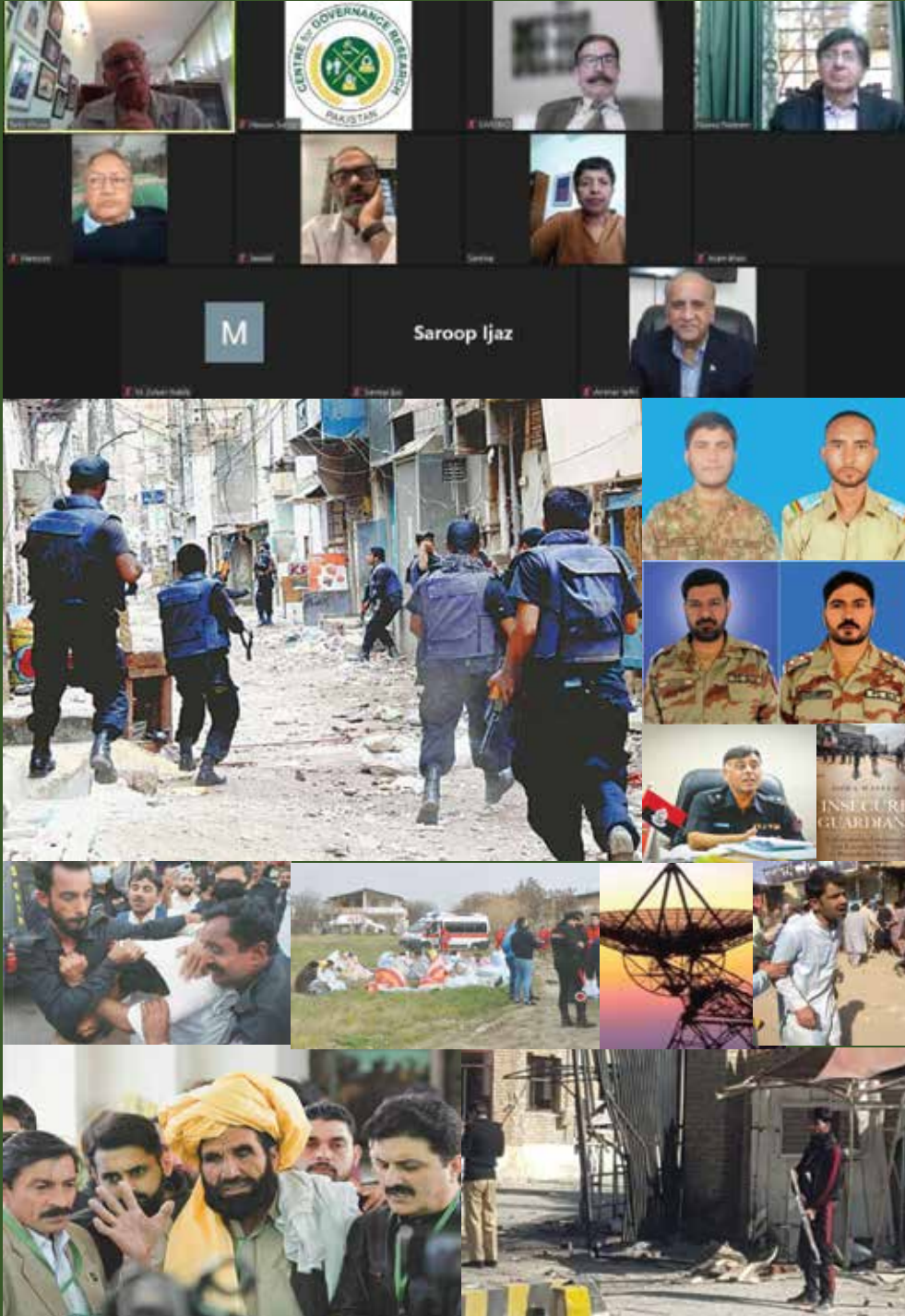


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# NIOC's 40th Advisory Board Meeting



The 40th Meeting of NIOC Advisory Board was held online on Tuesday 28 February 2023. The following AB Members participated: Samina Ahmed, Manzoor Ahmed, Zubair Habib and Jawaid Akhtar. Tariq Parvez and Zahid Hussain could not participate. NIOC Directorate was represented by the following: Tariq Khosa, Sarmad Saeed, Saroop Ijaz, Ammar Jaffri, Azam Khan, Nawaz Nadeem and Hassan Sardar.

The matters came under discussion:

- 1) Under the UNTOC Review Process, CGR has constituted three Working Groups on UNTOC Legal Matters, Human Rights and Transnational Organized Crime.
- 2) A Focus Group Discussion of WG of Legal Experts on UNTOC will be held on 8 March 2023.
- 3) A case study on Smuggling of Migrants on a recent boat tragedy near Italian coast will be carried out in collaboration with the FIA.
- 4) An NGO on SDGs, led by Ammar Jaffri, will apply for membership of Vienna-based Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.
- 5) CGR will release the UNTOC Implementation Review Report on behalf of the civil society by mid-March.
- 6) CGR-NIOC Annual Report 2022 will also be released during March 2023.

# Institutional police response

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AFZAL ALI SHIGRI

IN the past year, there has been a record spike in attacks by the TTP and Baloch separatists on Pakistan's law-enforcement agencies. Over this period, more than 100 policemen were martyred in the line of duty. The rather soft response to these acts of terrorism, as feared, has now culminated in the Peshawar Police Lines mosque attack. To underscore their nefarious intentions, the militants attacked a police station in Punjab the very next day.

It is inexplicable why, despite repeated failures and betrayal by the TTP resulting in catastrophic outcomes, the government entered into peace negotiations with the outfit. In what is a form of *déjà vu*, the release of TTP members and their incursion into Malakand and Waziristan, with 'parchis' (demand for extortion money) for local political leaders, echo the ominous pattern of their earlier rise. Fearing reprisals by these terrorists, PTI's KP government entered a state of denial. However, civil society which had suffered the most in the past under TTP control voiced its protests against such ill-advised appeasement by the state in massive public gatherings. These voices sadly were not taken seriously.

Undeterred by this public show of resentment, the TTP began to systematically target the police, civil armed forces and the army with newly acquired weapons, thanks to the hasty and chaotic withdrawal of the American forces in Afghanistan. The last few weeks have witnessed audacious attacks on KP police stations, inflicting heavy casualties on the ill-equipped and thinly deployed police force which is housed in unsafe, hastily acquired premises. Attempted suicide attacks in other parts of the country, including Islamabad, further demonstrates the nefarious intentions of the TTP.

These acts of terror have engendered a sense of insecurity, with negative ramifications for a country beset with economic woes and political instability. A besieged federal coalition government is petrified and unable to confront and tackle this challenge. State institutions are therefore bound to fill this void. A case in point is the Pakistan Army which has shown its resolve to neutralise this emerging threat. We are all confident that our armed forces, with their exemplary record of vanquishing the TTP in the recent past, have the will and capacity to decimate these elements and restore peace.

In the past, the police leadership felt that controlling terrorism and insurgency was not within the ambit of police responsibility. However, in the 1990s, recognising that modern-day acts of terror were essentially crimes, the leadership began to understand that it was the duty of the force to prevent, detect and punish the perpetrators through well-defined procedural law. With this

realisation, special cells and later wings were created in police forces nationwide to deal robustly with this rising threat. In Sindh, the police took the lead in tackling urban terrorism head on, while specialised investigation units to counter terrorism were created in Punjab and KP. This has now been expanded to the remaining provincial forces.

These steps enabled the police forces to withstand the brutal onslaught of diverse terrorist groups lent momentum by sectarian and 'nationalist' theories. This played a key role in the restoration of peace. Punjab's Counter-Terrorism Department deserves special mention. Originally operating as the Criminal Investigation Department, the latter was transformed by Mr Tariq Parvez, a professional police officer who headed this unit for seven years and who laid the foundation for a modern and efficient Counter-Terrorism Department, later to be replicated in the rest of the country. These departments have the experience and ability to deal with terrorism in the provinces. Mr Parvez later introduced the concept of a central authority, namely Nacta, to deal with this menace. Sadly, this valuable initiative was scuttled when, against his advice, the body was placed under the interior ministry rather than directly under the chief executive of the country.

Parallel to these progressions in antiterrorism structures, another important development was taking place to establish institutional arrangements for the police leadership to address internal security issues gaining prominence as hostile states increasingly caused ruptures in rival countries by deploying proxies linked to local issues.

The Police Order, 2002, created the National Police Management Board within the interior ministry so that a coherent and unified police response on 'crime control and internal security' could be conveyed to the government for managing any crisis situation spanning across provincial borders. Unfortunately, due to lack of interest on the part of the police leadership, the NPMB has remained a dormant body. Now is the time and opportunity, under these turbulent circumstances, to not only activate but also institutionalise the collective voice of the civilian police through a legally constituted platform in order to effectively quell the threat of the burgeoning TTP insurgency in KP that threatens to spill into other parts of the country.

It is the professional and moral duty of the police leadership to demand and insist on better equipment, purpose-built infrastructure and equipment outmatching the gear being used by the terrorists. It is also the responsibility of the police command to use the NPMB to update and improve the training of its personnel. Only these measures will allow police personnel to confront and fight terrorists in all areas of the country including the cities. Times have changed and the battle against terrorism looks likely to be a long one. The only way to vanquish the threat and restore lasting peace is to deal with every act of terror as a special criminal case that must be followed relentlessly by snatching the initiative from the terrorists. Instead of waiting for them to attack and add to our list of martyrs, the battle should be taken to them.

The NPMB must play its role effectively and boldly for no government can ignore the collective professional advice of the police leadership. In addition to the resources for police, NPMB must

help to secure facilities and resources for witness protection and deradicalisation programmes and ensure compensation for the victims of terrorism. It is high time to redefine the role of police as being an institution of civil society that cares for them.

**SOURCE: DAWN, FEBRUARY 2, 2023**

## Mianwali raid

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It is clear that the new wave of militancy is not likely to recede anytime soon. A day after the atrocious terrorist attack on a mosque in Peshawar's Police Lines, TTP fighters raided a police station in Punjab's Mianwali district.

According to security officials, the incursion targeting the Makarwal police station was repulsed after a 'grand operation' was undertaken, involving police units from neighbouring districts as well as Lahore.

The area targeted during Tuesday night's raid borders KP, specifically Lakki Marwat district, which has in the recent past been affected by terrorist activity. The foray should serve as a warning that the terrorists are moving beyond the peripheries towards the heartland, and that the state needs to prepare itself to meet the challenge.

Though Punjab has been relatively quiet after successive military operations brought a semblance of peace to the country, in the past terrorists have struck deep inside the province, including Lahore.

Moreover, after the TTP began its latest reign of terror following the end of the ceasefire last year, the militants have shown that they are capable of reaching Islamabad, as the suicide blast in the capital in December highlighted.

The fact is that the so-called Punjabi Taliban have always maintained cordial ties with the TTP, including providing recruits to the terrorist outfit, and sleeper cells are bound to exist, as the sectarian and jihadi militants of yore are still very much around, though maintaining a lower profile.

Now, emboldened by the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, as well as the TTP's deadly recent forays, the Punjabi Taliban may be reactivating themselves, at least as facilitators if not combatants.

The best way to stem the tide of this coming onslaught, as stated before in these columns, is to improve intelligence capabilities and uproot the terrorist infrastructure nationwide. Combing operations have been conducted in Punjab, and these need to be intensified considering the latest threats.

Vigilance by law enforcers in Punjab is relatively better, yet by no means can the civilian and military security agencies underestimate the threat, as the Mianwali episode has shown.

The military's top brass also emphasised the need for effective intelligence-based operations to counter the terrorist threat during Tuesday's corps commanders' conference, which is why the military needs to share intel with civilian agencies to achieve the target of neutralising the militant menace. As terrorists recognise no borders and jurisdictions, LEAs in all four provinces, as well as the centre, will have to coordinate their efforts to confront the threat.

Moreover, full implementation of the National Action Plan is imperative – this means action against the 'good' Taliban, as well as malevolent sectarian actors who can serve as the militants' 'B' team. The whole spectrum of the terrorist threat needs to be confronted, not just parts of it.

**SOURCE: DAWN, FEBRUARY 2, 2023**

# Women police officers

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IN a heartening development, a second female police officer has been appointed as DPO in Attock, weeks after the district saw the appointment of its first woman SHO. Ammara Athar was appointed to the DPO position by Punjab Police in its effort to increase women representation in the force including in decision-making positions. Ms Athar is a deserving candidate, having served as SSP in Multan. Earlier, she made history when she became the first female DPO in Punjab, serving in Bahawalnagar and then in Sargodha.

It is indeed a commendable effort, especially because out of all provinces Punjab has marked the highest number of crimes against women. It is critical to have women decision-makers in positions of authority – especially the police force – where crimes against women are being investigated. Women police officers are skilful at tackling violent crimes against other women, and can outperform their male counterparts when it comes to community policing. Many male police officers are either shy or indifferent when it comes to engaging with female citizens – which is a major drawback given women make up half the population. Not only can women police officers educate their peers about the need for sensitivity and privacy around certain crimes, their own life experiences can bring meaningful change in the processes that exist to gather evidence and report criminal offences. Pakistan’s convictions in rape cases are still very low, largely because evidence collection and the recording of testimonies is poor. Senior women police officers can bring a transformative change in this regard, perhaps also encouraging women to report cases of abuse. Ms Athar’s appointment should inspire other provinces to follow suit. The success of women like Ms Athar proves that the outdated, regressive stereotypes which dictate that women cannot be part of a workforce that demands ‘aggressive’ work can be shattered. The government ought to support the trend by making more key appointments open to the best female officers.

**SOURCE: DAWN, FEBRUARY 2, 2023**



# Corruption unlimited

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PAKISTAN'S consistent slide on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index over the last several years is deplorable but not incomprehensible. Though we have 'retained' our spot at 140 on the CPI among 180 countries and territories for the second consecutive year, the overall score fell by one point to 27 points in 2022, the lowest in a decade. That the country's corruption rankings dropped by 23 notches – from 117 in 2017 – under the administration of Imran Khan, who had come to power on the promise of tackling graft, highlights the unwillingness and inability of the nation's leadership to stem the ever-deepening rot. It also highlights that the growing incidence of corruption is not the only issue here. The real problem is the anti-corruption laws and framework that have been set up to protect the country's ruling elite, be they politicians, bureaucrats, military establishment, businessmen or judges. On top of that, these laws have mostly been applied in the past for the persecution of political opponents or 'political engineering' by the powers that be. Opposition politicians are put in jail for years on corruption allegations and subjected to vicious media trials, without their being convicted or their guilt being proved, until they are needed again by the establishment. The use of the anti-corruption watchdog NAB by Gen Musharraf and the PTI government to these ends is a testimony to the fact.

Considering this, it is not surprising that ordinary folk have lost all faith in the anti-corruption effort of the state. Both the federal and provincial anti-corruption agencies, hampered by political intervention, lack of resources and proper training to investigate white-collar crime and get the corrupt convicted, have proved ineffective in their so-called battle against dishonest activities. Rather, they themselves are perceived, and justifiably so, as involved in financial corruption. Consequently, we see greater social acceptance of the misuse of power for personal financial gains. The current state of affairs is placing new, harsher constraints on the economy, and raising the cost of public service delivery, besides affecting Pakistan's credibility among its foreign creditors and investors as a transparent country. In order to improve its international standing as a clean and transparent nation, Pakistan must revamp its laws to fight corruption, stop using the agencies for political purposes, properly train their staff, and ensure greater transparency in the public sector decision-making processes.

SOURCE: DAWN, FEBRUARY 2, 2023

# January ‘deadliest’ month since July 2018, says report

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ISLAMABAD: As Pakistan reeled from the terror wave, January 2023 remained one of the deadliest months since July 2018, as 134 people lost their lives – a 139 per cent spike – and 254 received injuries in at least 44 militant attacks across the country.

According to statistics released by the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), an Islamabad-based think-tank, the pattern of terrorist attacks continued in the new year, with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remaining one of the worst victims.

Although the number of terrorism incidents slightly declined in January, the fatalities increased by 139 per cent, mainly due to the Peshawar Police Lines suicide blast which resulted in the death of 101 people on Monday. In January, two suicide bombings were recorded – one in Peshawar and the other one in the Khyber tribal district. At the same time, the security forces foiled a number of attacks by arresting at least 52 suspected militants, mainly from Punjab, and killing 40 suspects, mostly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa not only the militant attacks increased from 17 to 27, but the resultant deaths also increased from 17 to 116 compared to December 2022, the think-tank said quoting data. At least 232 people were also injured in the province, most of them police officials wounded in the Peshawar blast.

The KP Police was the primary target of the militants operating in the province bordering Afghanistan. In KP, Lakki Marwat was one the most troubled districts, where the majority of the militant attacks were concentrated in January; it was followed by DI Khan and Peshawar.

As the southern region of KP reeled through a major militant offensive during the past few months, Bannu, Charsadda, and Swabi also reported militant attacks over the month.

However, violence in KP’s tribal districts declined during January. Only three militant attacks were reported in the erstwhile Fata region.

In December 2022, the think-tank said it recorded 11 militant attacks in ex-Fata. The security forces stepped up targetted operations in the tribal districts, which was the “main reason” that militant attacks declined in the area. No violent activity was noted in tribal districts with the exceptions of North Waziristan and Khyber districts.

However, militant attacks declined in Balochistan during January, where only nine militant attacks were reported compared to 17 attacks in December 2022. The resultant deaths also

dropped from 14 to 7 and the number of wounded declined from 48 to 20. Bolan, Panjgur, Kalat, Khuzdar, Mastung, and Quetta were the affected districts during the month.

Meanwhile, in Punjab, four militant attacks were reported in which three security forces personnel were killed while two low-profile attacks were reported in Sindh in which one person died.

The most high-profile attack was carried out in Mianwali's Makarwal police station by "around two dozen TTP militants" on January 31. The attack was repulsed, but it showed the numerical strength and ability of banned outfits to mobilise armed militants across the KP and Punjab border. One attack each was reported in Rawalpindi, DG Khan, and Khanewal, the report claimed.

**SOURCE: DAWN, FEBRUARY 2, 2023**

## 2 terrorists killed during exchange of fire in North Waziristan

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Two terrorists were killed during an exchange of fire between terrorists and security forces in the Esham area of the North Waziristan district, according to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

Following the “intense exchange of fire”, weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the killed terrorists, the ISPR added.

It further said the terrorists had remained “actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces”.

The ISPR added: “The incident re-vindicates [the] Pakistan Army’s resolve to have zero tolerance for terrorism in Pakistan and reaffirms its determination to take on any and all entities that resort to violence.”

The exchange of fire comes after a surge in terrorist activities in the country, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces, since the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) ended its ceasefire with the government.

On Monday, a devastating suicide blast took place in the Peshawar Police Line area that resulted in 101 people killed and around 59 injured, according to official numbers until now.

On January 18, security forces gunned down at least four terrorists during an Intelligence-Based Operation (IBO) in Balochistan’s Hoshab.

In the first week of the month, at least 11 terrorists, including a militant commander and two suicide bombers, were killed in an IBO in South Waziristan’s Wana.

**SOURCE: DAWN, FEBRUARY 3, 2023**

## At least 5 wounded in explosion near Quetta Police Lines: rescue official



The photo shows the Police Lines area in Quetta after an explosion.

At least five people were injured in an explosion near the Quetta Police Lines area, rescue officials said.

Edhi worker Zeeshan Ahmed, who is leading the rescue operation on the site, told Dawn.com that the injured persons have been moved to the Civil Hospital, Quetta.

He said police and emergency teams have arrived at the site and the area has been cordoned off.

Police haven't issued any statement and the nature of the blast is not clear at the moment.

The outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement released on Sunday. It stated that security officials were targeted in the blast.

The explosion comes days after a ghastly suicide blast in Peshawar Police Lines area took nearly 80 lives, mostly policemen.

Pakistan has been hit by a wave of terrorism, mostly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but also in Balochistan and the Punjab town of Mianwali, which borders KP. A terror attack also reached as far as the peripheries of Islamabad.

The TTP, which has ideological linkages with the Afghan Taliban, executed more than 100 attacks last year, most of which happened after August when the group's peace talks with the Pakistan government began to falter. The ceasefire was formally ended last year on Nov 28 by the TTP.

Last month was the deadliest month since 2018, in which 134 people lost their lives – a 139 per cent spike – and 254 received injuries in at least 44 militant attacks across the country.

**SOURCE: DAWN, FEBRUARY 5, 2023**

# No pardon for rape

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AN important aspect of procedural law pertaining to the crime of rape, and one that most certainly serves the cause of justice, was recently reiterated in a sessions court in Karachi.

In a case where a school teacher was sexually assaulted in Karachi in March 2017, the court found the accused guilty and rejected a compromise between him and the victim's father as a basis of acquittal.

Holding that an out-of-court settlement has no legal value in rape cases, the judge sentenced the defendant to 10 years behind bars. Her approach adhered to the law: the crime of rape is not included among the compoundable offences listed under Section 345 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which expressly says "No offence shall be compounded except as provided by this section".

Nevertheless, courts still make appalling errors of judgement. In 2012, a trial court acquitted men accused of gang rape after they came to an out-of-court settlement with the father of the victim.

Fortunately, the Supreme Court struck down the lower court's ruling. But similar travesties of justice continue to take place. For example, in December 2022, the Peshawar High Court set aside the sentence of life imprisonment awarded to a man for sexual assault because he married the victim as a result of a compromise.

Cultural filters and biases can often lead to faulty applications of the law. In a deeply inequitable society, the compounding of offences can lead to outcomes completely at odds with the principles of justice.

This is perhaps most starkly seen in cases of 'honour killing' where, unlike other types of murder, the families of the victims and the perpetrators are the same. This has allowed murderers to go free when the victims' next of kin have 'pardoned' them – a grotesque iteration of 'keeping it in the family'.

After the public outrage at the murder of social media celebrity Qandeel Baloch at the hands of her brother, legislators brought an amendment to the relevant law. Fundamentally, this amendment changed nothing. Honour killing remains compoundable; the court continues, as before, to have discretionary power to award punishment to perpetrators even if they are pardoned by the family of the victim.

Only the minimum punishment that may be awarded has been enhanced – from 10 years' imprisonment to imprisonment for life.

The acquittal of Qandeel's brother on appeal by the Lahore High Court is further evidence that the law needs revision, but it also offers an insight into society's misogynistic bent.

However, in most cases of murder, even willful murder, the deciding factor in whether justice is done is the social standing of the victim's family. If they can be browbeaten into a 'compromise', then killers walk free. Surely those who commit this most terrible of crimes should not get away with it.

**SOURCE: DAWN, FEBRUARY 7, 2023**



# Two TTP militants killed in Nowshera operation

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PESHAWAR: Two militants of banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan were killed by the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of police during an intelligence-based operation in Nowshera.

According to details provided by police, a raid was planned following information about the presence of militants in Misri Banda in the jurisdiction of Risalpur police station.

A police official said that the team reached the spot to arrest the militants.

They however opened fire and hurled a hand grenade at the team, adding that police returned fire killing the two militants, the official said adding that three other terrorists managed to escape and a search was underway to arrest them

Later, the slain militants were identified as Mohammad Zeeshan alias Usman and Salman alias Emirati and both were wanted in several cases in districts Mardan and Charsadda, an official statement issued by the CTD said.

It stated that Usman and Emirati were also involved in the targeted killing of senior medical technician Abdul Tawab and the martyrdom of constable Bilal, constable Muzamil Shah and constable Zaramust in Tangi districts.

**SOURCE: DAWN, FEBRUARY 10, 2023**

## 2 soldiers martyred in IED blast in Balochistan's Kohlu

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Major Jawad (L) and Captain Sagheer (R)

Two Pakistan Army soldiers were martyred after an improvised explosive device (IED) exploded in Balochistan's Kohlu area, the military's media wing said.

"Based on credible intelligence, a sanitisation operation was initiated on Feb 10 in the Kohlu area of Balochistan to deny terrorists any liberty of action," the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement.

During the ensuing sanitisation of the area, the ISPR said, an IED exploded close to the leading party.

"Resultantly, two officers – identified as Major Jawad and Captain Sagheer – embraced martyrdom and laid their lives in defence of the motherland against an externally perpetrated threat."

The ISPR said that a sanitisation operation is under way in the area to apprehend perpetrators and enemies of peace.

“Such cowardly acts by inimical elements cannot sabotage the hard-earned peace and prosperity in Balochistan. Security Forces are determined to neutralise their nefarious designs even at the cost of blood and lives,” the statement concluded.

Earlier, the medical superintendent of the District Healthquarter Hospital (DHQ) Kohlu told Dawn.com that an emergency had been imposed at the medical facility.

All the medical staff, doctors and paramedics have been alerted, he added.

Today’s attack in Balochistan was the latest in a series of terrorist attacks which spiked since the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) rescinded the ceasefire with the government in 2021.

According to a report, January was the deadliest month since 2018, in which 134 people lost their lives – a 139 per cent spike – and 254 received injuries in at least 44 militant attacks across the country.

Last week, a Coast guard was martyred and seven others were injured in a landmine explosion and subsequent ambush by armed militants in the Jiwani area of Gwadar district.

On Feb 6, seven people were injured in two terrorist attacks in Quetta.

Five people, including an office-bearer of the Civil Secretariat Staff Association, suffered injuries in the first attack. The outlawed TTP later had claimed responsibility for the blast, saying that it was a suicide bombing.

In the second attack, a woman and her child were injured when unknown persons riding motorcycles hurled a grenade into the house of Nazeer Ahmed on Mano Jan Road. The grenade exploded in the courtyard.

**SOURCE: DAWN, FEBRUARY 10, 2023**

# Curbing drug abuse

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Each year, large swathes of the population fall prey to the menace of drugs. The absence of adequate funds and resources has impeded the Anti-Narcotics Force's (ANF) ability to tackle the problem head-on. Currently, there are more than 9 million drug addicts in the country, of which 2 million are believed to be between the ages of 15 to 25.

Traffickers looking to exploit vulnerable groups target educational institutes and hostels where affordability is usually not an issue and great potential for additional customers. The youth are more prone to drug consumption due to easy access, peer pressure, social media and pop culture trends, and academic pressures. Students are now also using drugs to get good results. Educational institutes are either unaware of the issue or not concerned about the welfare of students who are increasingly becoming addicted to hardcore drugs. To stifle the use and supply of drugs at educational institutes, the Senate Standing Committee on Narcotics Control has decided to form vigilance/discipline committees in educational institutes. While this is a step in the right direction, private educational institutes that are notorious for not following government orders will be required to cooperate to make progress on the matter. Perhaps, institutes should be included in the process and urged to initiate anti-drug campaigns.

Previous crackdown attempts have remained futile because of little cohesion within departments and across regions. Corruption among police and other officials has further hampered efforts. Therefore, the authorities need to tighten laws and strengthen lawmakers to improve the monitoring of officials. The ANF has also sought funds and resources to establish rehabilitation facilities for women and children in the capital as well as other cities. Given the enormity of the problem, crackdown initiatives should be taken alongside improving access to rehabilitation to prevent individuals from relapsing and avoid being exploited by traffickers.

**SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, FEBRUARY 12, 2023.**

## THE RISE OF THE 'SUPER COP'

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On 13 January 2018, 27-year-old Naqeebullah Mehsud was shot dead in a 'police encounter' on the outskirts of Karachi, in a relatively deserted area. With him, three other suspected militants were killed.

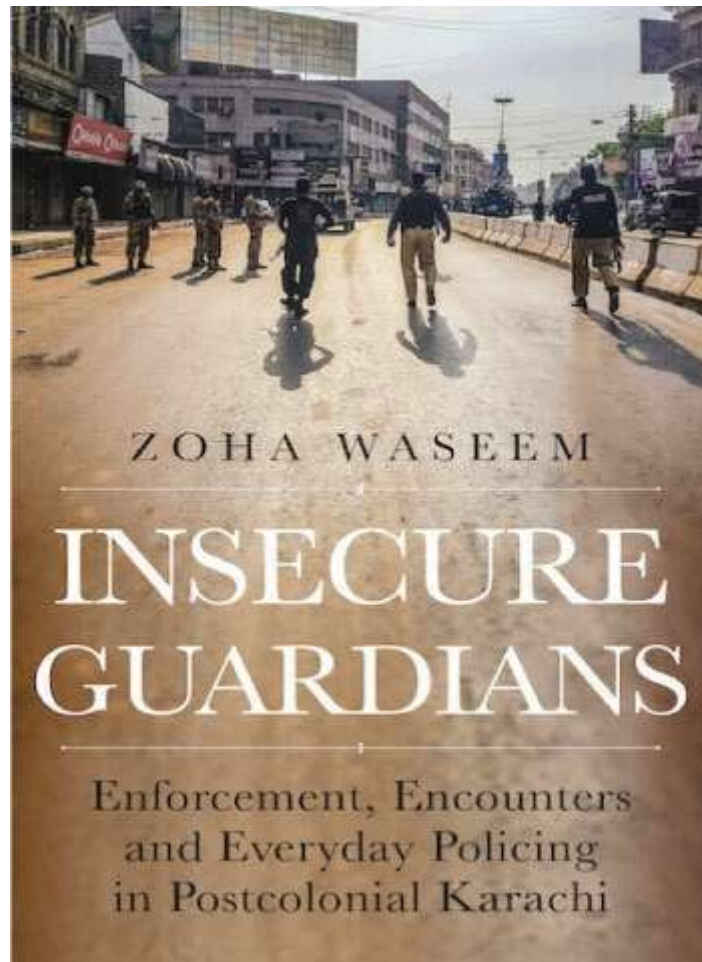
The police believed these men were associated with regional terrorist organisations. As news of this encounter (framed as a 'shoot-out' between the police and suspected militants) began trickling into newsrooms, it was reported as per usual: its details remained unquestioned and no independent investigations were carried out. The leading English-language daily, Dawn, reproduced the police version:

"Acting on a tip-off by intelligence agencies regarding the presence of some militant hideouts... on the outskirts of the metropolis, contingents of Malir police conducted a targeted raid. Having sniffed the raid, the suspects resorted to firing and hurled a hand grenade, but could not hurt the police, whose retaliatory firing killed four suspects."

The remainder of the report quoted the former Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Anwar Ahmed Khan (better known as Rao Anwar), the so-called 'encounter specialist'.

Anwar had started his career in Karachi during a security operation in the early 1990s known as “Operation Clean-Up” (1992-94). Then sub-inspector, Anwar quickly escalated up the ranks, a rare professional advancement in the rigid hierarchical structure of the police. The 1994 British documentary Karachi Kops described how Anwar was “regarded as a promising young Turk of the force.”

More than two decades later, Anwar became one of the most notorious police officers in another security operation, the “Karachi Operation” that began in 2013, to again ‘clean up’ the city from what were perceived to be anti-state elements: armed terrorists, criminal gangs, political party workers and other actors deemed to be directly involved in both violent and nonviolent crimes.



Dr Zoha Waseem’s book explores the ‘post-colonial condition of policing’

New geographies of crime and terrorism had emerged in the years preceding this operation, creating a “dramatic theatre” in which the repressive role of law enforcement agencies was consciously brought to the fore to cater to the public’s preoccupation with militarised responses to a range of security threats and to satisfy the appetite of those who consumed televised coverage of armed policing operations and read detailed accounts of police killings in the daily papers.

In the course of the operation, between 2013 and 2017, more than 2,000 individuals were killed by law enforcement agencies (led by the Karachi police and the paramilitary organisation Sindh Rangers). We may never know how many of those killed extrajudicially in ‘encounters’ had established links with armed militant groups or criminal gangs that were the objects of these security operations.

But condemning militarised practices that were shielded by narratives of ‘counterterrorism’ and ‘counterinsurgency’ was off-limits. At the time, Karachi was reeling from decades of ethno-political violence and terrorism; militants had shocked the nation by attacking a school in Peshawar and killing more than 140 staff and children, and military-led counterterrorism operations were being conducted across Pakistan.



Rao Anwar has been acquitted in the Naqeebullah Mehsud murder case

In this environment, critics of militarised policing practices were labelled unpatriotic, antinationalist, or ‘anti-state’. Furthermore, police encounters, as a form of vigilantism, were popularised, lauded by civilians who either sought closer relations with state officials or wanted safer mobility in the city for themselves and their families.

Such practices were similarly condoned by politicians, bureaucrats and senior police officers who legitimised them by participating in award ceremonies that commemorated the ‘bravery’ and ‘courage’ of officers who had ‘eliminated security threats’. They were glorified by news channels with prominent journalists who accompanied security officers on late-night raids.

They were also, as was the case during the operations of the 1990s, part of the police response (and revenge) to the growing number of attacks on police officers themselves. More than 400 police officers were killed between 2013 and 2017. In this complex and volatile environment, Mehsud's killing was a tragedy waiting to happen.

### NOT ANOTHER 'JIHADI'

Shortly after Mehsud's death was reported, a local journalist brought the incident to the attention of a lawyer-cum-civil society activist – an independent candidate for the 2018 general elections in Pakistan. The activist, based in Karachi, reportedly shrugged it off, considering this to be 'just another jihadi' killed in an encounter.

Just days later, Mehsud's photograph circulated on social media, supported by statements from family and friends confirming his identity. Mehsud was an aspiring model and shopkeeper, originating from South Waziristan – he had no known affiliations to any militant organisations.

The activist grew interested and collaborated with others to move the judiciary. The Supreme Court took a suo moto notice (literally: on its own motion). Police officers themselves began acknowledging that Mehsud was likely to have been killed in a 'staged encounter'.

What was initially perceived as another neglected extrajudicial killing morphed into a nationwide movement that shook Pakistan. Mass protests were held across the country, led by the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (Pashtun Protection Movement), highlighting the plight of Pakistan's ethnic minority Pashtuns – their enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings.

Mehsud's death and the subsequent rise of a social movement condemning violence meted out by state authorities in Pakistan created a shift. As John and Jean Comaroff wrote about police violence and its popularity, "As the state acts on popular desire for more immediate forms of violence and stages the appearances of a powerful police for its people, this almost necessarily backfires."

And it did. Inquiries were conducted. Anwar was suspended and briefly went into hiding, before attempting to flee the country. The subsequent investigations placed him and his accomplices (other police officers) at the location of Mehsud's extrajudicial killing.

An inquiry committee found that Mehsud was picked up by plain-clothed officers about 10 days before his death, during which time he was kept in illegal confinement and subjected to torture. Eyewitness accounts were taken to investigate Anwar's history, but were later withdrawn (due to, as the inquiry report stated, "a grave sense of insecurity [that] prevails amongst the residents of the area", who are afraid to testify against the police).

Extrajudicial killings carried out by the police were discontinued, but only briefly, and the operation came to a grinding but quiet halt. Anwar was labelled a 'black sheep' by his own colleagues, although he continued to receive protection from the civil and military elite, due to his affiliations with sections within the intelligence agencies (including those who had provided



him with the group of civilians, one of whom was Mehsud), political parties (including the provincial political party that empowered Anwar) and his close ties with powerful real-estate developers, most notably Bahria Town Karachi, none of whom would be held accountable for grooming an officer like Anwar.

But soon the pushback against militarised policing and the extra-legal use of force fizzled out. Within a year, the investigation and trial had stalled and Anwar continued to reside in his own residence in Malir, now classified as a ‘sub-jail’, with few restrictions on his mobility (a protection afforded to officers with good patronage networks in exchange for informal practices – a process that is part of what I call in this book “procedural informality”).

Sadly, Mehsud’s father succumbed to cancer, having never received justice for his son’s murder. The ‘unofficial policy’ to temporarily discontinue police encounters was abandoned. Though nowhere near as frequent as they were prior to 2018, Karachi still saw periodic occurrences of police encounter killings, a militarised practice that depicted both the trigger-happiness of police officers as well as the internalisation of narratives of ‘war’, ‘terrorism’ and ‘security’.

The subjects of these practices continued to be, primarily, the most marginalised groups in Karachi, across the various ethnic communities that diversify the city: Pashtuns, Baloch and Muhajirs. Its perpetrators, likewise, were socio-economically marginalised rank-and-file officers, predominantly from working-class backgrounds, aspiring to be the next ‘super cops’. Most of these encounters were uninvestigated and some were unreported.



Ordinary, routine and day-to-day police work also personifies the idea of a “nervous state under pressure”

## IN SEARCH OF ‘SUPER COPS’

It was during this period, in 2015, and less than three years prior to Mehsud’s death, that I stood off the Northern Bypass, one of the primary highways north of Karachi, where police encounters were routinely staged during the “Karachi Operation”.

A handful of reporters gathered next to me with their camera crew and media vans. We were invited to observe a police ‘shoot-out’ with alleged militants, taking place a short distance away. That night, news channels flashed tickers and reporters presented details about the police ‘operation’.

Anwar was on the screen, explaining how the eight men killed were reportedly affiliated with Al-Qaeda. There was no way to confirm this. Some reporters tried to find out details of those killed in this encounter over the following days, but managed to investigate little.

While Anwar operated with an independence and impunity not afforded to all police officers, he was the product of a culture of policing that had tolerated, if not condoned and encouraged, police repression and state violence.

His rise and prominence can be read in the context of decades of urban violence in Karachi, in the midst of which the police repeatedly operated like a “nervous state under pressure”, with the legal authority to use force, but no monopoly over the use of coercion and violence, resource constraints and capacity issues, and a tendency to resort to reactive policing methods as and when police authority was challenged.

And it must also be understood in the context of a state and society that glorified ‘tough cops’ and ‘super cops’, and where the killing of another ‘encounter specialist’, Chaudhry Aslam Khan – Pakistan’s so-called ‘toughest cop’, credited for helping ‘bind’ the city of Karachi together – granted him the title of a ‘martyr’; in effect, vindicating him for the extra-legal actions he took in the line of duty, actions that could not have been possible without the patronage he received both within and beyond the confines of his institution.

The pedestalisation of Anwar and Aslam should also be read alongside the narratives that reflect “global trends in hyper-security, such as the conflating of crime and terrorism”, and contemporary state apparatuses that mirror and reflect colonial policing philosophies of the so-called ‘civilised’, geared at suppressing internal threats from indigenous communities (the ‘uncivilised’), thus linking extra-legal police practices and police vigilantism to broader aspirations of ‘security’ (that of the regime, above all else).

These ‘colonial continuities’, however, are of course not without variations, nor are they constant, but neither can they be captured by restricting our analysis to repressive policing practices alone.

Indeed, such colonial continuities in policing can also be seen through routine, everyday police work, which is, above all else, about policemen trying to survive under institutional pressure and with their own insecurities.

Therefore, pinning such police ‘vigilantism’ or malpractices generally on individual police officers or ‘dirty workers’ (personifying, partly, the “Dirty Harry problem”), or even on some abstract notion of ‘police culture’ (notoriously referred to in South Asia as “thaana culture”), would constitute a reductive analysis of what the police do and why, and under what demands and circumstances.

It would similarly be naive to boil down policing to just vigilantism, without acknowledging the broader social, cultural, and political forces that sustain such police practice, and the institutional dynamics within law enforcement agencies that enable certain policing phenomena – such as corruption and violence (and other forms of ‘dirty work’) – to reinforce each other.

But above all, at the risk of complicating a complex intermingling of policing and security further, it would also be limiting to only include ‘exceptional police practices’, such as extrajudicial executions, and not the ordinary, routine, day-to-day police work and its formal and informal operations and activities, especially when the ordinary and the exceptional sustain each other, and exceptional practices – such as police violence – often rely on the existence of ordinary informalities within the institutions of the state that can excuse, enable, or conceal that which is unacceptable, or that which does not fall under broader security agendas and their legal mandates.

Without this intersection of the exceptional and the routine, it would be difficult to understand why the police personify the idea of a “nervous state under pressure” that has to routinely negotiate for its legitimacy and authority, turning to elite patrons and institutions for support, or depicting spectacular forms of violence to win over public trust, a dynamic that Beatrice Jauregui describes as the “provisional authority” of the police – that which is contingent upon the police’s various audiences, competitors, clients and patrons, which can both empower and disempower police officers.

By trying to connect both the exceptional practices and routine activities, we can also understand why the police in South Asia remain a “despised minority”, even though they are often recognised as being vulnerable, exploitable, “expendable” and deprived of basic human rights, such as adequate pay and sanitary working conditions, with their senior officers routinely under pressure from politicians, bureaucrats, the judiciary, and other security institutions.

These institutional dynamics of the post-colonial police thus become equally important, and so do the popular debates on police culture.



Naqeebullah Mehsud's father died having never received justice for his son's murder

## POST-COLONIAL POLICING

How then can we explain these complexities in police culture and these insecurities that underlie police work, especially in a post-colonial city where an “ordered disorder” creates what Laurent Gayer describes as a “complex ecology of violence co-produced by the city’s belligerents in the course of their interactions”, that is expected to be dealt with through state intervention, often in the form of coercion and violence meted out by law enforcement agencies?

Is there a unique way of understanding the culture of policing in certain jurisdictions that are characterised by their colonial past and post-colonial context? These are the questions I address in this book.

The study of everyday police work – both the ordinary and the extraordinary – helps us understand the colonial continuities and the postcolonial contextualities that persist in these institutions. Studying police work up close, ethnographically, explains why militarised and informal policing practices have become such normalised features of policing in post-colonial contexts.

Above all, I show that the normalisation of these practices is the consequence of policemen trying to survive and thrive under institutional pressure and individual insecurities. This study also helps explain the unique position and challenges that face policing institutions at the intersection of state-society relations in volatile and uncertain political environments.

Finally, it sheds light on why police reform efforts across the global South have largely failed to yield meaningful change.

Cosmetic developments in policing – in the form of modernised equipment and donor-funded reforms of policing, sans any structural and foundational transformations – are unlikely to shake off colonial legacies, keeping the legitimacy of the police minimal at best.

This ethnographic investigation allows me to discern what it is about postcolonial policing organisations that makes them susceptible to militarisation and informal practices – to trace how they take effect – and to understand what it is about the environment in which the police operate that demands these styles of policing and ensures their persistence. Thus, this study provides important new insights into the structural drivers behind some of the most controversial and hotly debated aspects of police practice and culture around the world.

Karachi is an ideal city in which to study post-colonial policing and address these questions. Karachi's political environment is a confluence of many of the maladies that affect post-colonial cities, including ethnic and sectarian tensions, land insecurity, weak state capacity and civil-military tensions – to name a few.

The city is notorious for its violent, extrajudicial and corrupt policing practices. Here, the security apparatus is still made to carry the burden of its colonial past, by and large due to the way successive regimes in Pakistan have chosen to utilise its infrastructure to secure their own gains (much like the dynamics seen in other post-colonial societies, such as Ghana and Nigeria).

And thus, the story of policing in Karachi is about everyday insecurities, explosive political confrontations, nervous regimes, bitter rivalries, vengeance and entitled elites. In this way, it is a story about post-colonial policing more broadly, which will resonate well beyond the spatial and temporal limits of this book.

Furthermore, policing in Pakistan has generated little academic interest, even though the police are one of the most problematic and problematised public institutions, but perhaps also the most impactful, given that ubiquitous practices of everyday urban policing are influential in shaping relations between the state and society.

This ethnography is the first of its kind to investigate how police culture in post-colonial Karachi has developed against its historical and political contexts, unsupported by substantial reforms or adequate policymaking. I show how policing in Karachi has been influenced by both colonial and post-colonial securitisation processes resulting from evolving security threats, perceived and actual, thus contributing to the militarisation and informalisation of police work and culture.

By shining the spotlight on urban policing in Pakistan, I reveal how the phenomena of police militarisation and “procedural informality” are interconnected, undergirded by insecure regimes that treat crime, public order and dissent as national security threats, and burden an ill-suited police force with protecting the state from these threats rather than serving the community.

I call this syndrome, characterised by regime insecurity and resulting securitisation, militarisation and informality in policing and police work, the “post-colonial condition of policing”.

By giving an ethnographic account of what public policing looks like and how policing and security are performed in the insecure post-colonial polity, this book paves the way for deepening existing knowledge on post-colonial governance and governmentality.

As such, it contributes to literature on critical criminology and critical security studies by introducing the framework of the ‘post-colonial condition of policing’, while also providing a unique empirical contribution that foregrounds the experiences of police officers caught in the middle of Pakistan’s political conflicts.

Excerpted with permission from *Insecure Guardians: Enforcement, Encounters and Everyday Policing in Postcolonial Karachi*, published by Hurst and Oxford University Press (October 2022).

**SOURCE: DAWN, EOS, FEBRUARY 12, 2023**

# 1 soldier martyred, 14 others injured in North Waziristan terror attack

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NORTH WAZIRISTAN: One security forces personnel embraced martyrdom and 14 others, including civilians, sustained wounds when a convoy of security forces came under attack in Mir Ali sub-division of the North Waziristan district.

The banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the attack.

Local officials said a convoy of security forces and employees of the Marri Petroleum Company was on its way from North Waziristan to Bannu when a rickshaw struck the forces' vehicle in the Khajori area of the sub-division.

"This rickshaw was parked on the roadside in the middle of parked vehicles when it suddenly appeared and struck a vehicle of the security forces," a local official said.

Initially, no official statement was issued by the military's media wing. However, on Sunday, the Inter-Services Public Relations said that one soldier was martyred and 14 other people were injured in the attack.

The local official said the area was cordoned off immediately after the explosion and the injured persons were airlifted to Bannu's Combined Military Hospital. Two among the injured persons were in critical condition.

On December 15, a similar incident took place in Sargardan area of the district when a suicide bomber riding a motorbike targeted the convoy of security forces, leaving three civilians dead and 14 others, including nine security personnel, wounded.

One killed in Kurram blast

In the mountainous area of the Central Kurram, one man was killed and another was critically injured in the explosion of an old and rusted mortar shell at Sara Tara locality on Saturday, state-run APP reported.

According to reports, arriving from Suveri Ali Sherzai locality, a far-flung convergent of Kurram and Orakzai districts, two men, Mujahid and Zaira Gul of Mamozai tribe had gone to forest for cutting wood wherein they found an old and rusted mortar shell. When they were trying to dig it out, it exploded, leaving both injured, the reports added. A team of Rescue 1122 rushed to the spot and shifted them to Ghaljo Mela hospital in Orakzai, wherein one of them died.

SOURCE: DAWN, FEBRUARY 12, 2023

# TO LEAVE OR NOT TO LEAVE PAKISTAN

BY YUSRA SALIM

Globally, relocating and looking for better education or working conditions are not new concepts. What is noticeable is that recently, the motivation to migrate has seen a peak in Pakistan. Various overwhelming factors, especially a weakened economy, are in play.

The latest numbers show that in just 2022, more than 800,000 people left Pakistan. And that is not merely because they wanted better education and working opportunities; state’s inability to provide necessities and security is also a major factor.

Some people relocate to another country to join their family members, pursue higher education, or/and find good financial opportunities. Others relocate to flee hostilities, persecution, terrorism, or human rights abuses. Some also relocate in reaction to the unfavourable consequences of environmental variables like natural catastrophes or climate change.



There could be one reason or several factors, but the recent numbers are alarming for Pakistan. The situation manifests the hopelessness of the youth stuck in the country’s unresponsive system, and how they are finding ways to move out.

“I was born, brought up and educated in Karachi, got married, have kids, and worked here, but recently I was laid off without any notice and any compensation. So why would anyone expect me to be loyal when I am unable to feed my children?” said Muhammad Usman. He has been in talks with a consultant in an attempt to leave Pakistan for better working conditions.



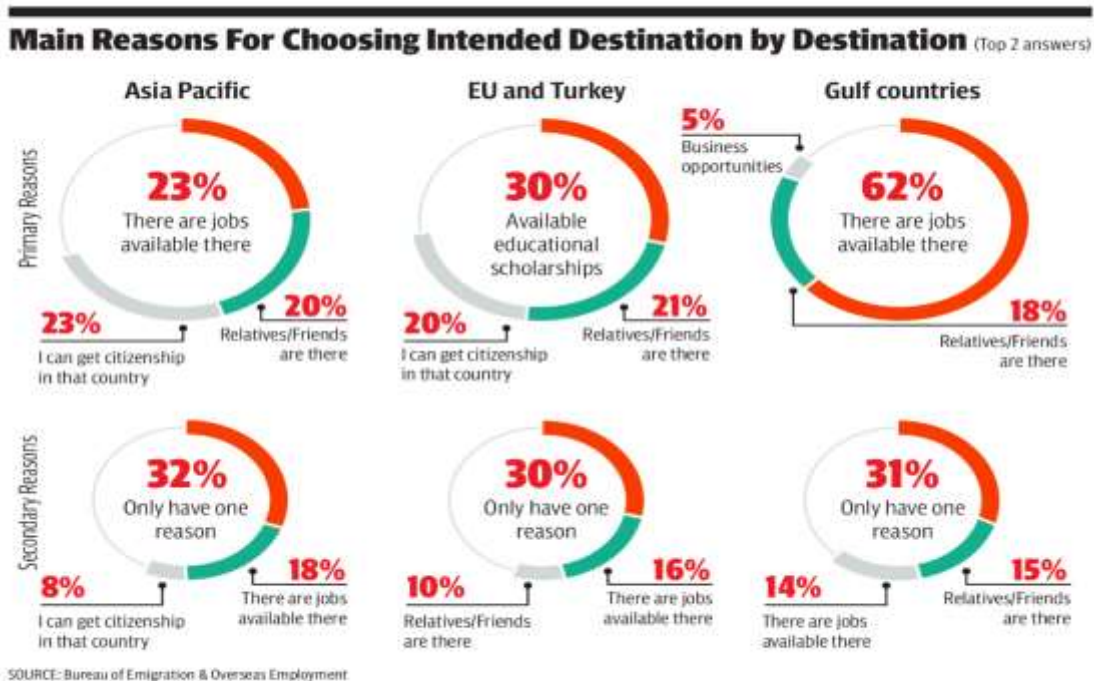
The story of every other Pakistani in the age bracket of 22-35 years is the same. They are all trying to find ways to move to another country, and while their reasons may differ their intention is identical. “I can stay in Pakistan as my parents are here, but even after studying at a reputed university and working in a big company, if I have nothing to show for it, why should I stay and keep my family suffering? My wife also works so we were not in a bad situation after I was asked to resign, but what if she wasn’t working? How would I have managed the expenses of my children who are both under three years of age,” said Usman.

His elder brother is working in the UAE, but he plans to go to Germany.

The impetus to migrate

Having hot piping tea at a roadside tea stall, a group of friends, in their mid-careers, is discussing options of how to move to another country. “It is our regular thing for the last eight-ten months; we meet every week. One of us could be worried about how they would manage next month’s expenses, given the increasing prices of almost everything and salaries being unchanged, or another friend is trying to find cheap options to migrate,” said Muhammad Abbas.

He added that from their group of twelve friends, more than seven have already left Pakistan to settle in Australia, Canada, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia. “The main thing that we discuss is different visas that can help in moving abroad as soon as possible; some of us are even in talks with immigration consultants to get help and have the right documentation ready.”



The reasons for this increase in immigration from Pakistan are many, and not just the current economic situation of the country. Abbas said, “If it was merely the issue of low paying, jobs, one could have adjusted to it. But the main concern of a middle-class salaried person is security and the law and order situation. In Karachi, we can’t even sit at a roadside hotel for tea without feeling afraid, then what is it we are paying taxes for?” Abbas and the rest of his family members are taxpayers.

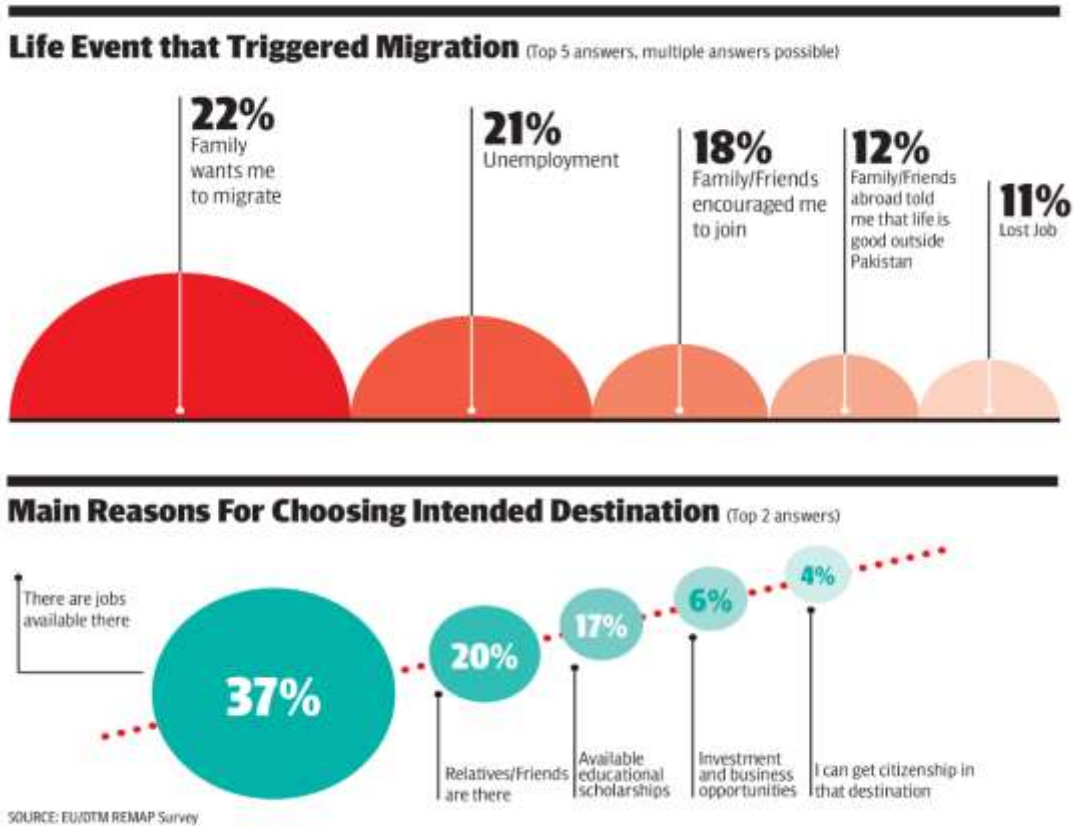
Among many concerns that people complain about, street crime in Karachi is one of the main ones. Many young people have lost their lives at the hands of common criminals. If numbers are to be believed, more than 400 people were killed in street crimes in Karachi last year. Looking at these statistics, it is not surprising that those who can afford, have a good education, and professional experience are investing all their savings to apply for work visas and permanent residency.



In this time of uncertainty when people are desperate to leave, immigration consultants are busier than ever. “We have not seen this many queries in the last decade; people aged between 20-40 are the ones who are coming to us for options and how to leave at the earliest. There are quite a few of those who already have job offers; in the technology era it is easier to get connected via LinkedIn. People have been applying themselves,” said Amanullah, a migration consultant. He also shared that the number of women looking for options to move abroad is also increasing.

“I would say that if one woman was applying in 2010, today there are fifty who are going abroad to study and even to seek permanent options. As men are leaving because of lack of security,

women are leaving for the same reason. The socioeconomic conditions are making it difficult to work and earn a respectable living.”

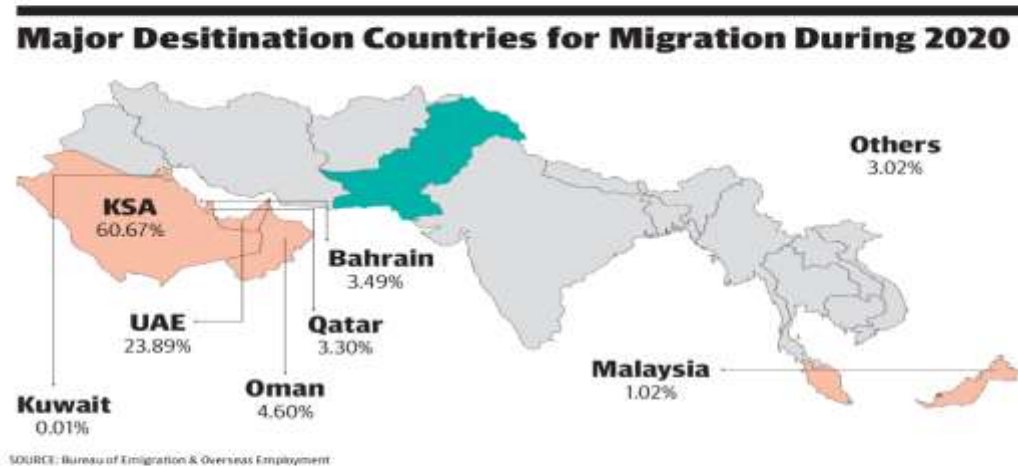


“Being a woman who was living alone, I was unable to find a decent house on rent,” Laiba Zainab told me, adding that in a country where an adult can’t even rent a house because of her gender and who has stepped out of her house to earn a living, imagine what others less fortunate have to face. “I think this country has been shrinking in every way to squeeze our souls, not just women but also men. It is a constant struggle for basic rights. If you are poor, there is no way you could fit into this system,” Zainab said, adding that it’s better to move abroad and live a decent life than just keep struggling here until one day you realize the hard work you had been putting in gives you so much less than what your friend earns doing the same work in some other counter.

The difference in lifestyle, security, and importance as a human being makes leaving the pain of your country worth it. “A classmate of mine shifted to Germany for work, and believe me, it's so much better when it comes to work ethics and job security. Here we can be laid off without even a notice period or any compensation,” she lamented.

Is the grass actually greener?

In the context of the recent scenario in which anyone who is in a position to do so is doing their best to leave, the situation outside Pakistan is also not that idyllic. In many countries, working conditions for expatriates are becoming difficult, and it is increasingly expensive for many of them to keep their families with them. “I shifted to the UAE last year with my wife. When we arrived here, she already had a job, but I am still struggling to find work; either I'm too qualified for something or I don't have the relevant experience,” shared Zain Siddiqui who left a good job in Karachi to move to the UAE. He has received some offers to join as an intern despite having eight years of work experience. “I'll wait for another three months, and if I don't get a good job, unfortunately, I'll have to return to Pakistan and find a job to make the ends meet as my wife's earnings can't be enough for us to live a comfortable life,” he said.



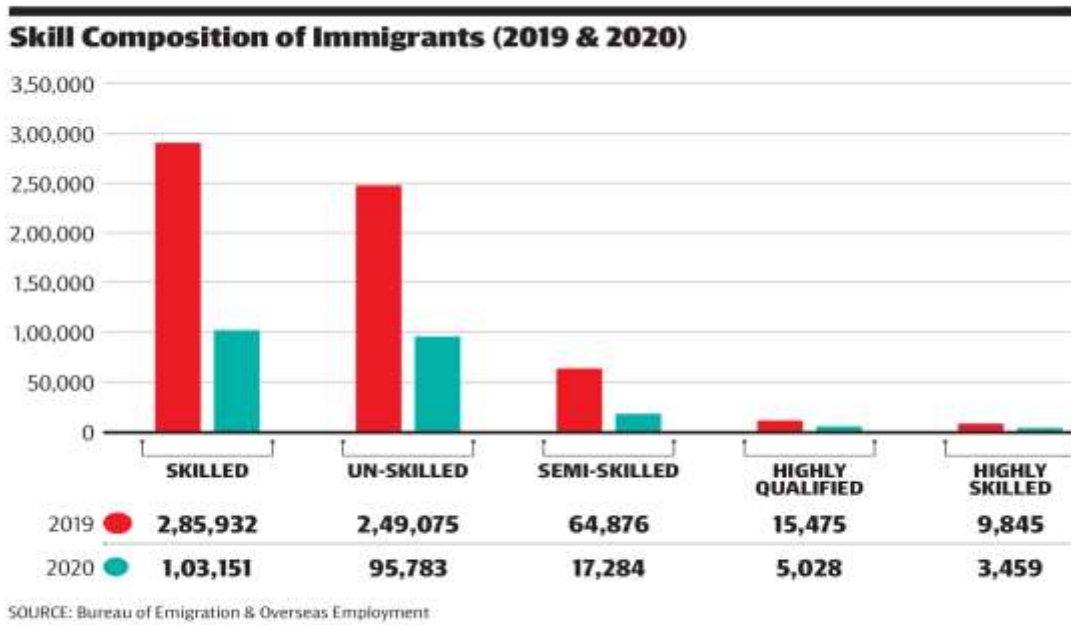
Unlike Siddiqui, Ali Shah left Pakistan a decade ago to start his life from scratch and build his own company. “Everything was going well, and I was even able to send a good amount of money back home to support my parents, but in the recent recession after covid, things have not picked up the old pace. My business has been in loss for a year now,” said Shah. He might have to come back to Pakistan and start again with all he has been left with; as he says, coming back to your homeland is the only solution you have when things don't fall in place abroad.

#### Calling out skilled immigrants

Many countries have increased their intake of immigrants recently after falling short of skilled workers, and for Pakistani professionals, this is the best time to migrate. “Countries like Australia, Germany, Canada, and others are luring markets such as those of Pakistan and other underdeveloped countries where people have skills but are not satisfied with their existing

lifestyles and systems. People who apply for such visas get easy options to leave Pakistan,” said Amanullah.

Lately, with change and ease in the points table of several countries, many young people are eagerly applying for visas, and in the next few years, our own country might be short of educated, skilled youth to contribute to society, Amanullah added.



SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, FEBRUARY 12, 2023

## CTD 'repulses' militant attack in North Waziristan, four TTP operatives killed

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The Counter Terrorism Department in Peshawar claimed to have repulsed an attack by militants on law enforcers last night in North Waziristan's Mir Ali area, killing at least four operatives of the proscribed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

According to a CTD statement issued on Tuesday, the militants belonging to the TTP attacked a law enforcers van carrying prisoners near Mir Ali Bypass. The inmates were being transported from Miranshah to Bannu by the CTD personnel when they came under attack.

It said militants opened indiscriminate fire on the convoy of security men, prompting law enforcers to retaliate.

"Due to firing by militants, all three inmates present in the van were killed," the statement said, adding that four TTP terrorists were also shot dead in the exchange of fire while five to six others managed to flee under the cover of darkness.

It said the slain terrorists were wanted by law enforcers in a number of heinous crimes.

"The terrorists were involved in the targeted killings of security personnel. They were also involved in the killing of constable Iftikhar," the CTD said.

A clearance operation was under way in the area to look for the fleeing terrorists, the statement added.

Last week, the CTD claimed to have killed a suspected terrorist allegedly belonging to the TTP in an encounter and arrested 11 other members of banned outfits from different cities during intelligence-based operations (IBOs) across Punjab.

Pakistan has been hit by a wave of terrorism, mostly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but also in Balochistan and the Punjab town of Mianwali, which borders KP. The renewed wave of terrorism also reached as far as the peripheries of Islamabad.

January was the deadliest month since 2018, in which 134 people lost their lives — a 139 per cent spike — and 254 received injuries in at least 44 militant attacks across the country.

SOURCE: DAWN, FEBRUARY 14, 2023

## NTSOC launched for cyber security

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This initiative also presents an opportunity for IT companies to develop their cyber security capabilities and help organisations protect themselves from cyber threats, says Nasheed Malik, ICT Analyst at Topline Research.

KARACHI: Amid rising concerns over cyber security in Pakistan, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has recently launched the National Telecom Security Operations Centre (NTSOC), a centralised platform that aims to efficiently manage and mitigate cyber security incidents in the country's telecom sector.

This development also presents a significant business opportunity for cyber security firms.

The NTSOC, established under the Pakistan National Cyber security Policy 2021 and Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA 2016), aims to secure Pakistan's critical telecom data and infrastructure against cyber-attacks, according to a PTA statement released on Tuesday.

Speaking to The Express Tribune, cyber security Expert Etizaz Mohsin said, "The launch of NTSOC by the PTA is a significant step towards improving cyber security in Pakistan's IT ecosystem and society. It is expected to strengthen the protection of critical telecom data and infrastructure against cyber-attacks, enhance Pakistan's cyber security ranking and enable quick and effective incident response."

“The integration of the telecom operators’ Security Operations Centres (SOCs) and the national Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) with NTSOC is a positive development that will further enhance Pakistan’s cyber security capabilities,” he observed.

The NTSOC is the first ever sectoral SOC to be introduced in Pakistan, after the issuance of a Cyber Security Policy, as per the PTA statement. It involves three key components, Security Incident and Event Management (SIEM), Threat Intelligence, and Security Orchestration and Automated Response (SOAR) all of which have been indigenously customised to improve the country’s cyber security ranking.

The NTSOC will integrate with the telecom operators’ SOCs and the national Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT), ensuring quick and effective incident response. Six telecom operators have been integrated with NTSOC, with the rest to follow gradually. The project includes continuous enhancement in the provided solution to keep pace with the evolving cyber security threats, mentioned the statement.

“In today’s world, cyber-attacks and warfare have become increasingly common,” remarked Nasheed Malik, ICT Analyst at Topline Research, while talking to The Express Tribune.

“It has become a growing concern for national security agencies in Pakistan, who keep highlighting the need for improved cyber security measures,” said Malik.

“This issue is not only limited to the public sector – private firms are also taking cyber security seriously – given that everything is becoming digital,” he added, adding that, “As a result, the post of Chief Cyber Threat or Chief Cyber Security Officer has become a customary position in every organisation.”

“Over a year, the government issued a national cyber security policy – which was a step towards combating cyber threats. With the NTSOC the government is now aiming to centralise its efforts to combat cyber threats,” said Malik.

“Both the government and private sector will have to hire cyber security specialist companies to protect themselves from cyber-attacks,” he said, adding that, “This initiative also presents an opportunity for IT companies to develop their cyber security capabilities and help organisations protect themselves from cyber threats.”

Supernet Limited, a company recently listed on the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX), is heading towards cyber security, while System Limited also recently announced plans to explore the cyber security domain.

“The recent incident of money being stolen from a big bank’s depositors’ accounts highlights the need for better cyber security measures. This issue is not limited to Pakistan only – it is prevalent at a global level. This is a wake-up call for both the public and private sectors to take the necessary measures to improve their cyber security protocols,” emphasised Malik.



Reiterating the importance of a cyber security protocol, Malik said, “Cyber security is no longer an issue that can be ignored, given the growing number of cyber threats that organisations face. It is a matter of national security and both the government and private sector need to take proactive measures to protect their systems and data from virtual attacks. The establishment of the NTSOC is a positive step, but there is still a lot of work to be done.”

**SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, FEBRUARY 15, 2023.**

## 2 terrorists possessing 1,000 detonators arrested during SIU-CIA operation in Karachi

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Two alleged terrorists possessing 1,000 detonators were arrested from Karachi's North Nazimabad during a joint operation by the Special Investigation Unit (SIU) and the Crime Investigation Agency (CIA).

According to the statement from SIU Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Junaid Ahmed Sheikh, the two terrorists were "arrested with explosive materials" while a search was under way to find their third partner, who manage to flee.

SSP Sheikh said that 1,000 detonators were obtained from the arrested suspects while two coil detonators were also seized.

He said in the statement the two terrorists were arrested while they were transferring the explosives from one place to another within the city.

During the preliminary investigation, the suspects confessed to bringing the explosives from Peshawar to Karachi to be used in "terrorist activities", the press release said. It added the one to bring them was an absconding suspect.

The statement also revealed that a partner of the suspects was previously arrested from Punjab's Charsadda city with explosives as well, and was sentenced to eight years in jail.

A case has been registered against the suspects in SIU police station under the Explosive Substances Act, 1908 while further investigation is underway, the release added.

**SOURCE: DAWN, FEBRUARY 15, 2023**

# Afghan Taliban ‘unlikely to stop support for TTP’

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WASHINGTON: Afghanistan’s Taliban rulers are unlikely to discontinue supporting militants in Pakistan as they feel that economic troubles prevent Islamabad from launching a major operation against the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), according to a new report from a leading US think tank.

“Amid Pakistan’s economic crisis and the Taliban’s rule in Afghanistan, the Pakistani Taliban have reemerged as an increasingly potent threat,” warned the report, released in Washington on Tuesday by the US Institute of Peace (USIP).

Referring to Kabul’s recent criticism of Islamabad’s policies, the report argued that “this undiplomatic rhetoric underscores the Taliban’s determination to continue supporting the TTP, even in the face of intensified pressure from Pakistan”.

USIP argued that the Taliban’s response to being confronted about their support for the TTP “has been to level counter-accusations – which does not signal an impending shift away from that support”.

Such rhetorical signals are matched by anecdotal reports from UN officials and other observers – quoted in the USIP report – of TTP individuals moving freely and conducting business in Afghan cities.

Interlocutors with access to Kandahar report that the Taliban emir and his close advisers were “unlikely to waiver in supporting the TTP on ideological grounds,” the USIP report noted.

According to this report, another key factor shaping the Pakistani response is the country’s deteriorating economy, which is on the brink of a default. “That limits Pakistan’s military options. Pakistan can carry out raids and undertake defensive actions inside the country, but it doesn’t have the resources for a sustained high-intensity campaign,” USIP warned.

The report noted that “Pakistan has flirted with the idea of cross-border airstrikes again,” which it last conducted in April 2022 and it also faced “growing pressure for action,” but seemed reluctant to act.

The pressure came from political groups in Pakistan who were “framing the terrorism resurgence as a conspiracy by the military to block former prime minister Imran Khan’s return to power and to get American aid,” the report added.

But the report argued that economic pressures and the risk of a conflict spiral, especially amid reports of Taliban fighters joining the TTP, “may induce doubts in Pakistan about such a cross-border operation”.

The TTP’s escalating campaign of violence “is a function of its growing political and material strength – reflected in its political cohesion, expanding cadre of trained fighters, suicide bombers, weapons, and equipment,” the report added.

“The Afghan Taliban remain very supportive of the TTP and are providing the group with a permissive safe haven,” the report claimed. It noted that the TTP also had a lot of popular support in Afghanistan, “where both Taliban and non-Taliban constituencies get behind the TTP due to a fervent dislike for Pakistan”.

The USIP reported that some Taliban fighters were also joining the TTP, and some recent bombers, who carried out attacks inside Pakistan, were also Afghan.

The report also pointed out that a handful of Taliban leaders, in particular Taliban Interior Minister Siraj Haqqani, had restrained the TTP on Pakistani requests on occasion. “Yet the balance of opinion within the Taliban is strongly in favour of the TTP and its campaign. In particular, Taliban Amir Hibatullah Akhundzada agrees with the TTP that Pakistani system is un-Islamic,” the report concluded.

**SOURCE: DAWN, FEBRUARY 16, 2023**

# Taliban-TTP nexus

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IF the analysis of an American government think tank stating that the Afghan Taliban are unwilling to end their support for the banned TTP is accurate, it would put to rest the illusion harboured by some in our security establishment that a Taliban government in Kabul is good for Pakistan. If anything, the US Institute of Peace report paints an unsettling picture, which shows that not only are the Afghan rulers allowing TTP fighters to freely operate on their soil, but that they believe that Pakistan will not launch a full-blown anti-TTP operation because of its financial woes. The report observes that TTP operatives move freely in Afghanistan, while adding that “the Afghan Taliban remain very supportive of the TTP and are providing the group with a permissive safe haven”. Moreover, there appears to be support for the TTP within Afghan society beyond the Taliban due to deeply entrenched anti-Pakistan views. In fact, some of the bombers who carried out attacks inside Pakistan have been identified as Afghans. And while some within the Taliban ruling elite, such as the Haqqani faction, favour a softer line towards Pakistan, and have tried to stop the TTP from launching attacks against this country, Taliban supremo Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzada remains convinced Pakistan’s system is “un-Islamic”, much as his ideological comrades in the TTP do.

Where Pakistan’s security is concerned, there were warnings all along that the Afghan Taliban would do little to rein in the TTP, and these findings only confirm those fears. While Pakistan’s options may be limited, it needs to firmly let the Taliban rulers know that hosting and supporting a group visibly hostile to this country will have far-reaching implications. For one, Pakistan should stop defending Kabul’s rulers at international fora unless they clean up their act. Moreover, while times may indeed be tough, the state needs to make it clear that the TTP and other terrorists trying to harm Pakistan will be dealt with severely on the battlefield. Also, Pakistan should coordinate with regional states to communicate to Kabul that terrorists cannot find a safe haven on Afghan soil. Russia, China, Iran and the Central Asian states are all wary of terrorist groups finding refuge in Afghanistan, and Pakistan needs to use regional platforms to let the Taliban know that either they can neutralise the terrorists, or face further isolation.

**SOURCE: DAWN, FEBRUARY 17, 2023**

## Audacious raid

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SECURITY experts have been proved correct in their assessment that the bloodthirsty TTP juggernaut would sooner rather than later move beyond KP and start spreading havoc in the rest of the country.

Mere weeks after the devastating attack targeting the Peshawar Police Lines mosque, the terrorist group claimed responsibility for striking Karachi on Friday evening. It raided key police installations on the arterial Sharea Faisal, raising questions about the efficacy of the national counterterrorism policy – if, indeed, there is one.

As these lines were being written, the law enforcers' counter-attack had successfully ended the assault on the Karachi Police Office and its allied facilities. But the entire event brought back painful memories of violent past episodes in the metropolis where the TTP has launched murderous, brazen assaults. These include the 2011 Mehran Base raid, as well as the 2014 attack on the Karachi airport.

There has been no let-up in TTP violence. For example, on Thursday, the terrorists attacked CTD personnel in Punjab's Kalabagh area, in Mianwali district, while a few weeks earlier, members of the banned outfit had raided a police station in the same district, located close to KP. But Friday's attack in Karachi is a far more complex operation.

The militants targeted an area in the heart of the city, where several facilities of the military, police and other security agencies are located. This is a breach of unacceptable proportions, and clearly our collective security and intelligence apparatus was caught off guard, with devastating consequences.

Police and Rangers' back-up had to be called in from the entire city, while the provincial government also sought the military's help. If one terrorist raid can bring Karachi's entire security apparatus to the field, what havoc might more complex militant operations cause?

This is another wakeup call for the squabbling politicians who rule in our name, as well as the security establishment that keeps reminding us that 'all is well'. Clearly, both stakeholders must understand the true situation.

According to media reports, the federal interior minister told a TV channel he was under the 'impression' that militants did not have 'access' beyond KP and Balochistan.

His impression was obviously flawed. The terrorists have the ability, as well as the links and operational wherewithal, to strike at will, while the state's response has been largely unimpressive. This must change.

In the Karachi strike, it is likely that sleeper cells were activated, as there is no shortage of sympathisers of the TTP in the port city in the shape of cadres and fighters of 'jihadi' and sectarian groups.

It should also be remembered that over the last few decades, major Al Qaeda operatives have been apprehended from the metropolis. Whatever the facts, the state needs to act now before more such attacks take place.

**SOURCE: DAWN, FEBRUARY 18, 2023**

# Situationer: Harvest of blood

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AFZAL ALI SHIGRI | TARIQ KHOSA

THE monster has been unlea-shed. Terror has struck Karachi, yet again. Police, as the frontline institution of the state, has been targeted all over the country. The brazen attack by the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) on the Karachi Police Office has indeed caused a 'violent jolt to the system.'

The road to perdition is being paved with blood. Representing the sentiments of the police officers, we can say they are angry and resent the policy of appeasement pursued by the powerful elements of the state, especially after a Herculean effort post-2014 Peshawar APS attack, that resulted in 70 per cent reduction of incidents of terrorism in four years from 2015 to 2019.

However, we must reiterate that despite huge sacrifices, police are fully determined to combat this new wave of terrorism. What they need is the support of all the elements of national power. The present situation points to the failure of the state.

Karachi, unfortunately, was engulfed in both ethnic and sectarian violence during the 1990s. After 9/11, it became a haven for the jihadi militant outfits, including Al Qaeda. Being the commercial and industrial hub, the militant organisations thrived thro-ugh extortion and violence.

Many sleeper cells of terror networks got safely ensconced in the urban jungle. At the peak of militancy, we witnessed political will to combat terrorists through an operation launched in September 2013.

Police played the leading role, ably assisted by Intelligence Bur-eau (IB), along with the support of the civil armed forces, particularly the Rangers and the military acted as the ultimate punch to knock out the militants who were responsible for murder and mayhem.

From 61 incidents of terrorism in 2013, such atrocious acts were reduced to merely four in 2019; 373 terrorists were killed and 521 arrested in four years of sustained intelligence-based ope-r-a-tions.

Police faced the major brunt: 450 officials were killed during that period of effective state response; highest casualties of 163 police officials martyred in 2013 came down to six fatalities in 2018.

CT (counterterrorism) National Action Plan of Dec 2014 had especially tasked all the stakeholders of the state to get rid of violence and terror in Karachi. National resolve manifested through political will restored the writ of the state.



However, the return of the Taliban to Afghanistan in Aug 2021 facilitated the re-emergence of the TTP, which launched a new wave of violence against Pakistan's security forces. Against the backdrop of euphoria of the Taliban victory, the Pakistani state, spearheaded by military and intelligence leadership, endorsed by the political government, started a peace process, nudged by unrecognised but de facto Taliban regime in Kabul.

As a goodwill measure, 130 hard-core militants were set free from prisons in KP, without realising that previous 12 peace agreements had been unsuccessful. The negotiation time and space spurred the return of the militants and their families from Afghanistan in large numbers.

Protests broke out and people of KP and erstwhile Fata strongly reacted to the shenanigans of the security establishment. With the successful repatriation of the militants, negotiations faltered and broke down.

The TTP claimed or was blamed for the numerous attacks that took the lives of nearly 400 security officials, mostly police officials, soldiers and members of other LEAs during the crescendo of violence in 2022. Sadly, the Taliban regime appears to be uninterested in effectively blocking terrorist groups and taking decisive action against the TTP.

Apart from the terrorist threat posed by TTP, the increased militancy by Al Qaeda and IS-Khorasan cannot be ignored. However, another significant threat is that of the sub-nationalist militant groups (SNMGs).

They have also intensified attacks against the state and in terms of lethality have started resorting to suicide attacks, not only in Balochistan but beyond, like the female suicide bomber belonging to the BLA who blew herself up in 2022 targeting a van carrying Chinese teachers from Karachi University, killing three.

Such terrorist attacks have significantly increased since 2020 and showing sustained rising trend in 2022. Only a few days back, CTD Balochistan arrested another female terrorist with explosives meant to target a high-profile state institution.

There is a typical blame game going on in the present acrimonious political environment. Former PM and his human rights minister blame the last army chief for suggesting and supporting repatriation of TTP militants. Present PM and his HR minister blame former PM and the then spymaster for pursuing the appeasement strategy to placate the Afghan Taliban. The fact of the matter is that Afghan policy has been spearheaded by the military and intelligence establishment. Instead of indulging in point-scoring and blaming one political dispensation or the other, all eyes are on the new army chief.

He has done well to reach out and personally visited the injured police officials after both the Peshawar Police Lines blast and KPO attack. Police officers have genuinely appreciated his response and empathy.

“Pakistanis have always rejected and defeated terrorism and extremism in all its manifestations. Together, we shall prevail upon this menace for a shared prosperous future,” he said during his visit to Karachi a day after the KPO attack.

He correctly stated that “no nation can overcome such challenges with kinetic actions only as it needs mutual trust, will of the people, and synergy between all stakeholders.” He must walk the talk. Amidst political bickering and blame game, the prime minister has not been able to channelize national resolve against emerging terrorist threats by holding an all-parties moot – so much for synergy between all stakeholders.

NAP focused on kinetic measures. Fourteen military courts were established that dealt with 650 cases; awarded death penalty to 344 accused, of which 56 were executed. Military operation in erstwhile Fata was an urgent but temporary strategy by invoking emergency under Article 245 of the Constitution.

We had urged all along that capacity of the law-enforcement agencies and antiterrorism courts had to be built further and strengthened as countering terrorism is a law-enforcement domain within the criminal justice system. Military operations and kinetic approaches are essentially last-resort measures in the overall battle against militancy.

It is time now to implement revised NAP-2021. Sustained and relentless action against the terrorists is required by all the elements of national power, including the political parties.

Here are the key recommendations that need to be implemented immediately: One, Nacta must be brought under the chief executive like IB and ISI. Two, a task force on counterterrorism must be launched with its secretariat in Nacta. It should steer all CT efforts in coordination with the relevant stakeholders, including the provinces. Three, capacity of all the civilian LEAs must be strengthened. Four, the CTDs of Sindh, KP, Balochistan and Islamabad should be brought at par with the CTD Punjab. Five, antiterrorism courts should ensure speedy trials as envisaged under the amended ATA 1997.

Six, protection of judges, investigators and prosecutors must be ensured while trials must be held in high-security prisons. Seven, a specialised sub-cadre of CT specialists, crime scene experts, intelligence analysts and investigators should be created in all the provinces so that exclusive attention is paid to meet the terrorism threat.

They must be inducted from the existing LEAs as well as recruited on merit according to the expertise required. Their professional training must be given top priority.

In conclusion, let us assure the citizens and the state of Pakistan that police services are fully capable of handling the emerging threats of insecurity and militancy. They have done it in the past and have made huge sacrifices. Their morale is high. All they need is full support and resources to make a difference. They will never give up. We wish them Godspeed.

**SOURCE: DAWN, FEBRUARY 21, 2023**

# US transfers two Guantanamo Bay detainees to Pakistan

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The United States has transferred two brothers from the Guantanamo Bay U.S. detention facility in Cuba to Pakistan, bringing the total number of people held at Guantanamo down to 32, the Pentagon said.

The Guantanamo camp was established by Republican President George W. Bush in 2002 to house foreign terrorism suspects following the 2001 hijacked plane attacks on New York and the Pentagon that killed about 3,000 people.

It came to symbolise the excesses of the US “war on terror” because of harsh interrogation methods that critics have said amounted to torture.

There were 40 detainees when President Joe Biden, a Democrat, took office in 2021. Biden has said he hopes to close the facility. The federal government is barred by law from transferring Guantanamo detainees to US mainland prisons.

On Thursday, the Pentagon announced the repatriation of Abdul Rabbani and Mohammed Rabbani to Pakistan.

Both were arrested in 2002. Abdul Rabbani was an al Qaeda facilitator while Mohammed Rabbani was a financial and travel facilitator for prominent al Qaeda leaders, according to the Pentagon’s website.

“The United States appreciates the willingness of the Government of Pakistan and other partners to support ongoing US efforts focused on responsibly reducing the detainee population and ultimately closing the Guantanamo Bay facility,” the Pentagon said in a statement.

A total of 32 detainees remain, of whom 18 are eligible for transfer, the Pentagon said in its statement.

**SOURCE: DAWN, FEBRUARY 24, 2023**

## At least 4 killed, 14 injured in blast in Balochistan's Barkhan



The photo shows the Rakhni market where a blast was reported.

At least four people were killed and 14 wounded in an explosion inside the Rakhni market in Balochistan's Barkhan, police and health officials said.

Barkhan District Health Officer Dr Abdul Hameed confirmed the death toll to Dawn.com, adding that the injured persons had been moved to the Rakhni Hospital.

According to Barkhan Deputy Commissioner Abdullah Khoso, the blast occurred when an improvised explosive device (IED), planted on a motorcycle, exploded.

Khoso said the police have arrived at the site and cordoned it off. "Teams have begun collecting evidence from the site," he added.

Unverified videos making the rounds on social media show volunteers carrying bloodied victims away as a crowd gathers at the purported site of the blast. Mangled motorcycles and charred vegetables can be seen strewn about on the road.

There was no claim of responsibility as yet.

The blast comes on the heels of attacks in KP and areas bordering Afghanistan. Since the talks with the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) broke down in November last year, the militant group has intensified its attacks while insurgents in Balochistan have also stepped up their violent activities and formalised a nexus with it.

### Condemnations

Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Abdul Qudoos Bizenjo has condemned the blast and directed the authorities to take all possible steps to arrest the culprits. He has also summoned a report on the incident from the police.

“Those who shed the blood of innocent people are enemies of humanity,” the minister said.

“Terrorists are creating uncertainty to achieve their evil goals. But we won’t allow anti-state elements to succeed,” he stated, promising that the government would adopt an effective counter-terrorism strategy.

Bizenjo also directed officials to provide the best medical care to injured people and prayed for the high ranks of the deceased.

Also condemning the incident, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah called the terrorists “enemies of peace and development in Balochistan” and said they would “never succeed in their wicked aims”.

He prayed for the deceased’s high ranks and for their families’ well-being.



President Arif Alvi also condemned the blast and stressed the need to “speed up efforts for the complete elimination of terrorists”.

“Terrorists are the enemy of peace in Balochistan and progress,” he was quoted as saying. “Terrorists will never be successful in their nefarious plans.”



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condemned the incident as well and prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured, APP quoted the premier’s press release as saying.

He said a report has been summoned from the chief minister and inspector general of police. Shehbaz added that “terrorists could not escape the punishment and those shedding blood would be made an example”.

The premier has also asked for the best medical treatment to be provided to the injured.

In a statement issued by the PPP Media Cell, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari also expressed his “heartfelt condolences and solidarity” with the families of those killed in the terror attack.

“Pakistan is determined to root out those who target innocent citizens,” he said. “Terrorists have no religion or nation; they are brutal beasts in human form.”



# Pakistanis among 59 killed in Italy boat tragedy



ROME: Fifty-nine people died, including some children, when a wooden sailing boat carrying migrants crashed against rocks on the southern Italian coast, authorities said.

The vessel had set sail from Turkiye several days ago with migrants from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and several other countries, and crashed in stormy weather near Steccato di Cutro, a seaside resort on the eastern coast of Calabria.





“As of a few minutes ago, the number of confirmed victims was 59,” Crotona mayor Vincenzo Voce said, while a provincial government official, Manuela Curra, said 81 people survived, with 22 of them taken to hospital.

Curra said the vessel left Izmir in eastern Turkiye, three or four days ago, adding that survivors had said some 140 to 150 were on board. The survivors were mostly from Afghanistan, as well as a few from Pakistan and a couple from Somalia, she said, adding that identifying the nationalities of the dead was harder.

One survivor was arrested on migrant trafficking charges, the Guardia di Finanza customs police said.

His voice cracking up, Ceraso told the Sky TG24 news channel that he had seen “a spectacle that you would never want to see in your life ... a gruesome sight ... that stays with you for all your life”.

Wreckage from the wooden gulet, a Turkish sailing boat, was strewn across a large stretch of coast.

Italian President Sergio Mattarella said: “Many of these migrants came from Afghanistan and Iran, fleeing conditions of great hardship.”

Ignazio Mangione, an Italian Red Cross official, said a very few of the children believed to have been on the boat survived.

‘Illusory mirage’

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni expressed “deep sorrow” for the deaths. Blaming human traffickers, she vowed to block migrant sea departures to prevent such disasters.

In a separate statement, Italian Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi said it was essential to stop sea crossings that he said offer migrants the “illusory mirage of a better life” in Europe, enrich traffickers, and cause such tragedies.

Pope Francis, the son of Italian immigrants to Argentina and long a vocal advocate for migrants’ rights, said he was praying for everyone caught up in the shipwreck.

**SOURCE: DAWN, FEBRUARY 27, 2023**

## Two soldiers martyred in exchange of fire with terrorists in North Waziristan

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Photos of Sepoy Imran Ullah (L) and Sepoy Afzal Khan (R) who were martyred in North Waziristan.

Two Pakistan Army soldiers were martyred in the Spinwam area of North Waziristan tribal district during a gunfight with terrorists, the military's media affairs wing said.

The statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) identified the martyrs as 25-year-old Sepoy Imran Ullah from Bajaur and 21-year-old Sepoy Afzal Khan from Upper Dir.

"On 26 February, an exchange of fire took place between terrorists and security forces in the general area of Spinwam, North Waziristan district. Own troops effectively engaged the terrorists' location," the ISPR said.

"Resultantly, two terrorists were killed, while two terrorists were apprehended. Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the terrorists," it stated, adding that the killed terrorists remained actively involved in terror activities against security forces and innocent citizens.

The military's media wing said sanitisation of the area was being carried out to eliminate other terrorists in the area.

"Pakistan Army is determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve," the statement concluded.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif paid tribute to the martyrs and extended his condolences to their families.

"Our armed forces and law enforcement agencies are an iron wall in the way of the nefarious objectives of terrorists," he said.



Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari hailed the martyrs as "brave children of the motherland", adding that the nation would always remain indebted to them.



Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah regretted the incident and praised security forces for fighting terrorists with “courage and bravery”.

“The sacrifices of the martyrs will not go in vain and, God willing, the scourge of terrorism will be completely eradicated from the country soon,” he said.



The exchange of fire comes amid a surge in terrorist activities across the country, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, since the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) ended its ceasefire with the government in November.

On February 13, seven TTP militants were killed when cops repulsed an attack on a police van carrying three detained militants to Bannu from North Waziristan.

On Feb 3, the ISPR said two terrorists were killed during an exchange of fire between terrorists and security forces in the Esham area of the North Waziristan district.

**SOURCE: DAWN, FEBRUARY 27, 2023**