

BALUCHISTAN





- Heavy rains and floods devastated large parts of Balochistan, with 32 of the province’s 34 districts declared calamity-stricken. The disaster destroyed thousands of acres of cultivated land and claimed over 300 lives.
- The organisation Voice for Baloch Missing Persons registered 257 cases of enforced disappearance in Balochistan. According to Defence for Human Rights, an organisation working on enforced disappearances out of Islamabad, Balochistan has the highest proportion of people who are ‘still disappeared’ (have not returned home), at over 75 percent.
- Overall, attacks by armed Baloch militant groups increased significantly, including attacks on law enforcement agencies. This also included a suicide attack by the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) (Majeed Brigade), carried out by a female suicide bomber at Karachi University’s Confucius Institute.
- Gulzar Imam, the leader of the Baloch Nationalist Army (BNA), was arrested from Turkey reportedly in early May. His group had been responsible for numerous attacks in Balochistan, including one on 20 January in a crowded market in Lahore, killing at least two.
- Islamist militants, including the Pakistani Taliban, increased their footprint in Balochistan, carrying out more attacks on security forces.
- Law enforcement agencies, including the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD), continued to pick up young Baloch persons, including women. Baloch rights activists reported more killings of suspected militants by the CTD in alleged ‘fake encounters’.
- Missing persons’ families held a 50-day protest in Quetta’s Red Zone to demand action against enforced disappearances. Gulzar Dost and several other members of civil society in Turbat led a barefoot march from Turbat to Quetta to demand an end to enforced disappearances in February.
- The Haq Do Tehreek, which began in Gwadar in 2021, continued in 2022, with thousands of people taking to the streets to protest against the excessive number of paramilitary check-posts in the Makran region, severe shortages of water and electricity, and threats to their traditional source of livelihood—fishing—in the form of deep-sea trawlers run by large companies. A case was lodged against the movement’s leader, Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman, and his supporters for allegedly killing a police constable.

- With the provincial government inking a deal with Canadian-based mining corporation Barrick Gold, nationalist parties, including the Balochistan National Party (Mengal) (BNP-M) and National Party, protested against the deal for not considering Baloch aspirations.
- Significant political developments took place, marking a major change in the political landscape. Prominent Baloch leaders, including former Chief Minister Nawab Aslam Raisani, joined the Jamiat Ulema Islam (JUI-F) while other leaders joined the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP).
- HRCP’s Quetta office recorded 24 mining incidents during 2022 in which 71 workers were killed and 25 injured in Balochistan.



Like the rest of the country, Balochistan experienced devastating floods during July to September. No fewer than 32 of the province's 34 districts were declared calamity-stricken. The disaster destroyed houses, thousands of acres of cultivated land and claimed over 300 lives. The bulk of livestock destroyed was in Balochistan, thereby affecting thousands of livelihoods. The floods brought to the forefront the province's fragile healthcare and education systems.

The year was marked by constant tension between Baloch nationalists and Islamabad. Enforced disappearances continued unabated in the province, targeting young Baloch and Pashtun activists, including those based in other provinces.

Towards the end of the year, there was a violent crackdown on peaceful protesters in the coastal town of Gwadar, a key site for the multi-billion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) infrastructure projects. The provincial government imposed Article 144 and disrupted the town's internet supply for ten days. Protests in Gwadar for economic rights and civil liberties remained a chronic bone of contention between the provincial government and residents of Gwadar throughout the year.

The Pakistan army, paramilitary Frontier Corps (FC) and CTD claimed to have killed dozens of militants in Balochistan in 2022. The militant BNA, which claimed responsibility for a bombing in Lahore's Anarkali Bazaar at the start of 2022, killing at least two and injuring 20, admitted that the group had suffered heavy losses in 2022. Thirty-four of its members were killed while its founding leader, Gulzar Imam, a student-turned-militant leader, was arrested. The BLA suffered similar losses.

Balochistan also witnessed a number of deadly attacks, including IED blasts targeting law enforcement agencies, hand grenades hurled at settlers and targeted attacks against civilians and alleged members of state-backed militias, often referred to as 'death squads' in Balochistan. A veteran judge and former chief justice of the Balochistan High Court, Justice (Retd) Noor Muhammad Meskanzai was shot dead in October in his native Kharan district.

Earlier in February, Balochistan witnessed unprecedented suicide bombings in Panjgur and Nushki targeting paramilitary Frontier Corps camps. In April, a dangerous new dimension to emerge in the strategy of Baloch militants was the use of a female suicide bomber in Karachi to target the Confucius Institute. Baloch militants also adopted tactics once widely used by Islamist militants, such as kidnapping key government and army officials, which occurred in Ziarat and Harnai in July and September. Most attacks on law enforcement agencies were claimed by banned outfits such as the BLA, Baloch Liberation Front (BLF) and Tehreek-i- Taliban Pakistan.



Laws and law-making

A number of bills were passed by the Balochistan Assembly, including the Home Based Workers Bill to protect the rights of women and others involved in cottage industries in Balochistan.¹ The Balochistan University Draft Bill 2022 provided for the chief minister to appoint vice-chancellors of government-run varsities instead of the governor.

The opposition, however, protested at many bills having been passed hurriedly and without taking opposition members on board. For instance, the government adopted a bill on the regulation of mines and oil fields and mineral development in the same session of the assembly as in which it was presented; this was the case for a number of other such bills.²

The Balochistan Assembly adopted a resolution on the Reko Diq project, meeting a pre-condition for the settlement agreement between Pakistan and mining company Barrick Gold to proceed, despite protests by the political opposition. BNP-M leader Akhtar Hussain Longove termed it 'an attempt to usurp the resources of Balochistan'.³ This was a consistent critique of nationalist parties around the lack of sovereign control over Balochistan's natural resources.

Law and order

Law and order in the province remained far from satisfactory. The year began with a bomb blast in Quetta in January in which six people lost their lives.⁴ In the same month, security personnel claimed to have arrested three suspected militants in the eastern districts of Dera Murad Jamali and Sibi. However, another attack in Sibi killed three and injured five, including the younger brother of Balochistan's former caretaker chief minister, Nawab Ghous Bakhsh Barozai, on 10 January.⁵

On 10 January, the CTD reportedly killed six men belonging to the Islamic State in the provincial capital.⁶ A week later, a bomb blast in Sibi derailed four bogies of the Jaffer Express, which injured six passengers. The attack was claimed by the BLA.⁷ Twin blasts in Sui in Dera Bugti district at the end of January killed Senator Sarfraz Bugti's cousin Sain Bakhsh, along with three levies personnel.⁸

Attacks against security and law enforcement personnel. Baloch militant groups continued to strike in the province throughout 2022. A major attack was carried out against security personnel by the BLF on a check-post in Kech district. As a result, ten security personnel lost their lives on 27 January.⁹ The BLA (Majeed Brigade) carried out intensive attacks against security forces. One of the two attacks carried out took place in a single day in two different towns, against FC camps in Nushki and Panjgur. January ended with a grenade attack in Jafferabad district, in which two police officers and 17 people were injured on 31 January.¹⁰



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On 2 February, militants from a banned BLA outfit entered FC camps in Nushki and Panjgur, where they battled FC personnel for three days, particularly in the Panjgur camp.¹¹ Thirteen Baloch militants, seven security personnel and an army officer were killed during the attacks.¹² Unfortunately, the near-absence of independent journalism in the province has made it difficult to ascertain what exactly transpires in such cases.

Following the attacks on the camps, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) claimed that three Baloch militants linked to the Panjgur attack were killed in a follow-up operation in the Balgatar area of Kech district on 5 February.¹³

On 25 December, Balochistan was rocked by militant attacks carried out by the BLA, in which six security personnel, including a captain from the Pakistan army, were killed while 17 others were injured in different incidents in the province.¹⁴

Law enforcement officials also suffered heavy losses of life. A CTD officer in Kharan, Eid Mohammad, was gunned down by an unknown assailant on his way to work on 16 July.¹⁵ In another incident, the *najib tehsildar* of Killa Abdullah, Abdul Sattar, was gunned down on Quetta's Sariab Road on 21 June.¹⁶ A levies official, Mohammad Hamza, was killed in Kalat while patrolling on 19 July.¹⁷ In Chaman, a levies guard, Habib-ur-Rehman, who was escorting a polio team, was gunned down in October.

Civilian casualties. Civilians too bore the brunt of violence during the year. In a single day, a professor, Mohammad Ali Nasar, was shot dead in Quetta, while the dead body of a missing lawyer was found in Pishin in a separate incident on 17 August.¹⁸

Religious minorities and women were also targeted. Nargis Mengal, a PTI leader from Quetta, was killed in broad daylight on 22 August.¹⁹ Earlier, a Christian man, Wilson Masih, was killed in a gun attack on 11 August.²⁰ On 15 October, former Federal Shariat Court judge and Balochistan High Court chief justice Mohammad Noor Miskanzai was assassinated in a mosque in Kharan. The attack was claimed by the BLA.²¹

Jails and prisoners

Prison capacity. Data from the Balochistan Prisons Department indicates that, as against a sanctioned capacity of 2,764 inmates, the province's 12 jails held 2,760 prisoners, making it the only province in which jails are not overcrowded. Under-trial prisoners outnumbered convicted prisoners at a ratio of 1.4 to 1.

The annual budget for the department was recorded at PKR 1,935,196,000. Table 1 gives additional data on the prison population in Balochistan.

Table 1: Prisons data for Balochistan in 2022

Total number of male inmates	2,694
Total number of female inmates	53
Total number of juvenile inmates	13
Total number of under-trial prisoners	1,614
Total number of convicted prisoners	1,146
Number of children living with their mothers in jail	9
Number of persons on death row	62

Source: Balochistan Prisons Department, in response to HRCP's request for information

Jail reforms. Blood screening was made mandatory for prisoners across the province. According to the parliamentary secretary for law and parliamentary affairs, Dr Rubaba Khan Buledi, there are testing laboratories in the Quetta and Mach jails, while laboratories are being established in nine other jails in the province.

The home minister, Mir Ziaullah Langove, while addressing the media after visiting Quetta District Jail in November, told reporters that the government was working on a plan to provide better facilities to local and foreign prisoners.²²

Enforced disappearances

The unlawful disappearance of people, especially of political activists, by state agencies continued with impunity through the year.²³ Baloch students based in other provinces were also forcibly disappeared even as families gathered to protest.²⁴ Despite repeated protests, many families expressed the concern that their missing relatives were at risk of being killed in 'fake encounters' by the CTD.²⁵

Alleged extrajudicial killings of missing persons. Following the killing of a retired lieutenant colonel, Laiq Baig Mirza, along with his cousin Umar Javed, by the BLA in July, the ISPR claimed that nine BLA militants had been killed in a security operation in Ziarat.²⁶ However, after protests by the relatives of missing persons in Quetta, it emerged that five people of those killed were forcibly disappeared persons and not militants.²⁷ Similarly, in October, the CTD claimed to have killed three BLA militants in Kharan district. However, Voice for Baloch Missing Persons chairperson Nasrullah Baloch alleged that it had been a 'staged encounter', identifying those killed as forcibly disappeared persons.²⁸ Throughout 2022, cases continued to emerge of the CTD's involvement in alleged fake encounters in which disappeared Baloch—already in detention centres run by security agencies—were killed. Many of the victims, who were accused of having links to militants, turned out to be political activists or students.²⁹

Civil society response. After taking office in 2022, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif claimed he would raise the issue of Baloch missing persons with ‘powerful quarters’.³⁰ Among others, rights activist Sammi Deen Baloch, the daughter of Dr Deen Mohammad (who has been missing since mid-2009), was not optimistic about these assurances,³¹ having spent the last 15 years raising her voice for her missing father and others. Following the Ziarat incident, Sammi and other family members of missing persons, held a 50-day-long protest on the issue outside the Governor House at a time when the province was badly hit by floods.³² They ended their protest only after the federal interior minister, Rana Sanaullah, assured them their loved ones would be recovered.³³

In February, a barefoot march led by Gulzar Dost, convener of Turbat Civil Society, covered the 750 km from Turbat to Quetta to protest against the enforced disappearance of Baloch people. The march was modelled on rights activist Mama Qadeer’s 2013 march on the same issue.³⁴

Government response. The devastating floods provided no respite. Even as Balochistan and other provinces were in the throes of torrential rains, security forces forcibly disappeared Lala Fahim Baloch—a publisher and rights activist—in broad daylight from his bookshop in Karachi.³⁵ Unlike other missing persons, he was released after a few months.³⁶ In September, Dr Abdul Malik Baloch, former chief minister and National Party leader, was compelled to raise the issue of Baloch missing persons along with the problems wrought by the floods in Balochistan with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Quetta.³⁷

Commission after commission has been constituted to address the issue, but have not yielded any results. In August, the provincial cabinet gave the go-ahead for a commission on missing persons, to be headed by the provincial home minister Ziaullah Langove.³⁸ In November, a commission formed by the court and headed by BNP-M chief Sardar Akhtar Mengal visited Quetta and met the relatives of missing persons, but produced no substantial results.³⁹ Rights activists continued to criticise the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances as ‘a toothless tiger’.⁴⁰

Death penalty

While no executions are reported to have taken place in Balochistan in 2022, the death penalty was handed down in at least four cases during the year, according to HRCP’s own data, based on media reports.



Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

Balochistan is home to a sizeable population of Hindus who have been settled here for centuries. In March, amid tight security, thousands of Baloch Hindus gathered at the ancient Hinglaj Mata temple in Lasbela district to observe a three-day festival, which they had been unable to do since 2020 owing to the Covid-19 crisis. Hundreds of police, levies and FC personnel were deputed to safeguard participants from any untoward incidents.⁴¹

Cases involving rights violations against religious minorities occurred from time to time through the year. In Kalat, the remains of a Hindu woman's body were desecrated in the cemetery. The Hindu community protested against the local administration on 3 October.⁴² Meanwhile, a key concern of Quetta's Christian community was that Christians of Punjabi origin, but now having lived in Balochistan for decades, were unable to relocate their domicile to Balochistan. Additionally, they alleged that the Christian community were invariably seen as 'outsiders' unlike the ethnic Baloch, Pashtun and Hazara population.⁴³

According to data received from the Balochistan police, nine cases were registered against the blasphemy laws.

Freedom of expression

Although in December, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that Pakistan had become the first country in Asia to legislate on the safety of journalists in Sindh as well as at the federal level and that he would support similar legislation in other provinces, including Balochistan,⁴⁴ press freedom remained sorely restricted through the year.

Most journalists and the vernacular press said that they were still compelled to tow the government line and could not report independently for fear of reprisal by state and nonstate actors—or simply because certain issues were not deemed important enough, especially by privately run media houses. As a result, Balochistan's problems received negligible coverage in the mainstream media, especially on private TV news channels. This was especially true of issues such as the ongoing conflict between the state and Baloch militants, grievous human rights violations such as enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings, poor governance, and even economic and social concerns.

In August a Gwadar-based journalist, Haji Obaidullah, working for the Karachi-based newspaper *Jasarat* was arrested in a late-night raid by the CTD at his home in Gwadar, allegedly for having reported on the ongoing protests there. He remained behind bars for several days and was released only after the Balochistan Union of Journalists and local

journalists in Gwadar protested against his arrest. Earlier in March, journalist Farooq Jatoi from Bolan district was arrested by the CTD and then released. Such assaults on press freedom remain common but are rarely reported in the mainstream media.

Freedom of assembly

Haq Do Tehreek. Notably, the Gwadar-based Haq Do Tehreek, a rights movement led by local Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) leader Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman, continued in 2022 even as the protestors' negotiations with the provincial government faltered.⁴⁵ The government resorted to violence in December to put an end to the two-month-long protest, using teargas and arresting over a dozen protestors in Gwadar.⁴⁶ An FIR was registered against Rehman and his supporters, holding them responsible for the death of a police constable during the protests.⁴⁷ Earlier in January, Rehman had strongly criticised the authorities for not implementing the Gwadar agreement, under which protestors had demanded an end to illegal deep-sea trawling (which had affected their traditional source of livelihood, fishing), a reduction in the number of paramilitary check-posts, access to water and electricity, and easier border trade.⁴⁸

Protests in Quetta. In January, 20 doctors and paramedics were arrested after clashing with police in Quetta during a protest in which 16 people on both sides were injured.⁴⁹ Three medical students, who had gone on hunger strike, were shifted to a hospital on 15 February.⁵⁰ They had been protesting against the Pakistan Medical Commission's decision to issue fresh tests for enrolment in medical colleges.

Protests in the province. In several cases, demonstrators—including government employees—blocked local highways in protest against the provincial government. On 17 January, residents of the area bordering Taftan in Chaghi district blocked the main highway to protest against the prolonged suspension of electricity to their towns.⁵¹ Similarly, protestors blocked the Quetta-Sukkur highway in Kachhi district after three PTI workers were killed and two others injured over a land dispute on 18 February.⁵² Locals from Dera Bugti's Pir Koh town protested against the absence of clean drinking water and cholera outbreaks on 15 May.⁵³ Engineers employed by Radio Pakistan also held a protest against out-of-turn promotions on 31 October.⁵⁴

Some protests were more fruitful than others. On 7 May, the FC arrested a student, offloading him from a bus on the Panjgur road, following which his fellow passengers protested and blocked the Panjgur highway until the FC had handed the student, Shah Baig, over to the police.⁵⁵



Political participation

Of the Baloch nationalist parties in opposition, the BNP-M remained on somewhat better terms with the provincial government, reaping benefits from the chief minister, Qudoos Bizenjo.⁵⁶ With elections due in 2023, the party continued in protest mode, especially over the Reko Diq project, despite being part of the government in the centre as well as in the Balochistan Assembly.⁵⁷ The second-largest nationalist party, the National Party, led by Dr Abdul Malik Baloch was, however, fairly critical of the government on issues affecting Balochistan. In September, it advised Baloch militants and the government to hold talks to resolve their issues. The party was also scathing in its criticism of the government over mega-projects such as those in Reko Diq, Saindak and Sui on the grounds that the interests and aspirations of the Baloch people were barely reflected in these projects.⁵⁸

The Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), cobbled together by the establishment in 2018, showed signs of weakening as several leaders joined the PPP, including three provincial assembly members, Zahoor Buledi, Saleem Khosa and Arif Muhammad Hassani.⁵⁹

Politics in Gwadar was dominated by JI leader Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman, who led a two-month-long protest, the Haq Do Tehreek, in the area and was arrested along with over 100 workers in December.⁶⁰ After the protest, he won a majority in the local government elections. Some observers commented that the protest itself may have been motivated by Rehman's stake in the upcoming general elections in 2023.⁶¹ *See Freedom of assembly*

Local government

Local government elections were held in the province in May, marked by sporadic violence. Most of the seats were clinched by independent candidates (1,182 out of the 4,456 seats), while the JUI-F and BAP clinched 469 and 303 seats, respectively, on 31 May.⁶² The Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) stated in its initial report that the first phase of the local government elections had been 'controversy-free and orderly' despite sporadic irregularities, which boded well for the democratic process in the province and country.⁶³

Other than a scuffle between rival candidates' supporters, there was only one violent incident—a bomb blast in Nushki district outside a polling station, in which no one was harmed.⁶⁴ However, allegations of political manipulation by the establishment continued to surface, including the claim that certain parties, such as the BAP, had far more freedom to campaign than others.



Women

Women remained acutely marginalised through the year and vulnerable to discrimination and violence. According to police data, there were 40 reported cases of rape, 35 cases of honour killings (with more than half estimated to be female victims) and 157 cases of domestic violence against women. These figures likely underrepresent the situation significantly, given that numerous cases of gender-based violence go unreported (see also Table 2).

Table 2: Statistics on gender-based violence in Balochistan in 2022

<i>Offense</i>	<i>Number of victims</i>
Rape	40
Gang-rape	0
Honour killings	35
Domestic violence against women	157
Acid crimes	0

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

At the same time, women remained politically active and closely involved in local rights movements, with thousands of women taking part in the Gwadar-based Haq Do Tehreek that began in 2021 and continued through 2022. Baloch women continued to organise the annual Aurat March, with economic rights as a key demand. Women also played an active role in student-run organisations in universities, lobbying for lower tuition fees and protesting against harassment. Above all, young women remained much of the driving force behind the movement against enforced disappearances, taking part in street protests, lobbying with the media, government and civil society, appearing before courts and in police stations, and demanding the return of loved ones as well as accountability for perpetrators of state-sanctioned disappearances.

Transgender persons

Like elsewhere in the country, Balochistan’s small transgender population was deprived of most of their fundamental rights through the year, with their problems receiving scant coverage in the press.

Instead of safeguarding trans rights in Balochistan, the provincial assembly adopted a unanimous resolution calling on the provincial government to repeal the federal Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2018.⁶⁵

Children

Balochistan’s schooling indicators remained alarmingly low during the year, with an estimated literacy rate of only 28 percent among boys, while 83 percent of girls were deprived of basic education.⁶⁶ Not only is the number of schools insufficient, but they also tend to be at great distances from the province’s scattered population. The catastrophic floods also affected children in Balochistan, with at least 32 killed as a result, some of them under the rubble of damaged houses.⁶⁷

An increasing number of underage children were reported to be working in the automobile, construction and coal mining sectors, indicating that the provincial government has not done enough to address the incidence of child labour. On World Day Against Child Labour, it was revealed that over 15,000 children in Balochistan were involved in child labour, most of them either orphans or belonging to poor families.⁶⁸

Cases of child marriage continued to be reported in the province.⁶⁹ The Federal Shariat Court took suo motu notice of the forced marriage of a six-year old girl in Balochistan. In spite of such cases, Balochistan’s child marriage bill remained in limbo although it has already been submitted to the Cabinet.⁷⁰

Labour

Coal miners continued to suffer injuries and lose their lives in lethal mining accidents in Balochistan during the year. According to HRCP’s records, there were 24 incidents in 2022 in which 71 workers were killed and 25 injured in Balochistan. Table 3 presents a breakdown of these statistics.

Table 3: Mining accidents in Balochistan in 2022

<i>Date</i>	<i>Place of incident</i>	<i>Killed</i>	<i>Injured</i>
1 January	Dukki	4	2
1 January	Dukki	5	-
6 February	Quetta	4	4
10 February	Harnai	3	1
22 February	Dukki	4	-
8 March	Gadani	2	2
15 March	Quetta	3	-
21 March	Dukki	3	-
22 March	Chamalang	7	6
7 June	Details unknown	2	-
1 August	Mach	3	3
16 August	Quetta	4	-

6 September	Harnai	5	-
19 September	Dukki	2	-
2 October	Dukki	4	2
4 October	Mach	1	2
1 November	Dukki	6	-
2 November	Chamalang	2	-
3 November	Dukki	-	-
7 November	Dukki	-	1
13 November	Dukki	4	1
18 November	Dukki	-	1
11 November	Dukki	1	-
19 November	Harnai	2	-

Source: HRCP media monitoring cell

The constant trend of deaths of coal miners is a grave human rights violation in the province. Poor working conditions have been a critical issue for coal miners, aggravated by a persistent lack of training and availability of safety equipment.

Refugees

Afghan refugees have constituted the bulk of Balochistan's refugee population since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. According to UNHCR, there are about 300,000 people in refugee camps in Balochistan, out of the 1.4 million registered refugees in the country. Many Afghan refugees have contributed to the agricultural sector in Balochistan.⁷¹

Since the fall of the Kabul government on 15 August 2021 and the Afghan Taliban takeover, some reports have suggested that many Afghan refugees migrated to Balochistan due to the lack of economic opportunities. However, UNHCR claims that, contrary to expectations, a large number of Afghan refugees did not come to Pakistan.⁷² Nonetheless, Afghan refugees already present in the province still contend with lack of access to basic facilities, such as education and healthcare.

Many Afghan refugees settled in districts of Balochistan were badly affected by the 2022 floods, especially those living in mud houses that were washed away.⁷³ UNHCR estimates suggest that about 800,000 refugees were living in the 45 'calamity-hit' districts out of 80 affected locations. Four of the worst-hit districts in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh host the highest number of refugees.⁷⁴



Education

Of the 22.8 million children estimated to be out of school in Pakistan, Balochistan accounts for at least 1 million.⁷⁵ The catastrophic floods of July and August compounded the lack of access to education in Balochistan in 2022. About 3,000 schools—mostly run by the government of Balochistan—hosting hundreds of thousands of students were destroyed in the floods,⁷⁶ in addition to 147 privately run schools (out of 2,583), thereby affecting the enrolment of some 11,121 students, particularly in the Nasirabad division.⁷⁷

Independent sources claim that the number of schools and students affected is even higher.⁷⁸ According to one official claim, 386,000 students were affected.⁷⁹ It will take a long time to rebuild these schools because the provincial government appears keen to implement its own schemes under the Public Sector Development Programme for 2022/23 and may not pay heed to the loss of education goals.⁸⁰ As of October, many schools unaffected by the floods were still being used to shelter flood-affected people.⁸¹

Health

Access to adequate healthcare remained elusive in 2022, to the extent that an increasing number of hospitals in Quetta were unable to offer treatment in many cases because most doctors prefer to run private clinics.⁸² Given the acute lack of doctors and health facilities in the rest of Balochistan, however, Quetta remained the only option available to most patients, belying the government's claim that healthcare provision was its first priority.⁸³

Like education, the already compromised health sector was adversely affected by the floods, with repeated outbreaks of disease. As of September, there were 38,476 cases of malaria, skin disease, acute respiratory infection, cholera and eye infections across the province, while the World Health Organization warned that a 'full-scale operation' was needed to stem the tide.⁸⁴ The Young Doctors Association warned of rising deaths if authorities failed to take immediate action to prevent waterborne diseases in flood-affected areas.⁸⁵ The warning fell on deaf ears and four people died of malaria in Jafferabad district on 22 September.⁸⁶

The floods also destroyed over 700 basic health units and rural health centres, which are the rural population's main port of call for access to healthcare.⁸⁷ Additionally, more than one in nine children under the age of five, admitted to health facilities in the flood-affected areas, were found to be suffering from severe malnutrition.⁸⁸

Balochistan has still not eradicated polio. The situation is compounded by the fact that polio workers have to conduct anti-polio drives amid tight security.⁸⁹

Environment

In the wake of devastating floods during July and August, 32 out of the 34 districts in Balochistan were declared calamity-hit, with at least 300 lives lost.⁹⁰ Balochistan witnessed record rains⁹¹ and the ensuing floods wrought significant damage to the province's already poor infrastructure.⁹² Quetta remained cut off from other towns for much of this period as a result of destroyed or blocked road and rail links.⁹³ The province itself was disconnected from the rest of the country during this time, making it difficult to access humanitarian aid.⁹⁴

Pir Koh town in Dera Bugti district was left without water as a result of the floods and its residents were compelled to drink contaminated water in the absence of clean drinking water, leading to several deaths in August.⁹⁵ In some places, the flood had inundated entire towns, leaving no room for people to escape. Under such circumstances, cuts were made to drain the water in some places. One such town was Usta Mohammad.⁹⁶



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Other ongoing and often ignored environmental issues in the province included the environmental impact of the construction of Gwadar Port and the public health impact of gas extraction in Dera Bugti.

Endnotes

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