to address the standing of “seasonal worker”.
- The *Sindh Protection of Journalists and Other Media Practitioners Act, 2021* seeks to promote, protect, and effectively ensure the independence, impartiality, safety, and freedom of expression, as contained in Article 19 of Pakistan’s Constitution.
- The *Sindh Regularisation of Teachers Appointed on Contract Basis (Amendment) Act, 2019* (passed in 2021) amends the Sindh Regularisation of Teachers appointed on Contract Basis Act 2018.
- The *Sindh Child Protection Authority (Amendment) Act, 2021* amends the Sindh Child Protection Authority Act 2011 to detail what “abuse”, “caregiver” means.
- The *Sindh Telemedicine and Telehealth Act, 2021* seeks to facilitate, enhance and improve access to healthcare through distant health platforms and to ease the shortage of healthcare professionals.
- The *Sindh Local Government (Amendment) Act, 2021* amends the Sindh Local Government Act of 2013.
- The *Sindh Food Fortification Act, 2021* seeks to address and alleviate nutritional deficiencies through food fortification.
- The *Sindh Solid Waste Management Act, 2021* provides for the collection and disposal of solid waste, arrange effective delivery of sanitation services, and provide for pollution free environment and matters ancillary thereto, and for the purpose establish the Solid Waste Management Boards in the Province of Sindh.

Legislation by administrative regions

Gilgit-Baltistan

- The *Gilgit-Baltistan Health Department (Regularisation of Services of Doctors/Paramedics) Act, 2021* provides for the regularisation of the services of Medical Officers appointed on contract basis against the clear vacant posts in various specialties after fulfilling all codal formalities through DSC on contract basis who are currently serving in Health Department Gilgit-Baltistan.
- The *Gilgit-Baltistan Local Government (Amendment) Act, 2021* further amends the Gilgit-Baltistan Local Government Act of 2014.

Azad Jammu and Kashmir

- The *Azad Jammu and Kashmir Elections (Amendment) Act, 2021* further amends the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Elections Act of 2020.
- The *Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council (Election) (Amendment) Act, 2021* further amends the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council (Election) Act of 1976.
- The *Azad Jammu and Kashmir Recruitment (Through Third Party) Act, 2021* provides a law for merit and competition based on a fair recruitment mechanism in government and corporation service.
- The *Azad Jammu and Kashmir Regulation of the Services of Certain Categories of Contractual, Ad Hoc or Temporary Government Employment (Terms and Conditions) Act, 2021* seeks to make a law in pursuant to Article 49 of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Interim Constitution, 1974.
- The *Azad Jammu and Kashmir Juvenile Justice System Act, 2021* provides for criminal justice system for juveniles.
- The *Criminal Law (First Amendment) Act, 2021* further amends the Penal Code of 1860 and the Code of Criminal Procedure of 1898.
- The *Azad Jammu and Kashmir Subsistence Allowance for Widows and Orphans Act, 2021* provides a law for Subsistence Allowance to destitute widows and orphans.
- The *Azad Jammu and Kashmir Employees Benevolent Fund and Group Insurance (Amendment) Act, 2021* further amends the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Employees Benevolent Fund and Group Insurance Act of 1971.
- The *Azad Jammu and Kashmir Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies (Registration and Control) Act, 2021* provides for registration, regulation, dissolution and control of voluntary social welfare agencies.
- The *West Pakistan Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Act, 2021* amends the West Pakistan Epidemic Diseases Act of 1958.
- The *Azad Jammu and Kashmir Local Government (Amendment) Act, 2021* further amends the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Local Government Act of 1990.



Appendix 2

HRCP activities

Workshops, seminars, meetings and press briefings

January

- 9 January, Quetta: Focus group discussion on inequality in employment for vulnerable groups during Covid-19.
- 11 January, Islamabad: Online meeting with human rights defenders on the Medical Teaching Institute Ordinance and its effect on the employees of Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences.
- 13 January, Hyderabad: Focused group discussion on inequality in employment for vulnerable groups during Covid-19.
- 29 January, Islamabad: Online meeting with human rights defenders on the privatisation of Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences, and its impact on patients from lower economic backgrounds.

February

- 4 February, Islamabad: Meeting with the national lobbying delegation for religious minorities.
- 5 February, Hyderabad: Meeting with human rights defenders on *jirgas* in Sindh, the higher judiciary's verdict in this regard and the response of the administration.
- 9 February, Lahore: Meeting with human rights defenders on the implications of the Single National Curriculum for primary education in Pakistan.
- 10 February, Multan: Focus group discussion with representatives from the transgender community on the role of parental support for transgender people in Pakistan.
- 12 February, Quetta: Meeting with human rights defenders on why the state is silent on human rights violations in Balochistan.
- 16 February, Islamabad: Held the second Asma Jahangir Memorial Lecture, delivered by Senator Raza Rabbani.
- 19-20 February, Gilgit: Training for officials from the labour department and local civil society representatives on labour laws in Gilgit-Baltistan.
- 23 February, Multan: Focal group discussion with journalists from South Punjab on the role of citizen journalism in promoting human rights.
- 24 February, Loralai: Meeting with human rights defenders on the rights of coal mine workers in Balochistan.
- 25 February, Hyderabad: Meeting with human rights defenders on protecting the rights of home-based workers.

- 25 February, Lahore: Meeting with human rights defenders on the crackdown on student activism in Pakistan.
- 25 February, Peshawar: Press conference to condemn the killing of four women social workers in North Waziristan.
- 26-28 February, Peshawar: Meeting with activists, lawyers, students and teachers on the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Domestic Violence Against Women (Protection and Prevention) Bill 2021.
- 27 February, Multan: Focal group discussion with human rights defenders on ensuring the security of human rights defenders.

March

- 3 March, Hyderabad/Jamshoro: Meeting with peasants and labourers to discuss the lack of basic amenities and threats of encroachment.
- 5 March, Khuzdar: Meeting with human rights defenders on the surge in human trafficking in Balochistan.
- 6 March, Multan: Consultation with members of civil society and students to mark International Women's Day and the upcoming Aurat March.
- 8 March, Turbat: Seminar on International Women's Day organised in collaboration with Guide FPAP, NRSP Turbat and RYB.
- 9 March, Quetta: Focus group discussion on Balochistan's human rights policy.
- 15-17 March, Multan: Training workshop for lawyers, journalists and human rights defenders from South Punjab on social citizenship and human rights.
- 17 March, Quetta: Focus group discussion on mine workers' rights.

April

- 1 April, Quetta: Meeting with human rights defenders on improving children's rights in Balochistan.
- 3 April, Lahore: Online reference for Kamran Arif.
- 14 April, Lahore: Online reference for I A Rehman.
- 15 April, Hyderabad: Organised a tribute to I A Rehman, in collaboration with HUI Hyderabad.
- 17 April, Multan: Online condolence reference for I A Rehman.

May

- 1 May, Multan: Online focus group discussion with human rights defenders on labour rights to mark International Labour Day.
- 1 May, Quetta: Meeting in remembrance of I A Rehman.

- 4 May, Peshawar: Meeting with human rights defenders on the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
- 7 May, Lahore: Meeting with student activists.
- 7 May, Multan: Online memorial reference on the 7th death anniversary of Rashid Rehman.
- 24 May, Hyderabad: Online meeting with human rights defenders on countering religious radicalisation.
- 24 May, Peshawar: Meeting with human rights defenders on anti-honour killing laws in Pakistan
- 26 May, Hyderabad: Online meeting with human rights defenders on Article 19 and people's right to information.
- 26 May, Lahore: Meeting on working conditions for lawyers during Covid-19
- 27 May, Hyderabad: Online meeting with human rights defenders on exploitation of small borrowers by private lenders.
- 27 May, Peshawar: Meeting with human rights defenders on the importance of student unions.
- 31 May, Lahore: Meeting with human rights defenders to ascertain the situation of labour rights in Pakistan.

June

- 1 June, Islamabad: Press conference, in collaboration with PFUJ, on press freedom and security in the country.
- 17 June, Turbat: Press conference organised by Turbat's civil society where HRCP condemned the Konshaklat Temp incident.
- 17 June, Islamabad: Organised, in collaboration with SCBAP, PBC, AGHS and SAFMA, an All-Pakistan Lawyers Representative Convention on assault on the judiciary and media.
- 17 June, Multan: Press conference on the state of human rights in Punjab in 2020.
- 21 June, Hyderabad: Press conference on the state of human rights in Sindh in 2020.
- 22 June, Peshawar: Press conference on the state of human rights in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2020.
- 23 June, Karachi: Press conference on the state of human rights in Sindh in 2020.
- 23 June, Lahore: Press conference on the state of human rights in Punjab in 2020.

- 23 June, Islamabad: Press conference on the state of human rights in Pakistan in 2020.
- 24 June, Hyderabad: Meeting with human rights defenders on the right to shelter and the responsibilities of the state.
- 24 June, Karachi: Joined other civil society organisations for a press conference on challenging perceptions of rape in response to the Prime Minister's statement.
- 25 June, Multan: Meeting with HRCP members, civil society activists, lawyers and students on to mark the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.
- 26 June, Gilgit: Press conference on the state of human rights in Gilgit-Baltistan in 2020.
- 26 June Hyderabad: Meeting with human rights defenders to mark the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.
- 26 June, Quetta: Meeting with human rights defenders to mark the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.
- 26 June, Turbat: Meeting with human rights defenders and demonstration to mark the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.
- 30 June, Quetta: Press conference on the state of human rights in Balochistan in 2020.

July

- 14-16 July, Peshawar: Training on social citizenship for three different groups.
- 28 July, Lahore: Policy dialogue on women's meaningful participation in politics.

August

- 16 August, Lahore: Meeting on students' involvement in social and political movements in Pakistan.
- 24 August, Islamabad: Online meeting on challenges faced by human rights defenders, and strategies and solutions.
- 24 August, Peshawar: Meeting with human rights defenders on the state of minority rights.
- 24 August, Loralai: Meeting with human rights defenders on the state of minority rights in Balochistan.
- 25 August, Multan: Online meeting with journalists for the promotion of human rights work in South Punjab.
- 26 August, Peshawar: Meeting with human rights defenders on student rights.

- 26 August, Quetta: Meeting with human rights defenders on the implementation of right to information laws in Balochistan.
- 27 August, Multan: Meeting with human rights defenders for the promotion of human rights work in South Punjab.
- 27 August, Lahore: Meeting with human rights defenders on examining the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Bill 2021
- 28 August, Hyderabad: Meeting with human rights defenders on the proposed amendment bill to criminalise enforced disappearances in Pakistan.
- 30 August, Gilgit: Meeting with human rights defenders to mark the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances.
- 30 August, Islamabad: National webinar to mark the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances and discuss the proposed bill on enforced disappearances (Criminal Laws (Amendment) Act 2021).
- 30 August, Peshawar: Meeting with human rights defenders to mark the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances
- 31 August, Lahore: Meeting with media representatives to discuss women's meaningful participation in politics.

September

- 15 September, Karachi: Policy dialogue on women's meaningful participation in politics.
- 16 September, Karachi: Meeting with media representatives to discuss women's meaningful participation in politics.
- 19 September, Gilgit: Meeting held with Chairperson NCSW and other civil society organisations on the role of the NCSW in Gilgit-Baltistan.
- 22 September, Gilgit: Meeting with human rights defenders on the draft human rights policy for Gilgit-Baltistan.
- 27 September, Islamabad: Online meeting with human rights defenders on the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Bill 2021.

October

- 1 October, Multan: Training Workshop for human rights defenders, students and lawyers on social citizenship.
- 1 October, Quetta: Meeting with media representatives to discuss women's meaningful participation in politics
- 2 October, Quetta: Policy dialogue on women's meaningful participation in politics.
- 3 October, Islamabad: Training for community facilitators on the rights of and legal protection for human rights defenders, with a focus on activism in cyberspace.

- 7 October, Peshawar: Policy consultation dialogue for itinerant workers on obtaining citizenship documents.
- 11 October, Lahore: Held a theatre performance on the death penalty to mark World Day Against the Death Penalty.
- 11 October, Peshawar: Policy dialogue on women's meaningful participation in politics.
- 12 October, Peshawar: Meeting with media representatives to discuss women's meaningful participation in politics.
- 13 October, Quetta: Consultation to mark World Day against the Death Penalty.
- 15 October, Gilgit: Awareness raising session to mark World Day against the Death Penalty.
- 15 October, Hyderabad: Meeting with human rights defenders to mark World Day against the Death Penalty.
- 15 October, Islamabad: Roundtable discussion, in collaboration with SAP-PK, on the situation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and the unfolding humanitarian crisis.
- 15 October, Multan: Seminar to mark World Day against the Death Penalty.
- 16 October, Gilgit: Meeting with deputy inspector general of police regarding increasing violence against women in Gilgit-Baltistan.
- 16 October, Khuzdar: Meeting with human rights defenders on barriers to education for students in Balochistan.
- 17 October, Hyderabad: Meeting with human rights defenders on incitement of violence against women activists on social media.
- 19 October, Peshawar: Meeting with human rights defenders to mark World Day against the Death Penalty.
- 22 October, Islamabad: Meeting with human rights defenders to mark World Day against the Death Penalty.
- 22 October, Quetta: Meeting with human rights defenders on countering ethnic and religious radicalisation in Balochistan.
- 25-26 October, Islamabad: National training workshop for women legislators on rules of business, pro-women laws, women caucuses, legislative drafting and engagement with the media.
- 26 October, Lahore: Focus group discussion with activists from the students' movement.
- 27 October, Lahore: Focus group discussion with activists from the women's movement.
- 27 October, Hyderabad: Meeting with human rights defenders on the risk-analysis for women human rights defenders working in Pakistan.

- 29 October, Islamabad: Meeting with human rights defenders on impediments to the economic lives of persons living with disabilities during the pandemic.
- 29 October, Lahore: Focus group discussion with academics.

November

- 8-9 November, Lahore: Training on advocacy and security of human rights defenders.
- 11 November, Hyderabad: Meeting with human rights defenders on the transgender community and the right to equality in Pakistan.
- 12 November, Loralai: Meeting with human rights defenders on to what extent the sustainable development goals have been applied in Loralai and Balochistan.
- 12-13 November, Lahore: Annual general meeting of HRCP membership, followed by press conference.
- 17 November, Islamabad: Screening of documentary on freedom of expression at the PFUJ convention.
- 18 November, Peshawar: Meeting with human rights defenders on reporting mechanisms for human rights violations.
- 19 November, Multan: Focus group discussion with lawyers on women's inheritance rights.
- 19 November, Quetta. Consultation on human rights violations in Balochistan's coal-mining sector.
- 19 November, Quetta. Press Conference on human rights violations in Balochistan's coal-mining sector.
- 21 November, Multan: Focus group discussion with journalists on the Journalists and Media Professionals Bill 2021.
- 22 November, Islamabad: Joint roundtable on the situation of Afghan refugees.
- 23 November, Lahore: Focus group discussion on the role of social media in movements.
- 24 November, Islamabad: Policy dialogue on women's meaningful participation in politics.
- 24 November, Peshawar: Meeting with human rights defenders on reporting mechanisms for human rights violations.
- 25 November, Multan: Focus group discussion with textile factory workers.
- 27 November, Peshawar: Awareness raising session on sexual harassment laws to mark 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence.
- 28 November, Lahore: Focus group discussion on enforced disappearances.

- 29 November, Lahore: Focus group discussion on PTM.
- 29 November, Lahore: Focus group discussion on urban development.

December

- 1 December, Multan: Awareness session with Bahawalpur human rights defenders.
- 2 December, Multan: Focus group discussion with human rights defenders on the enforcement of Women's Property Rights Act 2021.
- 3 December, Gilgit: Meeting with the association of persons with disabilities to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.
- 3 December, Hyderabad: Meeting in collaboration with the Sindh social welfare department to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.
- 3 December, Lahore: Focus group discussion with working professionals.
- 5 December, Multan: Book launching ceremony for biography of Rashid Rehman.
- 7 December, Lahore: Meeting with human rights defenders on online harassment of women in Pakistan.
- 7 December, Gilgit: Meeting with human rights defenders and the human rights department on the draft of Gilgit-Baltistan's child protection policy.
- 10 December, Hyderabad: Meeting with labourers to mark International Human Rights Day.
- 10 December, Gilgit: Awareness session to mark International Human Rights Day.
- 10 December, Turbat: Meeting with human rights defenders to mark International Human Rights Day.
- 10 December, Peshawar: Meeting on the UDHR to mark 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.
- 10 December, Quetta: Consultation on reducing inequalities and advancing human rights.
- 11 December, Islamabad: Meeting with human rights defenders on religious extremism in Pakistan.
- 21-22 December, Karachi: Training on advocacy and security of human rights defenders.
- 23-24 December, Hyderabad: Training of human rights defenders on human rights advocacy and the security of human rights defenders.
- 29 December, Multan: Focus group discussion with journalists on escalating attacks against journalists.

Fact-finding and observation missions

- 15 January, Taunsa Sharif: Fact-finding mission on the Rehmat Bibi case.
- 26 January, Lahore: Online consultation on Ravi Urban Development Project as part of the fact-finding mission on the project.
- 29 January, Lahore: Fact-finding mission on police encounter.
- 25 February, Lahore: Observation mission of farmers' protest against the River Ravi Urban Development Project.
- 6 April, Turbat: Fact-finding mission on a police encounter.
- 13 September, Multan: Fact-finding mission on labourers' working conditions in the textile industry.
- 4 October, Lahore: Observation mission of students' protest against PMC and police brutality.
- 16-18 November, Quetta: Fact-finding mission on human rights violations in coal mines in Balochistan.
- 26 November, Lahore: Observation mission of Students Solidarity March.
- 5 December, Lahore: Observation mission of NA-133 by-election polling.
- 8 December, Gwadar: Observation mission of Gwadar Haq Do movement.
- 9 December, Islamabad: Observation mission of protest rally conducted by Voice for Baloch Missing Persons from National Press Club to D-Chowk.
- 10 December, Islamabad: Observation mission of protest camp by Defence of Human Rights at D-Chowk marking International Day of Human Rights.
- 11-12 December, Tank: Observation mission of PTM rally.
- 12 December, Karachi: Observation mission of People's Climate March.

Demonstrations, rallies and visits in solidarity

January

- 8 January, Quetta: HRCP visited Hazara community's sit-in to express solidarity against the killing of 11 coal mine workers in Mach, Bolan.
- 21 January, Hyderabad: HRCP visited hunger strike camp setup, organised by the Sindh Sabha, to express solidarity with the protestors' demands to release missing persons in Sindh.

February

- 20 February, Turbat: HRCP visited a rally, organised by the Baloch Yakjeti Committee, to express solidarity with the participants' demands to recover missing persons.

- 25 February, Peshawar: Protest to condemn the killing of the four women social workers in North Waziristan

March

- 3 March, Hyderabad: HRCP visited protest camps set up to demand restoration of student unions and recovery of missing persons to express solidarity.
- 8 March, Islamabad: HRCP took part in the Aurat March to express solidarity with participants.
- 8 March, Lahore: HRCP took part in the Aurat March to express solidarity with participants.

April

- 23 April, Turbat: HRCP visited a women's rally, organised by the Baloch Yakjetei Committee, against the sexual abuse of ten-year-old Murad Amir Hoshapi, to express solidarity with their demands.

June

- 26 June, Gilgit: Demonstration to mark International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.
- 26 June, Hyderabad: Demonstration to mark International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.
- 26 June, Islamabad: Protest to mark International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.
- 26 June, Multan: Demonstration to mark International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.
- 26 June, Peshawar: Protest to mark International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

August

- 7 August, Turbat: HRCP visited the protest organised by BSO against the forcible abduction and murder of four-year-old Qadeer.
- 28 August, Quetta: HRCP visited Afghan refugees in Haraza Town to express solidarity with their plight.
- 30 August, Hyderabad: Demonstration to mark the International Day of Victims of Enforced Disappearances.
- 30 August, Islamabad: Demonstration to mark the International Day of Victims of Enforced Disappearances.
- 30 August, Multan: Demonstration to mark the International Day of Victims of Enforced Disappearances.
- 30 August, Peshawar: Protest against proposed amendments to the bill to criminalise enforced disappearances.

- 30 August, Turbat: Meeting and demonstration to mark the International Day of Victims of Enforced Disappearances.

September

- 4 September, Turbat: HRCF visited the hunger strike camp at set up on the first anniversary of Shahina Shaheen's murder to express solidarity with their demands to arrest the victim's killers.
- 12-13 September, Islamabad: HRCF visited a protest organised by RIUJ, Islamabad Press Club and PFUJ to express solidarity.
- 13 September, Gilgit: Collaborated with Gilgit Press Club and other civil society organisations to protest against the arrest of Amajd Bercha, a local journalist, outside the CM house in Gilgit.

October

- 10 October, Turbat: Meeting and demonstration to mark World Day against the Death Penalty.
- 12 October, Turbat: HRCF visited the Hoshab sit-in to express solidarity with the protestors demanding justice for victims who were killed and two children who were injured in an FC shelling on 10 October.

December

- 1 December, Multan: HRCF visited a Hindu community in Yazman, Bahawalpur, to discuss their issues.
- 7 December, Peshawar: Demonstration against the lynching of a Sri Lankan factory manager in Sialkot.
- 8 December, Peshawar: Demonstration highlighting violence against women to mark 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.
- 10 December, Multan: Demonstration and vigil to mark International Human Rights Day.

Awards

The following awards were made in 2021:

- I A Rehman Research Grant for 2020 (awarded to Fariha Aziz in January 2021).
- I A Rehman Research Grant for 2021 (awarded to Razeshta Sethna in July 2021).
- Nisar Osmani Award for Courage in Journalism (awarded to the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists in August 2021).

Complaints Cell

HRCF's Complaints Cell received a total of 905 complaints between 1 January and 31 December 2021. The bulk of these related to gender-based violence and other human rights violations.

Internship programme

Nine interns from universities in Pakistan and abroad joined HRCP's internship programme in 2021:

- Ali Gohar Butt (August 2021) assisted with data collection and collation.
- Muhammad Zaeem Arshad (August to September 2021) assisted with data collection and collation.
- Asma Sajid (7 February to 4 March 2022) assisted with data collection and collation.
- Haris Zaki (1 October to 13 November 2021) assisted with collating stakeholder reports, documenting complaints related to human rights violations, and preparing a policy brief.
- Maham Sohail (26 July to 3 September 2021) assisted with documenting complaints related to human rights violations and drafting a factsheet advocating an end to enforced disappearances.
- Sokaina Namdar and Yusra Namdar (24 May to 6 July 2021) assisted with preparing a policy brief related to press freedom, and organising data from case log reports for analysis.
- Zainab Hassan (17 January to 25 February 2022) assisted with data collation, graphic design and desk reviews.
- Ritika Dodani (15 June to 29 July 2021) assisted in drafting seminar and fact-finding reports, organising events and responding to queries from survivors of domestic violence for the complaints cell.

Publications and films

HRCP released the following publications and films in 2021:

- *State of Human Rights in 2020* (annual report).
- *Pakistan's obligations under ILO Conventions 100 and 111: Protecting workers against discrimination in employment* (thematic report).
- *An end to fear and censorship: Protecting freedom of expression and journalists' security* (policy brief).
- *Boon for business... bane for farmers? The Ravi Riverfront Urban Development Project* (fact-finding report).
- *Umeed-e-Sahar* (documentary film showcasing the work, vision and mission of HRCP).
- Documentary film on the constraints to freedom of expression in Pakistan (untitled).



HRCP stands

Social media

Rule of law

- *10 February 2021.* HRCP welcomes today’s Supreme Court judgement recognising that prisoners with a mental illness are among the most vulnerable and cannot in good conscience be executed.
- *14 October 2021.* HRCP stands in solidarity with lawmakers from religious minorities who have rightly called for a bill against forced conversions. We condemn the government’s U-turn on what is a grave human rights concern in Pakistan. Not only must the government legislate against forced conversions, but it must also build a far more effective legal framework protecting the constitutional right of religious minorities to practice and profess their own faiths by implementing the 2014 Tasadduq Jilani judgement.
- *4 December 2021.* The 14-year sentence handed down to Idris Khattak—after he was forcibly disappeared by state agencies who, for six months, refused to admit he was in their custody—underscores how easily the Official Secrets Act can be weaponised against human rights defenders. That a military court, with its attendant lack of transparency and due process, can sentence a civilian thus, should revive serious debate on the need for such courts at all. After all they have been through, Mr Khattak’s family deserves to know, at the very least, the facts of the case against him. HRCP expresses the hope that a higher court will entertain Mr Khattak’s appeal and serve justice.
- *31 December 2021.* HRCP is disappointed at the Islamabad High Court’s decision to frame charges against the News International journalists who covered a case pertaining to former chief judge of Gilgit-Baltistan, Rana Shamim. It is as much in the public interest to protect press freedom and allow journalists to fulfil their responsibility of holding those in power to account, as it is to ensure that the judiciary remains unencumbered by external pressure. We entreat the honourable court to annul this decision.

Enforcement of law

- *3 January 2021.* HRCP is shocked by the abduction and brutal murder of 11 Shia Hazara coalminers near Mach, Balochistan. Instead of mere condemnation, the government machinery must immediately find and apprehend the terrorists responsible for this heinous crime and take responsibility for protecting all citizens’ right to life and liberties.
- *19 January 2021.* HRCP is alarmed at reports that Zubair Baloch,

central chair of the BSO-Pajjar, was targeted by unknown persons who broke into his house in Kech and intimidated his family. Under Article 14 of the Constitution, the privacy of the home is inviolable and the state must ensure that all citizens enjoy this right without discrimination.

- 26 January 2021. The manner in which the authorities have attempted to foil the funeral arrangements for activist Karima Baloch is disgraceful and, regrettably, mirrors the state's attitude towards Balochistan and its people. HRCP strongly urges the state to recognize and address the legitimate concerns that Ms Baloch spent her life advocating.
- 31 January 2021. HRCP condemns the arson attack on the vehicle and house of Ayub Malik, Punjab president of the National Party and a columnist and human rights defender. The attack occurred in village Nakka Kahut, Talagang, Chakwal. Mr Malik's car was burned down and his house damaged. We demand that the Punjab government take immediate police action to identify and apprehend the miscreants who have created an atmosphere of fear in the whole village.
- 2 February 2021. The continued harassment of Professor Muhammad Ismail at the hands of the authorities is inexcusable. Cancelling his interim pre-arrest bail, subjecting him and his family to surveillance, restricting their freedom of movement, and keeping them trapped in an interminable cycle of ludicrous charges, arrests and court dates, are nothing more than heavy-handed tactics targeting his daughter, a respected rights activist. Prof. Ismail must be unconditionally and immediately released, especially given his frail health as a recovering Covid-19 patient.
- 22 February 2021. HRCP condemns the killing of four women social workers in North Waziristan. The state must bring to book the perpetrators of this heinous crime. The re-emergence of terror groups in the area is a matter of grave concern. It is the responsibility of the authorities to protect the lives and property of citizens at all costs. HRCP shares the grief of the families and colleagues of the four women who lost their lives.
- 14 March 2021. HRCP is concerned by Maryam Nawaz Sharif's allegations that her right to security of person has been threatened. Given Pakistan's chequered history of failing to protect not just political leaders, but also political workers, human rights defenders and academics, such allegations should not be taken lightly and warrant a prompt and independent investigation.
- 24 March 2021. HRCP strongly urges the federal and provincial governments to take heed of the continuing sit-in in Jani Khel, Bannu, where tribespeople are demanding justice for four young victims of an apparent kill-and-dump incident. The state must protect citizens' right to life, all the more so in an area that is a known target of violence by non-state actors.
- 15 April 2021. HRCP strongly condemns the violence perpetrated by TLP supporters, which has left over 300 people injured and four dead, almost all of them police officers on duty. That an under-resourced, under-trained police force has had to pay the price is

disgraceful, for which the state must take responsibility. Equally, the state must cease its implicit and explicit support for far-right groups and undo the damage wrought by decades of patronage by taking a consistent, unambiguous stand against all groups and individuals who attempt to stoke faith-based violence.

- 19 April 2021. HRCP is deeply concerned at the state's response to the ongoing TLP protests. We unequivocally condemn the violence perpetrated by the TLP, including the abduction of 11 police officers. However, for the state to have resorted to violence in turn, rather than finding peaceful means to curb the protests, was short-sighted, as was the decision to impose a media blackout on the situation. The government should be aware that its efforts to appease the far right have, historically, increased the latter's intransigence and it would do well to introspect on the Supreme Court's 2017 judgment on the Faizabad debacle. It must now ensure that no further lives are lost, whether of the police or protesters.
- 28 April 2021. HRCP expresses its solidarity with the families of forcibly disappeared persons from the Shia community, who have been protesting for the last three weeks. The state must cease the practice of enforced disappearances and of undermining the constitutional and legal rights of citizens it is supposed to protect.
- 21 May 2021. HRCP condemns the bomb blast in Chaman, Balochistan, and calls on the government and its security forces to ensure that such barbaric incidents that cause loss of innocent lives, cease. We stand in solidarity with the victims.
- 7 June 2021. HRCP strongly condemns the attack on journalist and writer Jugnu Mohsin. We are relieved that she is safe. The perpetrators must be brought to book immediately.
- 7 June 2021. We are gravely concerned by the forcible disappearance of Sanan Qureshi, the chair of the Sindhi nationalist JSQM party. Sources say that he was abducted by law enforcement agencies at 3 AM yesterday and has still not been produced in court, thereby violating his right to due process.
- 14 June 2021. HRCP is gravely concerned by continued reports of deaths in police custody, most recently that of a minor, Hasan Khan, in Islamabad. While we are reassured to learn that action has been taken against the police officials responsible, this remains an entrenched pattern among law enforcement agencies and must be reversed if the police are to fulfil their role as protectors of the public.
- 28 June 2021. Today marks 12 years since political activist Dr Deen Mohammad was forcibly disappeared. Like many hundreds of others in Balochistan, his fate and whereabouts remain unknown and his right to due process denied. HRCP demands that his case be investigated and resolved once and for all and that the state take every possible measure to ensure that he returns safely to his family. The scourge of enforced disappearances must be eliminated now.
- 15 July 2021. It has been a year since Taj Muhammad Sarparah was forcibly disappeared. HRCP supports the call to demand his safe return.

- 30 July 2021. It is 16 years to the day that Masood Janjua was forcibly disappeared. HRCP stands in solidarity with Defence of Human Rights and demands that he be recovered safely. All relatives of disappeared persons deserve answers.
- 1 August 2021. HRCP is deeply concerned by the news of an assassination attempt on human rights defender and advocate, Abdul Ghani Bijarani from Sindh. We demand an immediate inquiry into the incident: the perpetrators must be brought to book.
- 7 August 2021. HRCP strongly condemns the abduction of senior journalist and vlogger Imran Shafqat. We demand his safe return and an immediate enquiry into the circumstances of his disappearance. Given this seeming escalation in disappearances, HRCP will mobilise civil society organisations across Pakistan to demand an end to this heinous practice.
- 7 August 2021. The fact that two journalists—Imran Shafqat and Amir Mir—have been taken into custody by the FIA in the space of one day is inexcusable. It is no coincidence that both are known as dissenting voices. We demand that Mr Shafqat and Mr Mir be released immediately.
- 16 August 2021. HRCP demands the immediate release of Zakir Sahito, an activist of Jeay Sindh Students Federation Azad. Abductions and enforced disappearances of political dissidents must cease immediately.
- 21 August 2021. Journalist and writer Mudassar Naru’s parents held a demonstration outside the National Press Club in Islamabad yesterday. It has been three years since he disappeared and in that time, their four-year-old son has also lost his mother. Civil society demands answers now.
- 22 September 2021. HRCP strongly condemns the illegal and arbitrary detention of senior journalist Waris Raza in Karachi, who was abducted by security personnel last night. The manner of his abduction—late at night and the Rangers’ refusal to indicate why or where he was being taken—was clearly intended to intimidate. With Mr Raza having returned home, the incident must be investigated and the high-handedness of the perpetrators punished.
- 26 September 2021. HRCP demands an immediate inquiry to establish the cause of student Hani Baloch’s death. She was a brave, independent voice for the rights of oppressed women and marginalized nationalities and spoke up consistently against enforced disappearances.
- 7 October 2021. HRCP demands an immediate inquiry into the death of community development worker and rights activist Roshan Rajpar in Ranipur, Sindh. She had reportedly received threats but the police failed to provide her protection. We share the grief of her family and friends.
- 13 October 2021. HRCP reiterates its demand for an immediate investigation into the deaths of two children in Hoshap, Balochistan, whose families allege that they were killed in a mortar attack. The circumstances of their deaths must be established and the perpetrators brought to justice.
- 5 November 2021. The brutal murder of Nazim Jokhio in Malir,

allegedly at the behest of a PPP MPA, lays bare yet again the chronic impunity enjoyed by the wealthy and privileged. That Mr Jokhio was killed reportedly because he had documented a houbara bird hunt in Thatta led by the MPA—the act of a citizen concerned for an endangered species—is a national disgrace. Now that the perpetrator is in custody, his political standing must not be allowed to prevent justice from taking its course.

- 23 November 2021. HRCP is concerned by reports that the ongoing trial of rights defender Professor Muhammad Ismail on fabricated charges of sedition and terrorism continues to be marked by failure to ensure due process. This systematic harassment, which has continued since July 2019, must cease immediately.
- 9 December 2021. HRCP condemns the arrest of AWP president and veteran leader Yusuf Musti Khan in Gwadar. Mr Khan has done nothing more than demand that the state give Gwadar’s residents the civil, political and economic rights to which they are entitled. To charge him under archaic and repressive colonial laws is undemocratic. He must be released immediately and unconditionally, especially given his poor health.

Democratic participation

- 6 March 2021. HRCP deplores the organised violence perpetrated against leaders of the political opposition—including women—earlier today. It does not behave any political party to resort to fisticuffs. These are debates that should be settled on the floor of the house in a democratic manner.
- 27 June 2021. HRCP is deeply concerned by the abduction of political activist Seengar Noonari. He has neither been produced in court nor are his whereabouts known. We demand his immediate release. Such illegal detentions and disappearances must immediately end.

Fundamental freedoms

- 26 January 2021. HRCP strongly condemns the violence against the University of Central Punjab students who are exercising their constitutional right to freedom of peaceful assembly. Their concerns must be heard fairly and with empathy.
- 27 January 2021. HRCP is gravely concerned at the arrest of at least 36 students, following yesterday’s protest by University of Central Punjab students, several of whom were injured—two critically—by private security and police personnel. They should be released unconditionally and the cases against them—including charges of terrorism—dismissed. The government should also note that such situations are precisely why student unions need to be restored to resolve students’ concerns peacefully and pragmatically.
- 29 January 2021. HRCP condemns the arbitrary removal of journalist Adnan Haider from Public News. His termination occurred without recourse to due process and is, allegedly, linked to a programme that called out the powers that be for their control over land and housing. That the mere mention of such a subject is enough to cost a journalist his job has grave implications for press freedom in Pakistan.

- 29 January 2021. HRCP condemns in no uncertain terms the sickening display of violence against a Christian nurse, Tabitha, accused of blasphemy at a hospital in Karachi. Knowing full well how easily such accusations can spark mob violence, we demand that the state ensure Tabitha is guaranteed the security of life and liberty she is entitled to as a citizen of Pakistan.
- 11 February 2021. HRCP strongly condemns the government's brutal use of force against protestors—including many of its own employees—in Islamabad, in which a police officer is reported to have died. The government has a moral and constitutional duty not only to uphold protestors' right to freedom of peaceful assembly, but also to listen to their demands fairly and without resorting to violence in this knee-jerk fashion.
- 12 February 2021. HRCP notes with grave concern the murder of yet another member of the Ahmadiyya community in Peshawar. The modus operandi of the attack on Dr Abdul Qadir suggests that it may have been a faith-based killing. We demand a swift and transparent inquiry into the incident.
- 15 February 2021. Mr Sheikh Rashid's comment justifying the use of 'a little' teargas against protestors in Islamabad in order to 'test' it was callous. The government should be aware that it is obligated to protect people's right to freedom of peaceful assembly, not to use protestors as guinea pigs.
- 19 February 2021. On having visited the protestors' camp for missing persons in Islamabad, HRCP is greatly concerned to learn that the state appears to be using indirect means to stifle the protest, including by detaining on flimsy grounds, people who have visited the camp. The protestors are worried that the government may resort to force to remove them. HRCP urges the prime minister to visit the camp and acknowledge the seriousness of the issues being raised. The government has publicly committed to eliminating enforced disappearances—it must stand by its pledge.
- 21 February 2021. HRCP condemns the violent mob attack on the Jang and Geo central offices in Karachi by a group of protestors. Media houses must be free of any threats and intimidation. HRCP was equally shocked to see a Geo TV anchor ridiculing a particular community recently in the name of humour. However, unlawful and violent protests cannot be condoned. The authorities are responsible for ensuring the security of journalists and their freedom of expression.
- 18 March 2021. HRCP is alarmed to learn that an FIR has been lodged against some 60 political activists in Sukkur, including members of the JSM and JSQM parties, following their protest against the extrajudicial killing of Sindh University student Irfan Jatoi. This action is tantamount to conflating the right to peaceful assembly with 'offences against the state', which is unacceptable and undemocratic.
- 26 March 2021. In their letter to the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations, UN special rapporteurs Irene Khan and Mary Lawlor cite 'alarming restrictions on the right to freedom of expression of journalists in Pakistan.' HRCP reminds the government to take the letters and reports from UN special

rapporteurs and working groups seriously and fulfil its own constitutional and international obligations—to many of which Pakistan is a state party.

- *1 April 2021.* HRCP is gravely concerned by the allegations of blasphemy levelled against senior journalist and writer Amar Jaleel. This is little more than a witch-hunt and his accusers should be held to account for making baseless allegations that put lives at risk.
- *20 April 2021.* HRCP strongly condemns the assassination attempt on leading journalist and former chair of PEMRA, Absar Alam, in Islamabad. He received a bullet in the abdomen and has undergone surgery. We wish him an early recovery and demand that the government bring the culprits to book immediately. HRCP sees such cowardly acts of violence against journalists as an assault on an already muzzled media.
- *4 May 2021.* We deplore the concerted attempt by a group of nurses to marginalise their Christian colleagues at a hospital in Lahore by occupying the latter’s prayer room and deliberately reciting their own religious hymns. To bully a community in this way contradicts the spirit of any faith and indeed the constitutional protection accorded to religious minorities. The authorities must take immediate action against those who orchestrated this event. We demand once again that the 2014 Tassaduq Jillani Judgement of the Supreme Court be implemented in letter and spirit.
- *26 May 2021.* HRCP strongly condemns the brutal assault on journalist Asad Ali Toor by three unknown men who barged into his residence. We see it as yet another attack on freedom of expression and a free press. HRCP demands that the authorities apprehend and charge the assailants immediately.
- *27 May 2021.* HRCP stands in solidarity with the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists and will join its countrywide protests outside the press clubs in each city on Friday 28 May at 5 pm, to support freedom of expression and demand the safety and security of media persons.
- *31 May 2021.* HRCP strongly condemns the decision to take journalist Hamid Mir off the air three days after he spoke fervidly against the escalation in curbs on freedom of expression in the country. Mr Mir was right to voice his concern about the safety of his peers and colleagues, following the vicious attack on reporter Asad Ali Toor. That Mr Mir has been promptly silenced and his family allegedly threatened is now a tipping point for press freedom – and one that will not be resolved through the optics of law-making in the shape of the long touted and heavily criticised journalists’ protection bill. We demand that Mr Mir be allowed to resume his professional duties immediately and the threats against him taken seriously and addressed.
- *25 June 2021.* HRCP supports the right of the Janikhel protestors to demand justice for tribal elder Malik Naseeb Khan, who was gunned down by unknown assailants in May, prompting tribespeople to lead a long march to Islamabad. The state must respect their right to freedom of peaceful assembly. We are therefore gravely concerned to learn that at least one protestor was killed and some 20 people, including civilians and police, injured in Bannu.

- 28 June 2021. It has now been a month since journalist Asad Ali Toor was brutally attacked in connection with his work, following which senior journalist Hamid Mir was taken off air and his column discontinued. The perpetrators involved in Mr Toor’s case – and in journalist Absar Alam Haider’s case – must be held to account and Mr Mir must be allowed to resume his professional duties without fear of reprisal.
- 5 July 2021. HRCP is concerned to learn that Samaa TV anchor Nadeem Malik has been summoned by the FIA under S. 160 of the Criminal Procedure Code in connection with a news program in which he recounted a source having alleged that a former judge was coerced into ruling against former prime minister Nawaz Sharif in a corruption reference. The FIA must desist from using its authority to harass journalists who are merely doing their jobs.
- 7 July 2021. HRCP is outraged to learn that the Bheel community, which has been protesting against the alleged torture of labourer Dodo Bheel at the hands of Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company’s security guards, was baton-charged and teargassed by the Islamkot police. The arrest of protestors under the Anti-Terrorist Act is to be condemned as a case of custodial overreach. The right to protest peacefully is a constitutional right that must be upheld. HRCP supports the protestors’ demands for an immediate and impartial inquiry into Dodo Bheel’s death. Those nominated in the FIR submitted by Dodo’s family must also be arrested at once.
- 13 July 2021. The PCTB’s confiscation of a textbook – allegedly because it features a picture of Nobel laureate and rights activist Malala Yousafzai – is a new low in the state’s attempts to control information and manipulate public discourse. The PCTB must withdraw this order immediately.
- 5 August 2021. The deplorable attack on a Hindu temple in Bhong, Rahimyar Khan, is a recurring example of mob-led violence against vulnerable religious minorities. The fact that this occurred in response to a court granting bail to a child charged with a minor offence is of particular concern. The government must take immediate measures to charge the perpetrators and protect all religious minorities and their places of worship. HRCP once again demands that the 2014 Tasadduq Jilani judgement of the Supreme Court be implemented immediately.
- 11 August 2021. On National Minorities Day, HRCP notes with grave concern that discrimination and violence against sectarian and religious minorities continues unabated in Pakistan. Yet again, HRCP calls on the government to implement the 2014 Tasadduq Jilani judgment and to establish an autonomous statutory national commission for minorities. Indeed, the misuse of the blasphemy laws have reached a new low with the recent allegations against an eight-year-old Hindu boy. The state must provide better and more consistent protection for minorities against all forms of violence if it wishes to truly call itself a just state.
- 28 August 2021. HRCP is concerned by the government notification barring all employees from using social media platforms without

permission. While it may be reasonable to bar government employees from sharing sensitive information, denying them, as citizens, the right to express their opinions is arbitrary and disproportionate and essentially yet another means of stifling freedom of expression.

- *1 September 2021.* HRCP condemns the use of batons and water cannons to disperse a recent protest by medical students in Lahore, including the alleged use of chemical spray. This was a disproportionate use of force against students whose right to freedom of assembly is enshrined in the constitution.
- *12 September 2021.* HRCP stands in solidarity with the PFUJ during its demonstration outside the parliament today against the draconian PMDA bill, which will further stifle freedom of expression under the current regime.
- *24 September 2021.* We condemn the use of disproportionate force against hundreds of medical students in Quetta, who held a peaceful protest yesterday against irregularities in the PMC’s online exams. The police resorted to batons, teargas and aerial firing, and arrested 75 students. HRCP stands in solidarity with the protestors. Those arrested must be released and the protestors’ demands given a fair hearing.
- *21 October 2021.* HRCP is appalled by government advisor Shahbaz Gill’s slurs against senior journalist Asma Shirazi and his attempts to disparage her professional and personal integrity. Such behaviour reflects the government’s regrettable antipathy towards critical reportage, which in a democratic dispensation, is every journalist’s right.
- *2 November 2021.* On International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists, HRCP calls on the federal government to pass into law the long-awaited Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Bill without further delay. With Pakistan having fallen three places on the World Press Freedom Index this year to 145 out of 180 countries, it is critical that a legal and procedural mechanism for investigating and punishing abuse, intimidation and violence against media practitioners be made operational. No journalist should have to risk their life or physical integrity in the line of duty.
- *24 November 2021.* HRCP is increasingly alarmed by attempts to smother freedom of expression and opinion in the country—from the PTA’s ham-fisted bid to disrupt internet services to the venue of the Asma Jahangir Conference and detractors questioning its funding, to the Pakistan Ulema Council’s demand that the state take action against the convenors for having allegedly ‘defamed’ the army and judiciary. In an environment where marginalised voices—particularly those from Balochistan and grassroots movements such as the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement—have to fight to be heard on human rights, such steps are at odds with the government’s claim that Pakistan’s media is ‘free’.
- *26 November 2021.* HRCP fully supports today’s Students’ Solidarity March and reiterates the call to restore student unions. Not only

is the right to association enshrined in the constitution, but the country's student body needs to be heard, whether on issues related to teaching, learning and access to connectivity, to hard truths about the enforced disappearance of students and harassment on campus.

- *2 December 2021.* The government must heed the demands of the teachers currently on strike in Islamabad, who are concerned that they may lose their benefits under the Local Government Ordinance 2021. In the current economic climate, and given teachers' low wages in general, the protestors are right to be apprehensive about their future. Under no circumstances should the state resort to violence against peaceful protesters.
- *3 December 2021.* The unthinkable savagery with which a Sialkot mob has tortured a Sri Lankan man to death and burned his body on flimsy allegations of blasphemy should bring home once and for all the grim reality of spiralling radicalisation in Pakistan. Regrettably, the state's response has been cowardly at best and complicit at worst. We demand an immediate, transparent inquiry into the incident. Not only must the perpetrators be brought to justice, but the state must also cease its collusion with far-right elements.
- *7 December 2021.* HRCP is concerned to learn that senior journalist Rana Abrar Khalid's request for information on gifts received by the Prime Minister from foreign governments has been blocked repeatedly by the Cabinet Division on the grounds that such information is classified. This contravenes the Right to Information Act 2017. We have also received credible reports that Mr Khalid may be under surveillance by state agencies, including an underhanded attempt to enter his house on false pretences, allegedly in connection with his RTI. We are now seriously concerned for his personal safety. This continued pattern of harassing journalists and suppressing what is rightfully public information must cease immediately.

Rights of the disadvantaged

- *8 January 2021.* HRCP is appalled at Prime Minister Imran Khan's statement on being 'blackmailed' by the Hazara mourners in Quetta, who have declared that they will bury their dead – victims of senseless violence – only after the prime minister visits them and ensures the future safety of their community. The Hazara have long been relegated to the margins and persecuted to the point of genocide; to dismiss them as 'blackmailers' is disgraceful. The prime minister has a duty of care to the community and must respect their demand. The state should take immediate steps to secure their lives and liberty.
- *28 January 2021.* HRCP is pleased to learn that its chairperson Hina Jilani has been appointed a Commissioner on the International Commission of Inquiry on Systemic Racist Police Violence against People of African Descent in the United States. The fight against racism remains a core HRCP value.
- *12 March 2021.* HRCP strongly condemns the deliberate, vicious campaign against Aurat March, including by sections of the media.

Once again, allegations of blasphemy have been weaponised, this time against women who bravely drew attention to the harassment and sexual assault they had experienced. This is not just repugnant, it is an incitement to violence. We demand that action be taken against all such persons. A mere apology is not enough. Indeed, it is a matter of great shame that such a backlash has become a recurring feature of Aurat March.

- 15 March 2021. While HRCP welcomes the judicial inquiry into the custodial death of a 14-year-old boy in Peshawar, that such an incident occurred at all is a dire reminder that custodial torture remains ingrained in the state's approach to law enforcement. For a child to have allegedly suffered thus is unspeakable and no number of judicial inquiries will bring back a life forfeited. It is imperative that the government ensure that the protection accorded to children under the Juvenile Justice System Act 2018 is implemented at every stage of the custodial process, including the child's legal right to be kept in an observation home on arrest rather than a lockup.
- 16 March 2021. HRCP mourns the death of nine miners in Harnai, Balochistan. We consider it a grave failing on the part of the state and mine owners. Hundreds of miners lose their lives each year due to hazardous working conditions and sheer neglect by the government. HRCP demands that safety regulations be enforced immediately and that the owners, whose greed and neglect has caused the loss of precious lives, be brought to book.
- 26 March 2021. HRCP is gravely concerned by a court direction to register an FIR against Aurat Azadi March on charges that have been categorically debunked. Not only does it put the organizers' safety at risk, but it also echoes the very misogyny that women across Pakistan are struggling against.
- 31 March 2021. HRCP is horrified to learn that 15-year-old Rani Meghwar was abducted from her village of Sarangyar in Chachro, Tharparkar, and allegedly raped by a political influential. She was released and then abducted a second time. Her family is also worried that she may be forced to convert. After her father lodged an FIR, he too was abducted. The Sindh government must investigate the case promptly and hold the perpetrators accountable, regardless of their political affiliation.
- 3 April 2021. HRCP stands in solidarity with the Balochistan Employees and Workers Grand Alliance. Their sit-in to demand a pay raise in the face of spiralling inflation is now in its fifth day and the government must listen. We are also concerned to hear that some 360 Communication and Works Department employees have been let go after 10 years of service on the grounds that the hiring process at the time was 'incorrect'. They should not have to pay the price for administrative complications.
- 5 April 2021. HRCP condemns the use of unethical and inappropriate language against women in the daily *Ummat*. The newspaper must publish an unconditional apology and refrain from using such language in future. This is the same newspaper that is orchestrating a vilification campaign against leading elderly writer Amar Jaleel. Such practices bring a bad name to the profession of journalism.

- *6 April 2021.* HRCP is appalled by Prime Minister Imran Khan’s recent remarks linking the incidence of rape to ‘obscurity’ and suggesting that ‘purdah’ would contain the problem. Not only does this betray a baffling ignorance of where, why and how rape occurs, but it also lays the blame on rape survivors, who, as the government must know, can range from young children to victims of honour crimes. This is unacceptable behaviour on the part of a public leader.
- *1 May 2021.* HRCP stands in solidarity with all workers on International Labour Day. We demand that the state brings the fundamental rights and economic wellbeing of workers, farmers, miners and fisherfolk to the core of its policymaking. The state must discourage contractual labour, encourage unionisation, ensure safety at the workplace, and substantially increase the minimum wage.
- *15 July 2021.* HRCP is alarmed at reports of violence being instigated against the transgender community in Karachi through a wave of threatening audio/video messages. The Sindh government must take note of such systematic attempts to marginalise an already vulnerable community and investigate.
- *29 July 2021.* HRCP is concerned to learn that the appointment of a chairperson for the National Commission on the Status of Women appears to contravene the rules of the parliamentary committee concerned. Six members of the parliamentary committee say that their vote was illegally overturned. The Ministry of Human Rights must reissue this notification based on the number of votes cast by the majority of committee members.
- *30 July 2021.* Victims of trafficking, especially women, children and bonded labourers, must be accorded special protection and assistance even after they have been removed from exploitation. The government must adopt a comprehensive plan to combat trafficking in persons, including measures to increase the number and scale of investigations into labour and sex trafficking, especially where official complicity is suspected. Victims of trafficking, especially women, children and bonded labourers, must be accorded special protection and assistance even after they have been removed from exploitation.
- *11 August 2021.* HRCP stands in solidarity with all delivery riders across Pakistan, many of whom say they have not been paid in months. Riders work long hours for low wages and without any employment benefits. They have the right to safe, decent and productive work as well as to dignity of labour. The government must make sure that their employers are held accountable.
- *16 August 2021.* HRCP is gravely concerned by reports of honour crimes in Gilgit-Baltistan being disguised as suicides. 27-year-old Adiba was allegedly killed by her in-laws in Shimshal. We demand that the case be reinvestigated by a team that includes women investigation officers and that the accused parties’ bail be cancelled.
- *24 September 2021.* HRCP is perturbed to learn that a landlord in Sann, Jamshoro, has ordered the local Mallah community to

- exhume their ancestors' graves and transfer the remains elsewhere to 'make more space' for the graves of the Syed family. Not only does this violate common standards of dignity and respect, but it also smacks of racism. The indigenous Mallah community have every right to bury their dead in Sann. We demand that legal action be taken against the landlord if he does not reverse this decision and apologise to the Mallah community.
- 20 November 2021. On Universal Children's Day, HRCP calls on the state to recognise its responsibility to Pakistan's children. All children have the right to education, healthcare and play, access to clean air and water, and freedom to live free from exploitation and abuse, whether in the form of forced labour, underage marriage or domestic violence. Children are equal citizens with equal rights, and both the state and society must start treating them as such.
 - 20 November 2021. HRCP is horrified to learn of the fire in the Teen Hatti slum area in Karachi. The state must investigate the incident, and provide immediate relief and resettlement to the families affected – people from the lowest social stratum who have nowhere else to go.
 - 25 November 2021. On International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, we call on the state and civil society to pledge to build a world free from violence, abuse and harassment... In the home. At the workplace. In public spaces. In digital spaces. Through 2021, honour crimes, rape and sexual assault, forced marriage, domestic violence and online harassment have shown no signs of receding. End gender-based violence now by listening to women's voices, by breaking gender stereotypes, and by prosecuting perpetrators to the full extent of the law.
 - 14 December 2021. HRCP is appalled at the recent physical and sexual assault on a Karachi Climate March trans activist and stands in solidarity with the survivor. That this was perpetrated allegedly by law enforcement personnel for the purposes of extracting information concerning the march compounds our cause for alarm, given that the trans community is already subject to disproportionate violence.

Social and economic rights

- 19 January 2021. HRCP is deeply concerned at the federal government's recent decision asking the provinces and private entities to import Covid-19 vaccines. It is the government's responsibility to provide subsidised vaccines to the working class, which forms the bulk of Pakistan's population. The aid received and funding allocated to fight the pandemic must be used transparently and spent on vaccinating citizens.
- 6 April 2021. HRCP demands that the government ensure that the Covid-19 vaccine is dispensed to prisoners and prison staff in the country's ill-equipped, overcrowded jails on a priority basis, particularly to the elderly.
- 2 July 2021. HRCP calls on the KP government to comply with a Supreme Court ruling that former employees of the Frontier

Education Foundation be adjusted within the public sector and their arrears settled. Some 300 employees are protesting in Peshawar for the right to jobs – their demands must be heard.

- 7 November 2021. HRCP supports the Climate Justice march organised by civil society in Lahore on 8 Nov. The climate emergency we face will affect the poor, the vulnerable and the excluded beyond measure.

Loss of fellow human rights defenders

- 30 January 2021. HRCP mourns the untimely passing of courageous journalist and *The News International* op-ed editor Zainul Abedin. Our deepest condolences to his family, friends and colleagues.
- 8 May 2021. HRCP mourns the loss of artist and activist Sadaf Chughtai, mother of a three-and-a-half-year-old son. That she spent the last three years struggling to find her husband, poet, filmmaker and journalist Mudassar Naru is a measure of the tragedy. We extend our deepest condolences to her family and friends and reiterate our demand for the government to recover Mudassar Naru immediately. We also demand an official inquiry into the circumstances of her death, given that she was due to appear at a hearing of the UN Commissioner on Enforced Disappearances on 20 May.
- 27 August 2021. HRCP mourns the passing of veteran women’s rights activist Dr Rubina Saigol. Her work on gender, nationalism, human rights and education has inspired three generations of activists and academics. As a pioneering member of the Women’s Action Forum, Dr Saigol was always in the vanguard of the feminist movement in Pakistan. She will be deeply missed.
- 3 September 2021. HRCP is deeply saddened at the passing of veteran political leader Sardar Ataullah Mengal. He was an icon of the struggle for a democratic federation and a fierce defender of the rights of the Baloch people. His passing will be mourned not only by the Baloch but also by all those who believe in democracy, federalism and human rights.
- 25 September 2021. HRCP deeply mourns the loss of feminist and peace activist Kamla Bhasin. A South Asian citizen in the true sense of the word, she was a friend and mentor to scores of HRCP members. Not only was she one of the most familiar faces of the movement for regional peace, Ms Bhasin also embodied some of HRCP’s most cherished values: the struggle to protect democratic ideals, the resistance against patriarchy and, above all, the power of communities to mobilise for their rights. She will be sorely missed by human rights defenders across Pakistan.

International peace and human rights

- 25 November 2021. HRCP is seriously concerned for the welfare of Srinagar-based human rights defender Khurram Parvez, who has been arbitrarily detained under the draconian Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for over 72 hours. Mr Parvez is an internationally respected activist whose work on enforced disappearances and

trenchant criticism of the Modi regime reflects his commitment to human rights despite the constant risk to his organisation and to himself. We call on the Indian government to release him immediately and unconditionally.

Press statements

Rule of law

Overreach puts Pakistan's democratic future at stake

20 March 2021. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) is concerned by the Sindh High Court's decision to 'suspend' two members of the Sindh provincial assembly on the grounds that they failed to supervise a campaign to cull stray dogs. HRCP believes that suspending elected representatives whose task is to legislate, not execute amounts to judicial overreach and prays that the honourable court will reverse this decision.

Indeed, the tendency to overreach has become increasingly common, most recently with the National Accountability Bureau's (NAB) allegations concerning Maryam Nawaz Sharif. It is not for the NAB to accuse any citizen of being involved in 'anti-state propaganda'—at the best of times, a nebulous and convenient label applied to political dissidents, academics, journalists and human rights defenders. The NAB has been criticized rightly for overstepping its jurisdiction time and again, and for persisting in selective accountability.

HRCP believes that the government has as much to answer for in this respect. Its assault on the Election Commission of Pakistan betrays a worrying lack of respect for the Constitution and for democratic values. The government and all state institutions would do well to remember that neither the erosion of autonomy nor unbridled overreach bodes well for Pakistan's future as a democracy.

HRCP welcomes bill criminalising torture, voices concerns

13 July 2021. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) welcomes the passage of the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Bill 2021, presented in the Senate by Senator Sherry Rehman and supported by the minister for human rights, Dr Shireen Mazari. Given that the country ratified the Convention Against Torture in 2010, this bill is a long overdue step towards criminalising what is, regrettably, an endemic practice.

Ideally, legislation against torture should have been made part of the Pakistan Penal Code. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the bill provides a comprehensive definition of torture, includes custodial sexual violence within the ambit of custodial torture, and gives the National Commission for Human Rights jurisdiction to investigate cases of torture once it has set up the necessary infrastructure.

HRCP remains concerned, however, that the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has been given primary jurisdiction to investigate complaints against torture-related offences. The evidence suggests that the FIA has perpetrated acts of torture itself and its current structure must be reformed to ensure that it does

not collude with other state agencies to tacitly enable the use of torture as a tool of criminal investigation. Given Pakistan's long history of using torture as a tool to intimidate political dissidents, human rights defenders and journalists, the state must commit fully to eradicating the culture that props up the use of torture in the criminal justice system, through institutional reforms that seek to end impunity.

Enforcement of law

Even one enforced disappearance is one too many

30 August 2021. On International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) expresses serious concern over the woeful track record of the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances, including the credibility of its chairperson and its continued inability – or unwillingness – to hold the perpetrators of this heinous practice accountable. HRCP notes with alarm that, in the last 10 years, the geographical spread of disappearances has grown, now extending across all provinces and territories, while the profile of victims has expanded to include not only political activists, but also journalists and human rights defenders.

While the recently proposed bill against enforced disappearances is a good law on paper and at least acknowledges the severity of the situation, HRCP is concerned that the bill lacks a concrete and practicable mechanism for identifying and holding perpetrators responsible and does not provide for reparations to victims and their families. In addition, until and unless all state agencies can be held collectively responsible under the law – rather than assigning responsibility to individuals alone – the mere existence of the law itself will not curb enforced disappearances. HRCP also calls on the judiciary to fulfil its responsibility to enforce citizens' fundamental rights and show greater resolve in demanding accountability for enforced disappearances.

Moratorium on death penalty should be reinstated

10 October 2021. While marking World Day Against the Death Penalty, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) strongly urges the state to impose an immediate moratorium on the death penalty and focus instead on improving the efficacy of criminal investigations while introducing broader prison reforms that protect the fundamental rights of the incarcerated population – to whom the state owes a duty of care.

HRCP takes this opportunity to reiterate its stance on the death penalty: that the state's duty is to preserve life, not extinguish it, and that, at a practical level, there is no scientific evidence to show that the death penalty reduces the incidence of crime. Importantly, the death penalty in an unsatisfactory judicial system should not be permitted. Not only are the poor and resourceless overwhelmingly at risk of being executed when convicted, but also special cases, such as minors and the mentally challenged, remain under threat in pro-death penalty regimes.

It is worth noting that, according to HRCP's records, the state did not execute any prisoners in 2020 and that there was a significant fall in the number of cases in which the death penalty was awarded – from at least 578 persons in 2019 to

177 in 2020. In addition, the Supreme Court's earlier ruling in February – that prisoners with serious mental health problems cannot be executed for their crimes – was a welcome development.

Democratic participation

GB status quo continued in 2020

26 June 2021. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP)'s annual report on the state of human rights in 2020 notes with concern that, despite the long-standing demand that Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) be made a constitutional part of Pakistan, the territory remained a de facto administrative unit, its citizens deprived of the right to political representation in the National Assembly and Senate of Pakistan and other policymaking institutions. Additionally, GB's judicial system remained under the control of the executive pillar of the state and appointments continued to be made on a political basis. In common with the rest of Pakistan, GB struggled to counter the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak in 2020, which led to job losses for daily-wage labourers, caused education at all levels to come to a standstill, and put severe strain on the healthcare system.

A key development in 2020 was the joint sit-in in Hunza by the families of political prisoners and the Asiran-e-Hunza Rehayee Committee in October, following which the caretaker government and leaders of the committee agreed that the political prisoners would be released on bail. Subsequently, all the prisoners in question – including the incarcerated leader of the Awami Workers Party (AWP), Baba Jan – were released. Regrettably, the misuse of anti-terrorism laws – a trend observed consistently by HRCP over the years – continued in 2020, with youth, rights activists, journalists, political workers, and nationalists monitored regularly under Schedule Four of the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997. Rights activists continued to allege that Schedule Four was being used to stifle political dissent during the year. In one notable case, Irfan Haider John, a nationalist political worker, was warned by the local administration to curtail his social media and political activities after he had hosted Mohsin Dawar – a leader of the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement and member of the National Assembly.

HRCP's report also notes that instances in which local journalists were threatened or intimidated by state or non-state actors appeared to have increased in 2020. Elections for the GB Legislative Assembly were held on 15 November. Although the polling process was largely peaceful and orderly, HRCP was concerned to learn that independent election observers – including its own team of observers in four cases – were not allowed into polling stations in the city of Gilgit during the vote counting process. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf formed the new provincial government in GB. HRCP's report notes, however, that the absence of local bodies since the last elections in 2009 has scuttled the emergence of leadership at the grassroots level, explaining why the election for the GB Legislative Assembly in 2020 witnessed a large number of candidates.

HRCP concerned by AJK election violence

26 July 2021. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) notes with grave concern the deaths of two PTI workers during the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) elections held on 25 July. A third PPP worker is also reported to have been killed when PTI workers allegedly fired on a PPP candidate's vehicle

in Kotli. Initial findings indicate that independent observers have reported at least eight other incidents in which rival political groups engaged in violence, leaving both political workers and police injured. In one case, five police constables were injured after Jamaat-e-Islami activists attacked them with batons at the Dhal Chakhya polling station in LA-32 in the Jhelum Valley district. In at least one instance in Bagh, individuals associated with PTI candidate Tanvir Ilyas were reported to have been distributing money among voters, urging them to vote for their candidate.

The Election Commission must also investigate allegations by the PPP concerning the use of force to influence the voting process, including the arrest of the chief polling agent for LA-30 immediately after the start of polling and reports that PTI workers ‘captured’ the Mandol Bazaar polling station in LA-18 and stamped ballot papers. HRCP demands that all cases of election-related violence and poll rigging are investigated and addressed promptly and transparently. It is also a matter of serious concern that polling camps set up by the proscribed Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan were seen by independent observers. We also urge the government to ensure that women’s participation as voters is strengthened by increasing efforts to provide all women in AJK with CNICs so that they appear on the electoral rolls.

Fundamental freedoms

‘Rights have been systematically manipulated’: Second Asma Jahangir Memorial Lecture

16 February 2021. Speaking at the annual Asma Jahangir Memorial Lecture instituted by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), Senator Raza Rabbani observed that, although the Constitution protected the right to freedom of association, Pakistan had witnessed a systematic and premeditated plan on the part of the state to ‘manipulate’ and ‘deny’ this—and other—fundamental rights.

Senator Rabbani also pointed out that the judiciary’s interim order banning student unions in June 1992 was ‘a clear infringement of Article 17’ and that its subsequent decision in March 1993 to allow limited student activity was based on the flawed understanding that it was did not behove students to be involved in political matters. Senator Rabbani reminded his audience that student unions in Pakistan had traditionally nurtured leaders whose entry into politics was ideological. He said that his efforts to move a bill removing Section 124A from the Pakistan Penal Code was inspired by the student movement in Pakistan, during which it was common practice for the state to attempt to suppress dissent by charging student leaders with sedition. It was a ‘source of shame’, he added, that students in Balochistan had been forcibly disappeared: ‘Parliament has raised this issue, but at the end of the day, the deep state does not listen.’

Economic woes and curbs on dissent marred 2020 HRCP launches report on state of human rights

3 May 2021. The release of State of Human Rights in 2020, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP)’s flagship annual report, needs to jolt both the state and government out of their complacency that a neoliberal, hidebound regime will deliver to Pakistan’s people the rights and freedoms to which they are legally and constitutionally entitled. Assessing the Covid-19 crisis through a

human rights lens, HRCF finds that the pandemic aggravated existing inequalities, leaving millions of vulnerable workers at risk of losing their livelihoods.

The Benazir Income Support and Ehsaas Programmes, which the government sensibly made part of its approach to the pandemic, likely saved thousands of households from sinking deeper into poverty, but these programmes are only a small facet of what a robust, pro-poor strategy should look like. A pivotal step by the government could be to make the right to health a fundamental right under the constitution and invest in preparedness, quality and access. That local government elections were delayed long past the deadline in all four provinces – thereby violating the Elections Act 2017 and negating the spirit of the 18th constitutional amendment – is cause for serious concern. The Covid-19 pandemic is precisely the sort of situation that warrants effective local governments on the ground.

The pandemic was also a huge blow to educational institutions, with students compelled to attend online classes to the detriment of thousands in Baluchistan, the tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Gilgit-Baltistan, who had little or no access to reliable internet connections. That State of Human Rights in 2020 was released on World Press Freedom Day should give the state pause for thought. This is now the third year running in which HRCF has underscored escalating curbs on freedom of expression and opinion in its report. From the abduction of senior journalist Matiullah Jan to the arrest of Jang Group chief Mir Shakil-ur-Rahman, it is clear that media groups continue to be pushed into towing the line.

Worryingly, the National Accountability Bureau continued its operations as an instrument that violates fundamental human rights, including the right to fair trial and due process, among other things. Prisons in Pakistan remain sorely overcrowded, with an occupancy rate of 124 percent. This is marginally lower than in 2019, but the ever-present risk of infection in the country's prisons shows that the state has failed in its duty of care. On a welcome note, the death penalty was awarded to at least 177 persons in 2020 – a substantial fall from at least 578 persons in 2019. No executions were reported to have been carried out.

The long-awaited bill aimed at criminalizing enforced disappearance has still not been passed despite commitments to this effect by the incumbent government since 2018. Indeed, despite the fact that the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances has failed to address entrenched impunity, the government extended the latter's mandate by another three years. Meanwhile, Baluchistan remained especially vulnerable to excesses of power, from the extrajudicial killing of Hayat Baloch, an unarmed student, by a Frontier Corps soldier, to the shooting of four-year-old Bramsh and allegations that the men responsible had been sent by the alleged local leader of a 'death squad'.

'An end to fear and censorship': HRCF launches policy brief on press freedom

1 June 2021. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCF) is gravely concerned over the growing climate of fear, violence and censorship that currently underpins freedom of expression and opinion in the country. The attack on reporter Asad Ali Toor by unidentified persons allegedly in connection

with his work and the decision to take anchor Hamid Mir off the air – following his criticism of the establishment at a civil society protest – represents what has now become an entrenched pattern of unspoken censorship and violent reprisals.

According to a policy brief released by HRCP earlier today on the state of press freedom in Pakistan, with state and non-state actors strengthening their control over information, it has become clear that anyone challenging the preferred narrative will be punished—a sentiment that was unanimous among the journalists who took part in HRCP’s discussions for this policy brief. The document argues strongly against the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016 – misuse of which constantly forces journalists to self-censor – and demands that PEMRA operate as an independent body, not as a government subsidiary.

It is also critical to ensure that media persons – especially in Balochistan and KP, where fear of investigating and reporting the truth is apparent among journalists – are protected by their employers and state institutions. In cases where journalists have been murdered in the line of duty, FIRs must be registered, the culprits brought to justice and the victims’ families compensated. It is also unacceptable for a profession that can carry enormous personal risk to remain largely devoid of protection mechanisms.

Foremost, all media personnel must be paid their salaries on time and all salary cuts reverted. The jurisdiction of the Islamabad-based media tribunal must be expanded to the district level to ensure regular payment of salaries and other dues. The government must also take proactive steps to track down social media accounts involved in harassing or intimidating journalists, especially women in the profession.

Sindh’s response to Covid promising, but rights record worrying in 2020

21 June 2021. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan’s (HRCP) annual report on the state of human rights in 2020 indicates that, by the end of last year, Sindh presented the highest number of Covid-19 infections and deaths in the country, with a death toll of 3,560. The provincial government took a proactive approach to controlling the spread of the virus in the initial phase of the pandemic by closing down schools and imposing a temporary ban on public gatherings ahead of the national lockdown. The passage of the Sindh Covid-19 Emergency Relief Ordinance 2020 was a welcome development in that it provided some relief to workers, students and tenants. However, these measures were marred by weak implementation, with labour organisations complaining of widespread retrenchments, especially in the private sector.

Pakistan Steel Mills also dismissed over 4,500 workers, seeking to retrench about the same number. HRCP notes that, while the four-year term of local governments in Sindh expired on 30 August, the provincial government had not announced a new date for the next local elections as of end-2020. The report also indicates that 121 prisoners were awarded death sentences in the province in 2020. In a promising sign, no executions were, however, carried out. The abduction of the Sindh inspector general of police in October by security agencies raised serious concerns over undue political pressure imposed on the police to arrest an opposition leader. There was also an alarming uptick in enforced disappearances in the province. According to one estimate, a total of 127 persons went missing

in Sindh during 2020, of which 112 resurfaced while 15 were still missing at the end of the year. A prominent case was that of political activist Sarang Joyo, who was allegedly subjected to torture during his disappearance. Children’s access to education remained poor. HRCP recorded 197 honour crimes in 2020 for Sindh alone, involving 79 male and 136 female victims. At least six cases of forced conversion of Hindu girls were also reported in the province.

Deterioration in press freedom in 2020

23 June 2021. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP)’s annual report on the state of human rights in 2020 shows that, by the end of last year, Sindh presented the highest number of Covid-19 infections and deaths in the country, with a death toll of 3,560. While the passage of the Sindh Covid-19 Emergency Relief Ordinance 2020 was a welcome development, providing some relief to workers, students and tenants, these measures were marred by weak implementation.

Press freedom and working conditions in the media remained cause for alarm in 2020. Hundreds of media workers lost their jobs, were forced to resign, or faced salary cuts. In several cases, law enforcement or security agencies arbitrarily abducted or detained journalists or arrested them on charges of sedition – often preceded by allegations that the targeted journalists were critical of the state.

The report also indicates that 121 prisoners were awarded death sentences in the province in 2020. In a promising sign, no executions were, however, carried out. There was an alarming uptick in enforced disappearances in the province. According to one estimate, a total of 127 persons went missing in Sindh during 2020, of which 112 resurfaced while 15 were still missing at the end of the year. A prominent case was that of political activist Sarang Joyo, who was allegedly subjected to torture during his disappearance.

Promise of mainstreaming former FATA unfulfilled in 2020

23 June 2021. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP)’s annual report on the state of human rights in 2020 details the devastating impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), which recorded 58,702 cases and 1,649 deaths. This was aggravated by low testing levels – less than half a million of KP’s 35 million residents had been tested by the end of the year. Freedom of movement and association were also affected significantly by Covid-related restrictions. Over 30 laws were passed by the KP Assembly, of which at least 17 were directly related to human rights. Despite being long overdue, local government elections were not held in 2020. This adversely affected local development as the provincial government failed to utilise PKR 43 billion of the PKR 46 billion allocated to local governments for 2019/20.

The promise of mainstreaming the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas into KP also remained largely unfulfilled, given the inadequate implementation of the Tribal Decade Strategy (2020–30) – only PKR 37 billion of the promised PKR 74 billion in development funds was released. Jails in KP remained overcrowded in 2020, with nearly 8,000 of more than 11,000 inmates classified as under-trial prisoners. Little progress was made in tackling the backlog of court cases, with 41,042 cases pending in the Peshawar High Court and 230,869 in the District Judiciary KP by end-2020. In welcome news, the Peshawar High Court

ordered the release of nearly 200 men convicted by military courts for alleged terrorism in a verdict that included a scathing indictment of the miscarriage of justice. Additionally, no executions were carried out during the year, although the death penalty was awarded to at least one person.

Law and order remained unstable in the province, with terrorist attacks, violence against religious minorities and transgender persons, the harassment of women, and child rape reported through the year. The Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances traced 1,335 missing persons from KP as of end-2020. Overall, since its inception in 2011, the commission has traced 713 persons to internment centres and 93 to prisons.

NCHR, NCSW remained dysfunctional in 2020

23 June 2021. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP)'s annual report on the state of human rights in 2020 notes with concern that the government's initial response to the Covid-19 pandemic was marred by a lack of transparency and enforcement: no strict lockdown was imposed when it should have been, hospitals were ill equipped to handle the influx of cases, and non-compliance with standard operating procedures in mosques was not addressed. The National Coordination Committee and National Command and Operation Centre set up to combat the crisis were also established without parliamentary or Cabinet approval. However, cash distributions under the federal government's Ehsaas Programme were a welcome reprieve for those in need of a social safety net.

Presidential ordinances were repeatedly issued as the government continued to bypass the correct constitutional procedure of presenting a draft bill in Parliament and holding detailed discussions of the draft. That key human rights institutions such as the National Commission for Human Rights and the National Commission on the Status of Women remained dysfunctional throughout 2020 is a matter of grave concern. On a welcome note, the National Assembly passed significant human rights-related laws, such as the Zainab Alert, Response and Recovery Act and the ICT Rights of Persons with Disability Act. The Ministry of Human Rights also submitted several recommendations for prison reform in its report to the Prime Minister.

The right to freedom of expression and assembly remained under threat as spaces for dissent continued to shrink in 2020. This was evident in the government's attempt to impose new curbs on the electronic, print and social media; the National Accountability Bureau's widely criticised tactic of initiating cases against political opposition members while overlooking the ruling party's excesses; and the presidential reference filed against Justice Qazi Faez Isa who is known for his anti-establishment views. Journalists and media professionals in particular found themselves under continued pressure as Mir Shakil-ur-Rahman, owner of Pakistan's largest media group, was put behind bars in a 35-year-old case initiated by the National Accountability Bureau, and senior journalist Matiullah Jan was abducted in broad daylight and released only 12 hours later after public outrage.

The Aurat March collective also faced rigid opposition and harassment from various quarters, with Islamabad participants becoming a target of violence during their rally. Worryingly, crimes against vulnerable groups such as

children, women and religious minorities continued unabated. The Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances also came under fire in a scathing review from the International Commission of Jurists, which criticised the commission's failure to hold perpetrators accountable.

HRCP concerned about inflation and rising extremism

12 November 2021. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has said that the deteriorating state of human rights in the country has reached a tipping point. In a situation where people are caught between spiralling food inflation and the insidious rise of religious extremism, continued attempts by the establishment and the ruling government to marginalise Parliament represent an existential threat to the country's democracy. HRCP also strongly opposes any amendments that curb the power of local governments. The political opposition has a duty to its constituents to present solutions to the inflation crisis.

HRCP also urges the government to seriously reconsider the neoliberal development models it has adopted. That the government chose to negotiate with the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was unconscionable. This capitulation to a far-right militant group that is responsible for an estimated 80,000 Pakistani deaths is a grim portent for progressive, secular voices. HRCP is also gravely concerned by the government's failure to impose the writ of the state even after at least seven police officers were killed during the recent violence perpetrated by supporters of the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP).

HRCP demands immediate measures to strengthen children's protection bureaus, women's shelters and gender-based violence courts, and better equip women police officers. HRCP also continues to monitor the situation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and strongly urges the government to develop and implement a coherent policy towards refugees that guarantees their right to security and freedom of movement. HRCP welcomes the Supreme Court's decision to penalize the miscreants who attacked a Hindu temple in Karak district in KPK. This sets an important precedent. We reiterate the need to implement the 2014 Tassadaq Jilani Supreme Court judgment, establish an independent statutory national commission on minorities, enact legislation against forced conversions, and revisit the recommendations of the Senate's 2018 report on the blasphemy laws.

While HRCP supports the urgent need to legislate against the practice of enforced disappearances, it is concerned that the draft legislation does not make adequate provision for deterrence or prosecution, or for holding state agencies accountable for employing this practice as a tool of intimidation. We welcome the passage of the Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Act, but the procedural rules that have yet to be issued must not infringe on the right to freedom of expression and opinion, nor should the process of issuing these rules be needlessly delayed. It is deeply ironic, however, that this law is at odds with the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016 and proposed – draconian – Pakistan Media Development Authority Ordinance. In the current environment, it is therefore fitting that HRCP has chosen to give the Nisar Osmani Award for Courage Journalism in 2021 to the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), which has been an indispensable force in resisting the rising coercive regime of censorship.

Rights of the disadvantaged

On 8 March, listen to what women have to say

8 March 2021. On International Women's Day, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) joins the global call to recognise, protect and promote women's rights. Foremost, we demand an end to gender-based violence in all its iterations. The recent targeted killing of four women NGO workers in North Waziristan, the murder of two transgender persons in Gujranwala, and the brutal rape of a woman on the motorway last year should serve to remind the state that women and trans persons remain vulnerable whether at work or at home or simply for using public spaces.

HRCP expects the state to uphold women's constitutional right to freedom of peaceful assembly and to ensure that women's marches across Pakistan on 8 March are provided security and safe public spaces. Above all, both the state and society must listen to and reflect on what women have to say—from lady health workers and teachers agitating for fair wages and better working conditions, to women demanding an end to impunity at missing persons camps, and farmers protesting against elite-centric projects to 'reclaim' land for housing developments.

Vulnerable groups hit hardest by pandemic in 2020 in Punjab

23 June 2021. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP)'s annual report on the state of human rights in 2020 underscores the extent to which the Covid-19 pandemic exposed the shortcomings of the healthcare sector, both in terms of preparedness and access to facilities. This was especially dangerous in Punjab's jails where overcrowding and substandard hygiene exacerbated an already fraught situation for vulnerable inmates. Factory workers and daily-wage earners were among the hardest hit, with hundreds of thousands of layoffs taking place during the lockdowns. Students were compelled to protest when online classes served to benefit only those living in areas with a stable digital infrastructure. However, actions to curtail such public assemblies were erratic, with political gatherings facing more restrictions than large religious congregations or protests by ordinary citizens.

The passage of the Punjab Textbook and Curriculum Amendment Bill and the Punjab Tahaffuz-i-Bunyad-i-Islam Bill 2020 led to public outrage as yet another move to tighten restrictions on freedoms of expression, thought and belief in the guise of protecting religion. No inroads were made in tackling the backlog of court cases—188,176 in the Lahore High Court by end-December 2020. HRCP also documented the imposition of the death penalty in 91 instances, involving 148 victims. In an encouraging development, no executions were, however, carried out. Law enforcement in Punjab was marred by frequent internal transfers and infighting within the police force. Citizens complained that it was increasingly difficult to register first information reports, especially in cases where relatives had been killed in police 'encounters' or in custody, or in cases of illegal land acquisition by influential people. The National Accountability Bureau also came under fire for making allegedly politically motivated arrests.

Reports of cases of child abuse continued unabated, with Punjab accounting for over 57 percent of all reported cases. Religious minorities faced persistent

marginalisation over the year, with accusations of blasphemy and forced conversions. Police data indicates that 487 blasphemy cases were registered in Punjab alone. On a positive note, the Punjab government took measures to prevent hate speech on social media, which helped ensure a peaceful Muharram—over 4,000 such websites were blocked and action taken against their operators for inciting sectarian violence. The gang-rape of a woman on the Lahore-Sialkot motorway in September 2020 elicited outrage and wide public condemnation, especially after the capital city police officer came under fire for ill-advised comments implying that the woman was indirectly to blame. In an important development, however, women’s rights activists challenged the archaic and demeaning ‘two-finger test’ for virginity in the Lahore High Court, winning their case in November.

PM must apologise for remarks linking rape to women’s attire

24 June 2021. At a press conference, 16 civil society organisations—including the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, the Women’s Action Forum, Tehrik-e-Niswan, Aurat March, and the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research, among others—have strongly condemned Imran Khan’s troubling remarks linking women’s attire to the incidence of rape. This is the second time that the Prime Minister has reduced sexual violence to an act of ‘temptation.’ For the head of government to insist on this view is simply inexcusable.

It is equally disheartening to see that several women members of the ruling party have jumped to the Prime Minister’s defence and justified his comments in vague, illogical terms. Even a cursory glance at the news should make it painfully clear that survivors of sexual violence can include women, girls, men, boys, and transgender persons—and that such acts can occur in schools, workplaces, homes, and public spaces. We demand an immediate public apology from the Prime Minister and assurances that his highly flawed perception of how and why rape occurs does not inform the government’s attempts to tackle what is a serious and prevalent crime in Pakistan.

HRCP council gravely concerned at human rights crisis, calls for urgent measures

14 August 2021. HRCP has expressed grave concern over the state’s abject failure to protect its most vulnerable citizens. HRCP demands that child protection units be revitalised and law enforcement agencies compound their efforts to trace and charge perpetrators of crimes against children. Violence against women and girls amounts to a femicide emergency and must be dealt with as such. The much-needed domestic violence bill was also shunted unnecessarily towards the all-male Council of Islamic Ideology. Religious minorities and sects remain under enormous pressure, their sites of worship arbitrarily attacked or desecrated. The state must take prompt and concrete steps to implement the 2014 Supreme Court judgment, which provides for special police forces to protect sites of worship. The government must also recognise that the Shia Hazara community remains particularly vulnerable to sectarian violence.

HRCP remains concerned at the impact of the anti-encroachment drives in Karachi’s Gujjar Nullah and Orangi areas. The provincial government must ensure that people who have lost their homes are fairly compensated and resettled. HRCP also calls for an immediate end to the forced displacement of families by Bahria Town development schemes. The government must pay

special attention to protecting the rights of workers and peasants, in particular, addressing the concerns of the fisherfolk community in Gwadar regarding threats to their livelihood, small farmers in the military-owned Okara farms, and coal miners working in abject conditions in Balochistan and KPK.

HRCP is seriously concerned at the continuing lack of accountability of perpetrators in cases of enforced disappearance. All state agencies must be brought within the ambit of the law and the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced HRCP is greatly alarmed at the extent to which freedom of expression and opinion has receded, with reports of the abduction and torture of journalists becoming more common and repressive state policies making it difficult for journalists to even remain employed.

The political engineering evident in the newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and stringent curbs on political dissent must cease. Similarly, the state must take immediate measures to remove all landmines in this area. It is also imperative that the government investigate the 'kill list' recently issued by the Taliban and ensure that all those concerned are provided security.

The government must also apprise citizens of the state of implementation of the National Action Plan, given the prospect of increasing militancy. HRCP is especially concerned by the extent to which federalism has come under strain. In the interest of giving students the right to a secular education, no province should be pressured to adopt the heavily criticised Single National Curriculum.

Parliamentary proceedings should not be conducted in camera. The public has the right to know what is debated and decided on the floor of the house. Equally, HRCP is concerned by the deteriorating independence of the judiciary, continued application of the jirga system in Sindh and KPK, and the fact that the National Commission for Human Rights remains dysfunctional.

HRCP calls on the government to accelerate its vaccination efforts and to ensure that social safety nets do not exclude individuals who lack citizenship identity documents and extend to the millions of un-regularised contract workers who depend on their freedom of movement to make a living.

27 August 2021. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) notes with grave concern that the government continues to neglect coal miners' right to life and security of person in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The murder of three coalminers in Marwar, Balochistan, on 24 August is at least the second such incident in 2021, after 11 coal miners were kidnapped by armed militants and shot dead in Mach in January this year. In addition, the discovery in April of the remains of 16 coal miners in Shangla, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, who were abducted and murdered almost a decade ago, is a grim reminder that miners' lives have long been considered expendable. Not only must they contend with hazardous working conditions, but they are also at great risk as a result of poor law and order in remote mining areas, where militant groups commonly extort protection money from colliery owners.

It is deeply ironic that security agencies reportedly impose an unofficial security charge on production—termed extortion by coalmine owners—and remain unable to provide the very security that is their job as public servants. HRCP demands that the inquiry into the Marwar killings be conducted swiftly and the

perpetrators brought to justice. Given the circumstances, the state must provide miners in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa secure sites to work and compensate the families of those who have lost their lives as a result of sectarian or militant violence.

Citizenship documentation requirements must be eased for vulnerable seasonal workers

1 October 2021. At a policy consultation held on itinerant workers' right to citizenship documents, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) presented the key findings of a study examining the obstacles to citizenship for seasonal workers based in and around Karachi. The study shows that women from such communities are often actively denied this right because it is not considered important for them to possess computerised national identity cards (CNICs)—otherwise a means of empowerment.

Children of unknown parentage are especially vulnerable: there is no provision for issuing them with birth registration certificates, leaving them at greater risk of violence, trafficking and induction into child labour. Most itinerant workers surveyed also said they had been unable to access relief during the Covid-19 crisis, given their lack of citizenship documents. Among other measures, the study recommends expanding the outreach of mobile units and involving lady health and polio workers in facilitating seasonal workers' access to CNICs.

Border should not be closed to those who flee in fear for their lives

15 October 2021. At a roundtable organized by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) and South Asian Partnership - Pakistan (SAP-PK) today, panelists called on the government to formulate, as a matter of priority, a coherent policy for assisting Afghan refugees fleeing the Taliban-led dispensation in Afghanistan, where reports of human rights violations have escalated steadily since the far right militant group seized power in mid-August.

SAP-PK executive director Muhammad Tahseen said that the absence of such a policy meant that poorer, more vulnerable HRCP chairperson Hina Jilani pointed out that developments in Afghanistan had serious implications for civil society in Pakistan and that 'secret briefings' on the issue were unacceptable. While respecting Afghan sovereignty was indeed important, she said, this should not keep civil society in Pakistan from speaking up against human rights violations in Afghanistan.

Former senator and HRCP Council member Farhatullah Babar emphasized the need to develop a human rights-centric policy with respect to Afghan refugees. Former senator and former HRCP chairperson Afrasiab Khattak said it was critical to hear from Afghan refugees themselves. Cumbersome documentation requirements and reports that the authorities were extorting refugees for money at the border were cause for grave concern. It was essential, he added, that Pakistan accede to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol and pass national legislation in light of these obligations.

Lahore's 'forgotten citizens': Access to CNICs for Pakhiwas communities

10 November 2021. At a policy consultation held earlier today, the HRCP presented the key findings of a study examining the obstacles to citizenship for

seasonal workers based in and around Lahore, many of whom hail from the nomadic or Pakhiwas community. The study found that a significant proportion of the Pakhiwas community were unaware of the benefits of computerised national identity cards (CNICs), including the fact that citizenship documents could make them eligible for public healthcare and social safety nets such as the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP).

Among other recommendations, HRCP underscored the importance of community-level advocacy to encourage the Pakhiwas community to apply for CNICs and setting up an emergency unit to include nomadic communities in the national census and reporting this data to the human rights ministry to bring them within the citizenship process.

Balochistan's coal miners must not be neglected any longer

19 November 2021. HRCP fact-finding mission is gravely concerned to find that coalminers remain vulnerable to severe human rights violations. According to the Pakistan Central Mines Labour Federation, at least 176 miners were killed and 180 injured in mining accidents in 2021. Miners in Balochistan face the additional risk of targeted attacks by non-state actors.

With respect to external safety inspections, the fact that only 27 mine inspectors are available to oversee health and safety in over 6,000 mines in the province is also cause for concern. The mission's broad findings reveal that the majority of coalminers are not registered with the EOBI or other social security programmes. This implies that they are not eligible for employment benefits or pensions, leaving them highly vulnerable once they are no longer able to work. There are also concerns that the compensation for death and injury is lower in Balochistan (PKR 300,000) than in other provinces (PKR 500,000)—this must be rectified promptly.

Many labour union representatives also say they are deeply unhappy with the contractor system of operating coal mines because contractors have less stake in ensuring the safety and security of their workers and resort to cost-cutting measures. HRCP also recommends that the government upgrade the status of the coal mining sector to an industry and hold mine owners as well as contractors accountable for running their sites in line with the provisions of the Mines Act 1923 and subsequent amendments. The government must also ratify and implement ILO Convention 176 on safety and health in mines as soon as possible.

43 bonded labourers released from Khuzdar after HRCP petition

20 November 2021. Following a petition filed by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), 43 bonded labourers were released in Ornach in the district of Khuzdar, where they had been working for a local landlord as agricultural labour. The labourers are from Hyderabad's Hindu community, where a relative had approached HRCP's Hyderabad office to lodge a complaint concerning their situation. The complaint was then forwarded to HRCP's Quetta office. Subsequently, HRCP filed a petition with the Balochistan High Court, where a division bench comprising Justice Hashim Khan Kakar and Justice Nazeer Ahmed Langve ordered the deputy commissioner of Khuzdar to recover the labourers and produce them before the court. Following this, the high court directed that they be returned to Hyderabad.

Open letter: The situation of Afghan refugees cannot continue to be ignored

22 November 2021. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) calls on the state to immediately address the situation of Afghan refugees in the country, which, in the absence of any comprehensive policy framework or legislation, has been sidelined. Contrary to the Prime Minister's public announcements, ordinary citizens from Afghanistan have been left to fend for themselves amid new and arbitrary restrictions on cross-border movement. This dire lack of protocol and policy is unjust and serves only to aggravate the tension between the two countries rather than restoring balance in such a precarious situation. HRCP thus recommends that the state take the following practical steps towards tackling what could potentially become a full-blown humanitarian crisis:

Develop a transparent, human rights-centric policy

Historically, Parliament has never held a discussion on the situation of Afghan refugees, relegating this issue to the military domain instead where policies have been made in secrecy. In similar fashion, public debate on this issue has been ousted and 'secret briefings' held, which HRCP deems unacceptable. The Cabinet's 2017 decision to adopt a national policy on the management of Afghan refugees and nationals in Pakistan along specific parameters must be revived immediately, and the Parliamentary Committee of the Whole, in consultation with civil society organisations, must develop a substantial policy to address the matter in a way that upholds human rights and humanitarian law. This policy must also be announced in Parliament to allow for much-needed discussion and debate before it is implemented.

Hear from Afghan representatives and refugees

There is a worrying lack of clarity at the grassroots level about how to respond to this crisis, especially among border patrol and the police. Multiple reports from the border indicate that authorities have been extorting refugees for money, giving preferential treatment, refusing entry, and even subjecting them to violence. Refugee camps also suffer from poor hygienic conditions and refugees continue to experience harassment and xenophobia from local administrations and communities. Allowances must be made, such as easing cumbersome documentation requirements, providing more dignified living situations, and making every effort to provide a safer, more inclusive environment. This will only be possible if the state listens proactively to the concerns of Afghan representatives and refugees rather than dismissing them.

Honour agreements, protocols and Pakistan's own precedent

Pakistan must accede to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, and pass national and domestic legislation in light of these obligations. Furthermore, Pakistan must honour its own precedent of accepting Afghan refugees and adhere to the tripartite agreement between UNHCR, Afghanistan and Pakistan whereby repatriation has to be voluntary.

Take action to speed up resettlement of refugees

Afghan citizens were recently allowed to obtain permission letters or cards from the Ministry of Interior in Islamabad while in Afghanistan, which is impractical. HRCP urges the government to hasten the paperwork needed to secure safe

transit and visas for asylum seekers. The government should also take UNHCR on board so that an easy and effective registration policy can be initiated without delay. Moreover, civil society should be encouraged to assist refugees to whatever extent possible instead of being harassed by state authorities when such efforts are made. Finally, the government must take immediate steps to ensure that refugees have unhindered access to an overall rehabilitation plan that includes healthcare, employment and education for their children.

Social and economic rights

RUDP: Boon for business, bane for farmers?

7 April 2021. In a fact-finding report released earlier, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has expressed serious concerns as to the environmental as well as human rights implications of the much-vaunted Ravi Riverfront Urban Development Project (RUDP). Based on consultations with civil society, including environmental activists and experts, and field visits to several villages affected by the land acquisition being carried out under the project, HRCP has reason to conclude that – contrary to the Punjab government’s claims – the RUDP will neither help provide affordable housing to the needy nor protect the local environment.

The opaque nature of the project, and the fact that it has involved top-down decision making, has rightly been criticised by civil society and environmental experts alike. In addition, the project’s environmental impact assessment (EIA) is flawed on numerous counts, not least of which are poor levels of stakeholder consultation, vague commitments on how noise, water and air pollution levels will be controlled, and lack of attention to cheaper alternatives to cleaning the water body.

HRCP demands that all development work in the area be halted, including land acquisition, until the project’s EIA is revised, with input from all stakeholders – including landowners – and compensation issues settled satisfactorily. Importantly, no forcible occupation of land should take place and no pressure tactics employed to buy land.

Loss of fellow human rights defenders

‘She defined courage’: HRCP pays tribute to Asma Jahangir

11 February 2021. At a reference held at the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) earlier today, rights activists gathered to pay tribute to HRCP’s co-founder and iconic human rights defender, Asma Jahangir. Veteran journalist and former secretary-general I. A. Rehman said that Ms Jahangir ‘defined courage.’ She did not shy away from the possible consequences of a principled action or stance, he added. When sections of civil society termed General Pervez Musharraf’s seemingly liberal military regime a ‘window of opportunity’ for human rights in 1999, recalled Mr Rehman, Ms Jahangir was quick to retort, ‘But there is no need to take a flying leap straight through that window.’

Labour rights activist Farooq Tariq recalled that Asma Jahangir was always ready to take part in demonstrations for workers’ rights at short notice and had played an instrumental role in helping mobilise the Anjuman-e-Mazareen

Punjab in Okara against military-owned farms. Civil society activist Mohammad Tahseen said that it was important to take Ms Jahangir's vision forward rather than dwell on her loss. Lawyer Alia Malik, who worked with Ms Jahangir for over 25 years at the AGHS Legal Aid Cell, said that she had always encouraged her younger associates to remain persistent: if the courts refused to listen to them, Ms Jahangir would say, then they should return with stronger evidence and ask on what basis the courts had refused to listen.

Former chairperson Dr Mehdi Hasan recalled that, when a young Christian accused of blasphemy was shot dead outside the Lahore High Court, his last words had been: 'Tell Asma Jahangir what has happened.' Indeed, her name was synonymous with the human rights she spent her life defending. Chairperson Hina Jilani remembered Ms Jahangir as a 'doer.'

Kamran Arif: So much more than a rights sloganeer

3 April 2021. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) mourns the untimely passing of Kamran Arif, vice-chair of HRCP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on 2 April 2021. A senior lawyer and internationally respected human rights defender, Mr Arif was associated with HRCP for almost 30 years, during which he led high-profile fact-finding missions to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit and Balochistan; trained hundreds of activists in international human rights law; and remained a staunch advocate against custodial torture, enforced disappearances and the death penalty.

As co-chair of HRCP from 2011 to 2017, Mr Arif spoke up consistently for human rights—particularly freedom of expression and of religion and belief—in the context of the criminal justice system. He articulated time and again the need to ensure that former FATA was mainstreamed into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa fairly and effectively, but as HRCP secretary-general Harris Khaliq noted, 'Kamran Arif believed more in actual work than mere sloganeering. His loss to HRCP is irreparable.' A former bureau member of South Asians for Human Rights, Mr Arif was also deeply committed to a lasting peace between India and Pakistan. At a memorial held online yesterday, HRCP members, staff, and supporters recalled Mr Arif's wit, humour and erudition; his keen eye for photography; his passion for history and travel; and above all his commitment to human rights and democratic values in even the most difficult circumstances.

I. A. Rehman: A titan of human rights

12 April 2021. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) is devastated by the loss of its honorary spokesperson and former secretary-general I. A. Rehman, who passed away in Lahore. Mr Rehman served as HRCP's director from 1990 to 2008, before being elected its secretary-general in 2008, a post he held till 2016. He was a co-founder of the Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy, a bureau member of South Asians for Human Rights (SAHR), and former chairperson of the South Asian Forum for Human Rights (SAFHR). Most recently, he served as a member of the working group on torture and terrorism instituted by the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and as patron of the People's Commission for the Protection of Minorities' Rights in Pakistan. Mr Rehman received Nuremberg City's International Human Rights Award in 2003 and the Magsaysay Award for Peace in 2004.

He was one of the few voices to oppose military action in Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) in 1971 and was dismissed from service for trade union activities and detained for his views and work for civil liberties during General Zia-ul-Haq's martial law. In 70 years of journalism, his writing ran the gamut from film, literature and history to politics and human rights—subjects he tackled with an intellectual clarity and dry wit that remained as sharp and rigorous till his last column.

HRCP chairperson Hina Jilani said: 'I. A. Rehman leaves behind a strong legacy of speaking truth to power in a way that not only persuaded others of the value of respecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law, but also conveyed to those he criticised how damaging their role could be for the most vulnerable members of society.' Secretary-General Harris Khalique termed I. A. Rehman an 'irreplaceable public intellectual' who lent his voice to the voiceless and was a beacon of hope for the oppressed. 'His human values, political insight, vast knowledge and depth of wisdom informed and educated all who worked with him in Pakistan in particular and South Asia in general,' he added.

Zaman Khan: HRCP Council member and labour rights activist passes away

22 October 2021. The Human Rights Commission (HRCP) mourns the loss of Muhammad Zaman Khan, a senior member of the organisation's present governing council, who has passed away in Faisalabad. Mr Khan was a founding member of HRCP and was elected to its first council. Subsequently, he worked at HRCP for almost two decades, heading its Complaints Cell and helping survivors of human rights violations access legal and protective services.

A staunch human rights defender since his days as a student leader, Mr Khan was also a trade unionist, political worker and intellectual. His commitment to labour rights led to a long association with the Mazdoor Kissan Party, during which he chronicled the labour movement and many of its leaders with characteristic flair. His political activism led to fines as well as imprisonment during Pakistan's martial law regime, although this did not deter him from his commitment to the ideal of a progressive, secular Pakistan free of class prejudice.

As a founding member of the Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy and South Asians for Human Rights, Mr Khan argued consistently for better relations between India and Pakistan. He was also a prolific writer and journalist, having served as bureau chief at both *The Muslim* and *Frontier Post*, and written on subjects as varied as the abolition of the death penalty to Punjabi folklore and literature. Zaman Khan will be missed by his colleagues and friends at HRCP and in progressive circles across South Asia.

International peace and human rights

HRCP condemns carnage in Kabul

10 May 2021. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) strongly condemns the brutal terrorist attack on a girls' school in Kabul on Saturday, which cost over 60 lives—most of them, young students. The incident is a grim reminder of the carnage wrought during the APS attack in Peshawar, Pakistan, in 2014. It also underlines the perpetual threat to women in Afghanistan, in light of recent attacks targeting women. In January, two women judges were killed by

unknown gunmen in an ambush. In March, three women who worked for a local Afghan radio and TV station were shot dead in Jalalabad.

It is a matter of grave concern that the number of civilians killed and injured in the prolonged armed conflict in this region has been rising instead of coming down, in violation of all humanitarian laws. HRCP appeals to all parties with any stake in the conflict to pledge an immediate ceasefire and enter negotiations to resolve political differences. International bodies too have a responsibility to monitor the human rights situation in the region and play a transparent and active role in bringing about a peaceful solution. We share the grief of the victims' families and express our deepest condolences.

HRCP calls on international community to end Israeli impunity

18 May 2021. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) reiterates that the Israeli state's continued brutal assault on the people of Gaza is in flagrant violation of international law and universal human rights standards. In the last week alone, over 200 civilians – including at least 60 children – have been killed.

That the Israeli offensive has targeted not only civilians, but also children, health workers and the media indicates a level of shocking impunity, which the wider international community ignores at its peril. It is simply not enough to continue to say that a state has the right to 'defend' itself in the face of such a gross imbalance of power, compounded by decades of violent settler colonialism and state-sponsored crimes against a beleaguered people. HRCP stands in solidarity with the people of Gaza and calls on the international community to live up to the human rights standards they have espoused.

INDEX

A

abduction 40, 60, 93, 106, 114, 127, 174
Afghan nationals 150
age limit 134, 148
AIDS 73, 127
air quality index 46
AJK Assembly 157, 166
All-Pakistan Government Employees Association 131, 143
animal rights 30
anti-encroachment drive 52, 73, 74
anti-state 63, 181
Army Public School 88
Aurat March 93, 145, 147
Awami Workers Party 57

B

Balochistan Assembly 105, 120, 124
ban 27, 85, 87, 90, 117, 136, 139, 143, 186, 139
Benazir Income Support Programme 48, 98, 125
Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) 111
blasphemy 27, 30, 31, 34, 55, 80, 81, 82, 86, 87, 93, 110, 136, 140, 141, 163, 171, 175
brick kiln workers 47, 69
Buddhist 51, 60

C

candidates 77, 91, 165
capital punishment 30, 131, 149
censorship 61, 116, 133, 144, 156, 161
Chief Minister House 62, 71
Child labour 41, 124
child marriage 68, 95, 121, 148
Child Protection Authority 53, 68
China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) 107, 124
Christians 58, 60
citizenship 48

civil society 43, 47, 48, 57, 62, 66, 67, 105, 108, 131, 133, 138, 142, 143, 144, 146, 147, 150, 155, 161, 163, 177, 180, 181, 184
climate change 47, 128, 171, 188
coal miners 110, 121, 123
computerised national identity cards (CNICs) 48, 63, 118, 120, 178
conversions 35, 58, 59, 145
coronavirus 71, 99
corporal punishment 95
Covid-19 25, 33, 39, 41, 43, 44, 45, 48, 52, 53, 57, 62, 73, 77, 85, 96, 98, 99, 100, 120, 126, 131, 139, 143, 144, 151, 152, 178, 181, 187
crackdown 101, 116
crime rate 55, 159
curbs 86, 117
custody 53, 60, 62, 93, 94, 136, 138, 142, 157, 163
cyber-crime 142

D

death penalty 30, 53, 80, 114, 138, 174
defamation 141
Delta variant 100
dengue 45, 100, 101
Deosai National Park 188
Diamer 174, 175, 176, 177, 186
disabilities 39, 42, 51, 68, 71, 90, 96, 124, 149, 186
disaster 63, 188
displacement 127
domestic servants 152
domestic violence 25, 31, 38, 39, 55, 67, 77, 79, 92, 110, 134, 136, 179, 184
drinkable water 105, 128
drone 88

E

education department 29, 36, 43, 44, 51, 96, 99, 126
elderly 70, 124, 148, 149

election 65, 66, 146, 155, 164, 165, 166, 172
Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) 91, 119, 134, 164, 165, 166
elections 37, 65, 66, 77, 82, 91, 119, 125, 155, 156, 162, 164, 165, 166, 167, 78, 183
electricity 42, 107, 146, 162, 172
encounter 31, 56, 61, 110, 143
enforced disappearances 57, 80, 84, 89, 105, 113, 116, 137, 138, 143, 145, 160
environment 26, 46, 47, 48, 74, 101, 128, 134, 149, 161, 167, 182, 183, 188
evictions 64
exit control list 33, 139
extrajudicial killings 31, 56

F

fake encounters 31
farmers 26, 41, 42, 48, 69, 88
Federal Shariat Court 80, 134, 148
femicide 132, 145, 147
Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) 139, 142, 175, 178, 184, 187
first information reports (FIR) 34, 60, 64, 67, 87, 88, 93, 94, 107, 109, 111, 117, 135, 142, 147, 159, 164, 176, 180, 184, 185
fisherfolk 69, 70, 74, 124, 127
fishing 105, 107, 124
floods 101, 155, 167, 171, 188
forced conversion 35, 58, 60, 87
freedom of expression 27, 35, 61, 87, 116, 132, 141, 161, 180, 184

G

gang rape 42, 67, 93, 94, 159, 167
gender-based violence (GBV) 38, 39, 56
gender equality 120
general election 155, 164
Grand Democratic Alliance 65
Greater Iqbal Park 33, 38
Gujjar nullah 73

gunned down 31, 61, 82, 93, 111

H

harassment 29, 33, 38, 48, 61, 63, 67, 88, 94, 120, 131, 132, 136, 142, 147, 150, 155, 159, 167, 171, 180, 181, 184
Hazara 36, 110, 115, 116
healthcare 45, 48, 52, 70, 72, 107, 117, 120, 127, 187
Hindu 27, 34, 51, 58, 59, 60, 72, 86, 121, 140, 144
HIV 45, 67, 73, 127
honour killing 39, 93, 111, 176
housing 25, 46, 47, 48, 64, 73, 74, 101, 149, 152
housing societies 47, 101
human rights activist 178, 185
human rights defender 142
human rights violations 108, 116, 140, 156

I

IDPs 97
illiteracy rate 98
imprisonment 30, 34, 79, 80, 92, 117, 121, 140, 174
injured 27, 31, 36, 41, 81, 82, 87, 89, 90, 93, 115, 121, 131, 142, 155, 161, 162, 163, 164, 168
ISI 142

J

jail 30, 32, 57, 83, 89, 91, 92, 112, 113, 138, 142, 160, 163, 175, 176, 177
Jamaat-e-Islami 65, 107, 148
jirga 62, 95
job quota 51
journalists 35, 52, 53, 61, 62, 87, 105, 108, 110, 111, 116, 131, 132, 133, 141, 142, 144, 155, 161, 171, 180, 181, 184
judicial commission 109
judiciary 30, 77, 80, 108, 134, 135, 155, 171, 173

K

Karachi Bachao Tehreek 63, 74
Karachi Development Authority
(KDA) 68
Karachi Metropolitan Corporation 55
Karachi Press Club 62, 63, 67
kidnapped 36, 55, 58, 59, 60, 87, 110
killed 27, 34, 35, 41, 51, 56, 61, 67, 77,
81, 82, 86, 88, 89, 93, 95, 101,
105, 107, 110, 111, 115, 116, 121,
136, 140, 162, 164, 167, 168, 176,
185
Kissan Card 42

L

labour 41, 68, 69, 96, 117, 121, 123,
148, 186
labour laws 148
Lahore High Court LHC 29, 30, 31,
33, 34, 40, 44, 47, 48
land acquisition 26, 48, 187
land developers. 41, 48
land grabbing 127
landmines 80
lawyers 35, 80, 185
Line of Control (LOC) 156, 162, 168
local government 25, 51, 53, 65, 66,
77, 82, 91, 119, 146, 180, 183
lockdown 25, 33, 85, 100, 126
lynching 25, 27, 34, 163

M

media personnel 110, 141
mental health 45, 149, 187
mental illness 45, 86, 113, 131, 149
mentally challenged 94
militants 77, 81, 82, 107, 110
military operations 77
military trial 80
miners 110, 121, 123
minimum monthly wages 96
minimum wage 41, 51, 108
minor 33, 41, 59, 83, 95, 136, 185
minorities 35, 43, 58, 60, 77, 139, 140,
151
missing children 40
missing persons 57, 62, 84, 107, 113

mob 25, 33, 34, 36, 38, 82, 86, 87
mortality rate 95
MQM-P 65
murder 31, 38, 67, 81, 82, 88, 89, 93,
110, 131, 136, 147, 174, 179

N

National Database and Registration
Authority (NADRA) 29, 39,
48, 97, 118, 120
Naltar valley 174, 188
Nankana 30
Nasla Towers 74
National Accountability Bureau
(NAB) 33, 135, 139, 146, 186
National Democratic Movement 91
national parks 179, 187, 188
Nazim Johkio 51, 52, 61
non-government organisations NGOs
66, 117, 143, 163
no-objection certificates 143, 163

O

Omicron 33, 45, 99
Orangi nullah 73
out of school 43, 73, 98, 126, 151

P

Pakistan Democratic Movement
(PDM) 89, 118, 119, 136
Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) 67,
158
Pakistan Penal Code 30, 34, 72, 80,
117, 135
Pakistan People's Party (PPP) 52, 53,
61, 62, 65, 68, 82, 89, 91, 97, 143,
164
Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) 31, 37,
46, 55, 65, 91, 97, 152, 158, 164,
165, 175, 183, 186
Pak Sarzameen Party (PSP) 65
pandemic 39, 43, 46, 62, 73, 85, 96, 98,
99, 127, 78
paramedics 35, 62, 72
Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM)
89, 91, 115, 117
Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act
(PECA) 141, 142

pending cases 29, 30, 108, 137, 158
 pension 77, 79, 182
 Persons living with disabilities 42, 96,
 124, 149
 Peshawar High Court 77, 79, 147
 plastic bags 47
 policemen 44, 81, 87, 89, 93, 164
 polio 71, 81, 100
 pollution 47
 population 32, 45, 55, 60, 72, 98, 100,
 112, 120, 125, 128, 140, 149, 151,
 172, 176, 187
 press freedoms 141
 prime minister 29, 46, 48, 110, 113,
 124, 126, 138, 147, 149, 151, 155,
 156, 157, 158, 164, 165, 167, 172
 prisoners 32, 45, 53, 57, 70, 83, 92, 112,
 113, 131, 138, 149, 160, 163, 176
 prisons 32, 53, 57, 83, 92, 112, 177
 protest 25, 27, 35, 36, 37, 41, 51, 53, 57,
 61, 62, 63, 64, 84, 86, 87, 88, 89,
 90, 93, 99, 105, 107, 110, 111,
 112, 113, 115, 117, 118, 119, 124,
 127, 128, 131, 132, 136, 142, 143,
 144, 145, 146, 147, 156, 159, 161,
 162, 175, 179, 180, 181, 182, 184,
 187, 188
 provincial assembly 29, 51, 53, 56, 66,
 69, 84, 101, 113
 provincial government 27, 29, 33, 41,
 44, 45, 47, 51, 52, 55, 60, 62, 65,
 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 74, 79, 90, 96,
 105, 108, 116, 118, 119, 124, 125
 provisional province 173
 public sector 63, 73, 95, 96, 99, 100,
 126, 127, 152, 186
 Punjab Disaster Management
 Authority 45

R

Rangers 33, 63
 rape 31, 55, 67, 81, 110, 133, 136, 137,
 143, 147, 155, 159, 167
 Ravi 25, 41, 47, 48
 refugees 71, 97, 115, 125, 131, 132,
 149, 150, 160
 retirement 77, 79, 96
 rights activists 48

rights campaigners 34
 right to information 105, 108, 155
 road accidents 155, 167, 168

S

sanitation workers 152
 Securities and Exchange Commission
 of Pakistan 66
 Sehat Sahulat Card programme 25,
 45, 52
 Sehat Sahulat Programme 100
 Senior Citizen Azadi Card 70
 senior citizens 124
 sexual abuse 40, 41, 124
 sexual assaults 40, 94, 111
 Shias 115
 Single National Curriculum (SNC)
 25, 28, 43, 44, 52, 73, 131, 151
 sit-ins 105, 143, 144, 187
 smog 46
 snatching 55, 110, 111, 159
 social media 41, 52, 60, 61, 87, 93, 112,
 139, 141, 142, 147, 160, 161, 171,
 175, 177, 180, 181, 184
 social media activist 51
 street crimes 55
 students 28, 35, 36, 41, 43, 44, 63, 73,
 88, 90, 99, 106, 107, 113, 114,
 115, 116, 117, 126, 127, 131, 132,
 143, 144, 151, 162, 167, 181, 182
 student unions 63, 90, 117, 167
 suicide 51, 72, 82, 111, 136, 138, 171,
 176, 184, 187
 Supreme Court 25, 34, 37, 45, 51, 52,
 62, 63, 65, 68, 74, 79, 84, 86, 96,
 108, 131, 134, 135, 136, 138, 145,
 149, 152, 155, 157, 158, 173

T

Taliban 71, 82, 86, 97, 115, 125, 132,
 149, 175, 178
 target killings 77, 82
 teachers 43, 44, 73, 90, 95, 96, 99, 126,
 144, 145, 161, 95
 Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP)
 25, 27, 31, 35, 36, 37, 163, 165
 temple 34, 86

terrorism 31, 61, 62, 79, 82, 86, 107,
110, 136, 143, 176
terrorists 31, 81, 82, 88, 113
TikTok 38, 87
torture 41, 56, 60, 93, 159, 182
training courses 71
transgender 25, 39, 40, 51, 67, 68, 87,
90, 94, 120, 148
transgender persons 25, 39, 40, 51, 67,
68, 90, 94, 120, 148
Transparency International-Pakistan
52, 74
Twitter 38, 142

U

UNICEF 92, 126, 185
Usman Buzdar 25, 37, 42, 46

V

vaccination 44, 45, 52, 57, 81, 100, 120,
121, 152, 178, 187
violence against children 95, 111, 185
visually impaired 36, 42, 80

W

workplace 38, 68, 159, 171, 184

Y

Young Doctors Association (YDA)
180, 181, 186
young doctors 62, 127, 187

Established in 1986 and registered in 1987, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) is the country's apex independent human rights body. A membership-based organisation, HRCP is committed to realising the entire ambit of human rights—civil, political, economic, social and cultural—for all citizens and persons present in the country. HRCP uses the framework provided by the fundamental freedoms guaranteed in the Constitution of Pakistan as well as international human rights instruments, to some of which Pakistan is a state party.

HRCP's office bearers for 2020–23 are: Hina Jilani (chairperson), Asad Iqbal Butt (co-chair), Husain Naqi (treasurer), Habib Tahir (vice-chair, Balochistan), Akbar Khan (vice-chair, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Raja Ashraf (vice-chair, Punjab), and Qazi Khizar (vice-chair, Sindh).

The HRCP Secretariat is represented by its secretary-general, Harris Khalique. The organisation's day-to-day operations are overseen by the director, Farah Zia. HRCP's work is supported by a network of human rights defenders across the country.

Head office

Aiwan-i-Jamhoo, 107 Tipu Block
New Garden Town, Lahore 54600
T: + 92 42 3586 4994, 3583 8341, 3586 5969
F: +92 42 3588 3582
E: hrcp@hrcp-web.org
M: +92 333 200 6800 / 321 341 4884
(Complaints Cell)
E: complaints@hrcp-web.org
W: www.hrcp-web.org

Centre for Democratic Development

Office 1B, 2nd Floor, Block D-12
G-8 Markaz, Islamabad
T: +92 51 835 1127
M: +92 333 561 6190 / 349 900 0824
(Complaints desk)
E: islamabad@hrcp-web.org

Quetta regional office

Flat C-6, Kabeer Building
M A Jinnah Road, Quetta
T: + 92 81 282 7869 F: +92 81 282 0117
M: +92 306 294 6125 (Complaints Desk)
E: quetta@hrcp-web.org

Turbat / Makran regional office

Parwaz House
Opposite Allama Iqbal Open University,
Pasni Road, Turbat, Kech
T: +92 852 413 365 M: +92 323 234 2406
E: turbat@hrcp-web.org

Multan regional office

#24A, Abdali Colony, Street Masjid
Teenawali, Dera Adda, Multan
T: +92 61 451 7217
M: +92 331 665 5529 (Complaints Desk)
E: multan@hrcp-web.org

Karachi regional office

Unit #8, 1st Floor
State Life Building #5 (ILACO House)
Abdullah Haroon Road, Saddar
Karachi 74400
T: + 92 21 3563 7131, 3563 7132
F: +92 21 3563 7133
M: +92 315 111 6287 (Complaints Desk)
E: karachi@hrcp-web.org

Hyderabad regional office

Office 306, Faiza Arcade
(loft and mezzanine floors)
Beside Masjid Haji Shah Bukhari Dargah
Cantonment, Saddar
Hyderabad
T: +92 22 278 3688, 720 770
F: +92 22 278 4645
M: +92 310 339 2222 (Complaints Desk)
E: hyderabad@hrcp-web.org

Peshawar regional office

Azam Chishti Road
Sherzai Colony
Street 1, People Stop
Railway Line
Pawaka, Peshawar
T: +92 91 584 4253
F: +92 91 585 3318
M: +92 331 935 2097 (Complaints Desk)
E: peshawar@hrcp-web.org

Gilgit-Baltistan regional office

Office 8–9, Rang Yul Plaza
Jammat Khana Road
Zulfiqar Abad Colony
Jutial, Gilgit
M: +92 355 454 1088 (Complaints Desk)
E: gilgit@hrcp-web.org