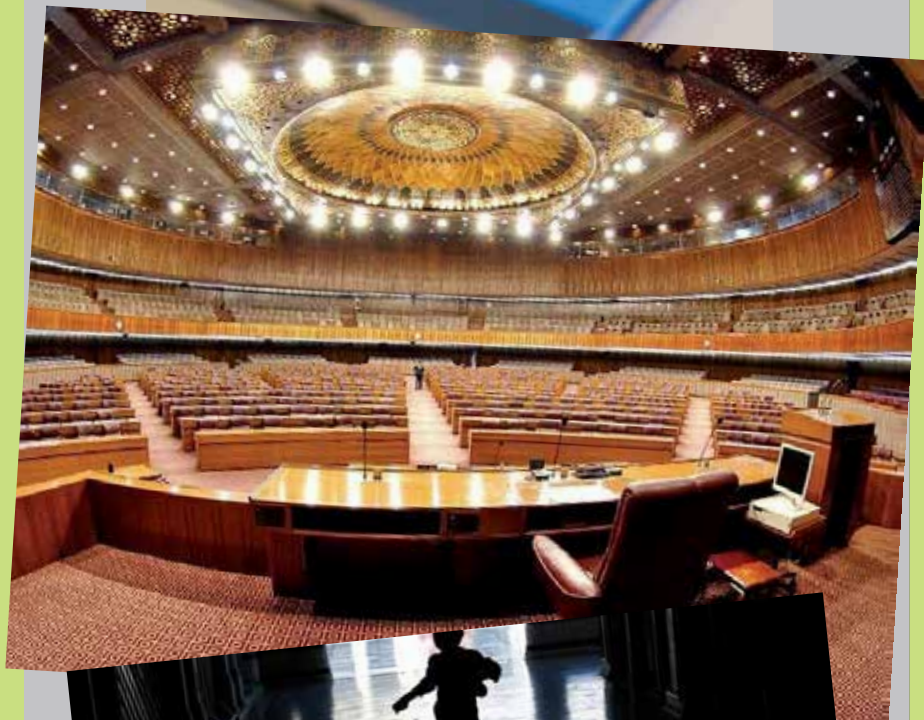


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## 2 cops escorting polio team martyred in Quetta



This image shows the area where two policemen escorting a polio vaccination team were martyred.

**Two policemen escorting a polio vaccination team were martyred when armed men opened fire on them in Quetta's Nawa Killi area, police said.**

The attack comes on the first day of a week-long campaign to administer the polio vaccination to approximately 2.6 million children under five years of age in Balochistan.

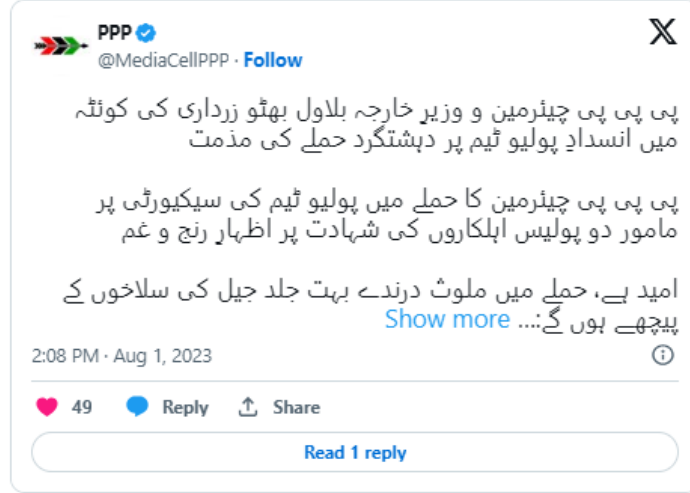
Zarghoonabad Station House Officer (SHO) Asif Marwat confirmed the casualties to Dawn.com. He identified the deceased as constable Shaukat Ali and Syed Muhammad.

The SHO said that members of the polio team did not sustain any injuries in the attack but added that the polio campaign in Nawa Killi and its surrounding areas had been suspended.

Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Abdul Qudoos Bizenjo took notice of the incident and sought a report on the attack from the concerned officials. He termed the incident a conspiracy against the healthy future of the nation's children.

“The negative propaganda against the polio campaign and the malicious intentions of the anti-state elements will be thwarted,” he said as he called for bringing the perpetrators under the law.

Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, in a statement, condemned what he called a “terrorist attack” on the polio team in Quetta. He also expressed grief and sorrow over the deaths of the two policemen.



He expressed the hope that the perpetrators of the attack would soon be behind bars. FM Bilawal said that elements involved in endangering the health of the nation’s children would be dealt with an iron fist.

“Authorities concerned should ensure foolproof security of polio teams, The people should fully cooperate with polio workers,” he said.

SOURCE: DAWN AUGUST 1, 2023



# 85 Pakistanis freed from traffickers' warehouse in Libya



Policemen patrol Libya's capital Tripoli

**At least 385 Pakistani migrants, held in human traffickers' warehouses, have been freed in a law enforcement raid near the coastal city of Tobruk, in northeastern Libya.**

The Associated Press re--ported that the Pakistani nationals were released from smugglers' warehouses in the Al Khueir area, south of Tobruk.

According to Al-Abreen, a migrants' rights group based in the Tobruk, there are at least 11 children among the freed, some less than 10 years old.

A representative for the group told Dawn that some of the rescued migrants are suffering from diseases, such as scabies, and have been provided food.

The group claimed that the majority of those recovered have been sent by authorities to a facility in Qunfudhah, near the city of Benghazi, while 45 remain in army custody.

Although there was no official word from Libyan or Pakistani governments, it is expected that these migrants will be deported.

In videos and pictures posted to Al-Abreen's Facebook page, a large group of people, ostensibly in the hundreds, can be seen sitting on the ground as people who look like volunteers and aid workers distribute food and drink. The captions indicate that the migrants had not eaten for three days and lacked access to basic necessities.

**SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 2, 2023**

## Suspected militant killed in blast on Quetta's Spinny Road



Police, citizens and rescue personnel gather on Quetta's Spinny Road after a blast.

A suspected terrorist was killed in a blast on Quetta's Spinny Road after the explosive material he was carrying detonated, according to police.

Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) police said in a statement that the explosive material probably detonated "accidentally", adding that no suicide jacket or its remains had been found at the site of the blast until late on Wednesday night.

Separately, Balochistan police said in a statement the suspected militant was carrying explosive material with the intention to commit an act of terrorism.

The statement added that CTD personnel, investigators and a bomb disposal squad had reached the site of the blast after the incident.

The CTD statement said the matter was being investigated.

Over the past few months, the law and order situation in Pakistan has worsened, with terrorist groups executing attacks with near impunity across the country.

Since the talks with the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) broke down in November, the militant group has intensified its attacks, particularly targeting the police in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan and areas bordering Afghanistan. Insurgents in Balochistan have also stepped up their violent activities and formalised a nexus with the outlawed TTP.

Last month, nine army soldiers were martyred in an attack on a military installation in Balochistan's Zhob Cantt.

According to Zhob District Commissioner (DC) Azeem Kakar, a civilian woman was also killed in the incident after being caught in the crossfire while five other civilians were left injured.

Around the same time, security forces had come under fire from militants in Balochistan's Sui during an operation in the area. During the fire exchange, three soldiers were martyred.

Seven terrorists were killed in both attacks during retaliatory action.

**SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 2, 2023**

# Human rights policy

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It is unfortunate that our human rights legislation appears more aspirational than practical. The Sindh government's progressive and inclusive laws, such as The Sindh Protection of Human Rights Act, 2011, The Sindh Protection of Communal Properties of Minorities Act, 2013, Domestic Violence (Prevention & Protection) Act, 2013, Sindh Commission on the Status of Women Act, 2015 and others, have a profound presence on paper but none in spirit; they fail to protect the people from abuse and exploitation. Hence, one can't help but view the province's human rights policy, approved by the provincial cabinet on Wednesday, as another promise destined for oblivion. The policy is in step with the times as it focuses on political, economic, civil, cultural and social rights, including civil liberties of women, children, minorities, differentlyabled people, senior citizens and transgender persons. It will be subject to review every five years to keep pace with international changes and the human rights context of the province.

But despite weighty decrees, according to the Sindh Human Rights Commission's annual report released early this year, as many as 738 human rights violations occurred in Sindh during 2021 to 2022. Regrettably, successive regimes have seen human rights as handouts to be delivered at will, and the approach is reflected in all strata and spheres of society as well as in a labyrinthine legal system. This mindset has resulted in the dearth of robust social development structures that provide awareness and implementation of legal measures. On the other end, failure to enforce the law is rooted in the ideal of ethical pluralism sans governance that prioritises rescue and well-being. Lastly, Sindh's admission of falling short on deliverance is pivotal to instituting mass regard for human rights – and set its own mindset, therefore freedoms, on the right path. It must also seek legitimate ways to thwart obstacles – including those who hinder criminalising forced conversions – to advance safety.

**SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 4, 2023**

# Govt plans e-safety body for social network users



The app will be developed by the Ministry of Information Technology.

**The government has planned to establish an e-safety authority in an attempt to protect the fundamental rights of social network users under the e-Safety Bill 2023.**

Under the bill, anyone who targets the judiciary or armed forces will face punishment.

According to the draft bill, any news or other programme will not be streamed in a manner that is likely to jeopardise any ongoing inquiry, investigation or trial.

The Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication has sought comments from stakeholders on the draft bill.

The e-safety authority will consist of a chairperson and 13 members, who will be appointed by the federal government. One member will be appointed on a full-time basis.



Five members, one each from four provinces and one from the federal capital territory, who will not be more than 65 years of age, will serve for a four-year term.

The authority's chairperson and members, other than the ex-officio members, will hold the office for four years and will be eligible for re-appointment for a similar term or as the federal government may determine.

The government may remove the chairperson or a member if he is found unable to perform the functions of his office due to mental or physical disability or has committed misconduct.

The government, based on the recommendations of the authority, will establish the e-Safety Complaints Commission in Islamabad and other places.

Each commission will receive and decide on complaints made against any aspect of the content or expression shared by the social network registration holders.

Each commission will consist of a chairperson and four members, who will be from among the citizens of eminence from the general public. At least two of the members will be women and there will be one journalist registered with the press club concerned.

The government may also establish one or more e-Safety Appellate Tribunals.

Any person operating a social network platform who violates or abets the violation of any of the provisions of the Act shall be guilty of an offense punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years, or with a fine prescribed by rules, or both.

In addition to the criminal prosecution, the authority may also initiate proceedings for the revocation of registration where the violation is serious or the offender is repeating the same.

Anyone operating a social network platform without registration and commits violation shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to five years, or with a fine prescribed by rules, or both.

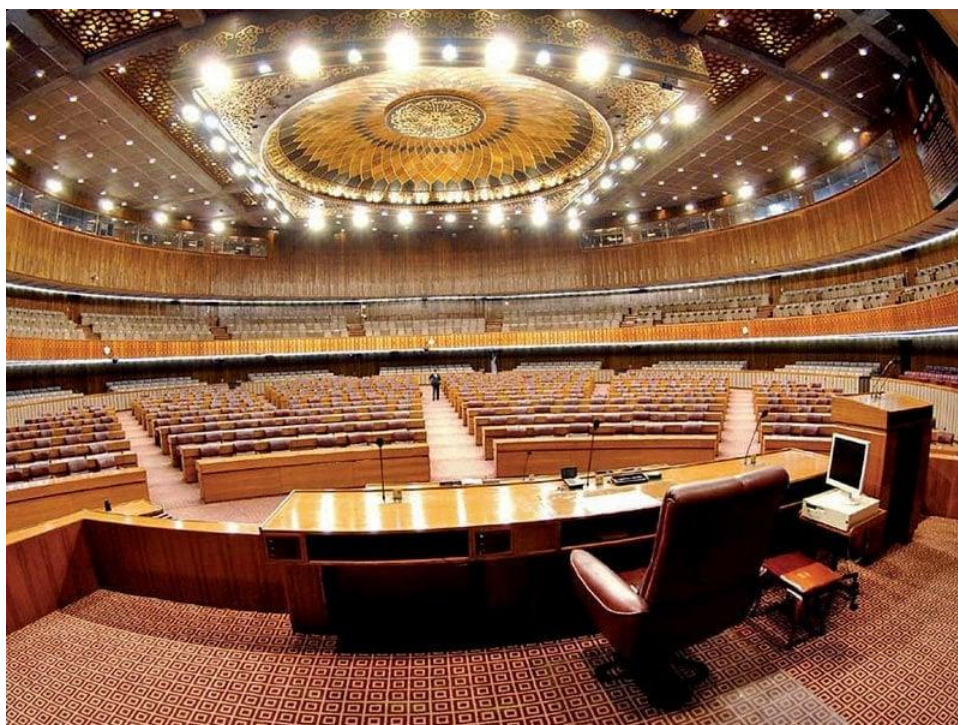
The authority may call for any information, audited financial statements, or any other relevant document required for carrying out the purposes of this Act from any person in respect of any regulated activity or any matter incidental or consequential thereto.

Any person called upon to provide such information, documents or reports shall do so within the stipulated time period, and their failure to do so shall be punishable by the imposition of fines and/or penalties as may be prescribed.

A fund called e-Safety Fund will be established, which shall be utilised by the authority to meet financial needs in connection with carrying out its functions, The fund shall consist of seed money provided by the federal government.

**SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, AUGUST 4, 2023.**

## NA passes bill to 'end FATF threat forever'



Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar said "this is a good bill and if it is enforced and properly implemented then Inshallah Pakistan never sees the FATF grey list again".

**The National Assembly on Thursday passed a bill, which, according to a minister, will help Pakistan avoid the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) grey list forever if it is enforced and properly implemented.**

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar while presenting the bill – the National Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Financing of Terrorism Authority Act, 2023 – said that the proposed law will bring all institutions related to FATF under one authority.

The state minister while recalling the time when Pakistan was put on FATF's grey list said that the proposed authority would function as a focal institution and help the state give a unified response to curb the menace of money laundering and terror financing.

"This is a good bill and if it is enforced and properly implemented then Inshallah [God willing] Pakistan never sees the FATF grey list again," Khar said on the floor of the house, adding that the proposed law will institutionalize different entities and greatly benefit Pakistan.

Khar said Pakistan faced difficulties in three different arenas namely anti-money laundering (AML), countering financing of terrorism (CFT) and targeted financial sanctions (TFL) when it was put on the FATF grey list. She, however, hoped that the newly-passed bill would effectively address these issues.

Earlier, in December 2022, it was reported that the government had planned to establish an organization at the federal level that would be similar to the US Homeland Security Department.

The establishment of the authority suggests that the government is now implementing the same by making a centralized authority in Islamabad.

The statement of objects and reasons says that the purpose of the bill is to have an overarching body to supervise and coordinate matters pertaining to AML, the CFT and the TFS.

Currently, the statement says, money laundering (ML), financing of terrorism (TF) and targeted financial sanctions are being enforced under different laws mainly via Anti-Money Laundering Act 2010, Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997 and the United Nation Security Council Act 1948.

It adds that in order to unify state response by planning, combining, coordinating and implementing the government's policy through an exhaustive strategic planning and necessary ancillary mechanism and to coordinate and collaborate at International level, there is a need for a focal institution.

Also, in order to address the challenges, a need was felt to have a sustainable and permanent authority with required mandate to operate under direct supervision of the prime minister.

The ultimate objective and aim of this authority would be to coordinate matters at the national level pertaining to the AML, the CFT and the TFS, including proposing changes to the policy, laws, rules and regulations to bring them in compliance with the international requirements and best practices and to mitigate the risk of the ML and the TF in the most effective and efficient way.

Headed by a chairman to be appointed by the premier, the authority will include secretaries of the finance, foreign affairs and interior division and the State Bank of Pakistan governor.

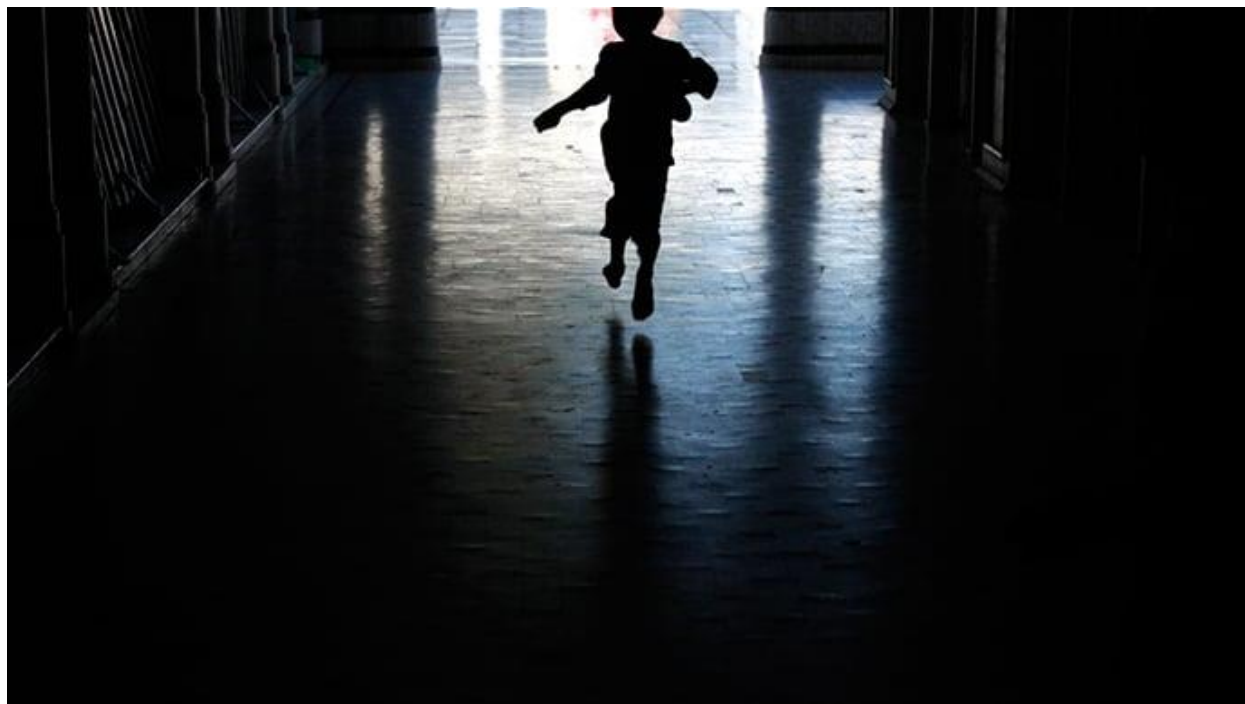
It will also include chairmen of the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, the National Accountability Bureau and Federal Board of Revenue; DGs of the anti-narcotics force and the financial monitoring unit; chief secretaries and any members recommended by the PM.

The authority shall act as focal point for the FATF and related international organizations, bodies and will carry out liaison with the competent authorities and other national, international organizations, bodies, and or entities for facilitating cooperation in areas relating to the AML, the CFT and the TFS.

**SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, AUGUST 4, 2023**

## 4,253 child molestations in 2022

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**PESHAWAR: In the year 2022, 4,253 cases of child sexual abuse were recorded in country while 365 cases were reported to police in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.**

This was revealed at a training workshop organized by Friedrich Naumann Foundation Pakistan (FNF) on the prevention of child abuse for relevant stakeholders in Peshawar.

The workshop had 30 participants from Peshawar and nearby districts, including teachers, journalists, social workers, lawyers, students, and representatives from other relevant departments.

The workshop was attended by FNF Pakistan's Head of Program, Muhammad Anwar, child rights expert Imran Takkar, and peshawar based senior journalist Shamim Shahid.

Imran Takkar briefed the participants on different aspects of child abuse and emphasized the need to build synergy for the cause. He highlighted that in 2022, 4,253 cases of child abuse cases were reported, indicating that 12 children become victims of sexual abuse every day, marking a 30 percent increase compared to 2021.

Imran Takkar added that child abuse often leads to various psychological problems, causing victims to grow up fearful and experience mental health issues.

During the event, Muhammad Anwar, FNF Pakistan's Head of Program, said that symptoms of molestation include frightening behaviors such as nightmares, depression, abnormal fear, attempts to run away, and the development of extremely inappropriate sexual behavior for the child's age.

He pointed out that 50 per cent of child abuse victims are acquainted with their abusers, and abusers can come from any class, caste, religion, or ethnic group, emphasizing that they cannot be classified into a single type or category.

The abuser can be a man, woman, child, acquaintance of the child, or a complete stranger.

Senior Journalist Shamim Shahid said that the root of all the children-related issues is the enormous increase in population and political instability in the country, due to which economic problems arise and parents send their children to work instead of education.

He said that the primary responsibility of promoting and protecting the rights of children is the state.

After the 18th amendment in the country, according to the constitution, every child should be in school from five to 16 years, yet 20 million children of school age do not go to school, of which about 10 million are in child labor.

Shamim Shahid said that laws were made for the promotion and protection of human rights in the country, but their implementation has always been a question mark.

He said that child labor is increasing day by day due to the economic situation in the country. In order to reduce this, there is an urgent need for all partners to work together.

He further said that if we want to eliminate child labor from the country, provision of free and compulsory education to all children from 5 to 16 years will be ensured.

**SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, AUGUST 7, 2023.**



# Terrorism – need for a new public policy

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DR SYED AKHTAR ALI SHAH

Located at the crossroads of civilisation and embroiled in old and new great games, Pakistan's northwestern region, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa in particular, is currently witnessing a resurgence of terrorism. From June 18, 2022 to June 18, 2023, as many as 665 terror attacks, including 15 suicide bombings, have struck the province. While most of these incidents took place in North Waziristan and DI Khan, the Peshawar district witnessed 56 – including 19 gun attacks, 25 grenades attacks, eight IED blasts, two suicide bombings and two rocket attacks. And there appears no end.

The scourge of militancy and terrorism arouses feelings of anxiety and helplessness. It has not only affected the psyche of people but also left a deep imprint on the whole socio-political life in the country. Without understanding the dynamics of terrorism and its underlying motivational drivers, identifying proper remedial measures is difficult. The whole scenario needs to be understood in its proper perspective and not in the context of an isolated event. Investigation of cases and bringing a few offenders to justice may be a success from a tactical and investigational point of view but not at the strategic policy level. The recent suicide attack in Bajaur that claimed more than 60 lives is a reference to the context. Therefore, there is a pressing need for a dispassionate and rigorous analysis of the determinants of the multidimensional phenomenon of the existing wave of terrorism.

The Bajaur attack has once again raised alarm bells, questioning national policies, indicating lack of coherence, ambiguity of direction and crisis of governance. This tragic incident, targeting a politico-religious party which follows the Deobandi school of thought, has jolted the whole nation. The incident should not be left to mere investigation at the tactical level, but there is need to find where we have gone wrong at the policy level.

Unfortunately, Pakistan's border region is experiencing serious problems due to the narrow geo-strategic interests of international players. With the misplaced notion of strategic depth, jihad was used as a tool to prop up religiosity, inimical to Pashtun nationalistic values. Increasing use of violent non-state groups since 1977 not just inside the country but outside also has severely devastated the social fabric of the border region, in particular, and the country's economy.

Seen in this perspective, the ongoing conflict in the wake of the war on terror post-9/11 assumed a new dimension due to the leading role of Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and then of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Already active in the region, they inculcated the concepts of a Universal

Caliphate and tafkeer. They declared the killing of Muslims on the pretext of siding with infidels and obstructing the reinstatement of the Caliphate as Shariah-compliant.

The wars in Iraq and Syria brought a new player to the equation – the Islamic State. The group's affiliate IS-Khorasan (Daesh), active in Afghanistan and Pakistan, are working to nurture the belief that the renaissance of Islam would happen from this region. They believe that since a favourable mindset is already prevalent in the region, it makes fresh recruitment easy.

Today, three major non-state actors constitute the threat: Al-Qeeda, TTP and IS-Khorasan. Their splinter groups and other minor groups also operate in the region. All these groups are quite active, as indicated by their terrorist acts as well as their communication and recruitment activities.

Meanwhile, the Bajaur incident was not an isolated case, but a part of a deep crisis. Seen in a broader perspective, it is in fact a crisis of governance. The state has the Constitution, the law, the policies, the framework. Still it is unable to enforce its writ. Right from Karachi to Khyber, private militias and private armed guards are operating in the country either as custodians of feudal lords or members of militant outfits. Katcha areas in Sindh and Punjab as well as in Peshawar's Mathara are cases in point. Islamabad is no exception either.

Rule of law is a major determinant in assessing good governance. Based on this factor, states are assessed as successful, fragile, failing or failed. Since the rule of law is non-existent in Pakistan, it is sadly perceived as a fragile state or failing state.

With the main factors having been determined now, there is need to review our national policy, and formulate a new one based on the notions of constitutional supremacy, democracy, stable economy, non-alignment, friendly relations with all neighbouring countries, zero tolerance against violent non-state actors, and above all the rule of law.

**SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, AUGUST 9, 2023.**

## 2 terrorists killed in intelligence-based operation in Balochistan's Kech district

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A cache of weapons recovered during the operation.

**Security forces killed two terrorists during an intelligence-based operation in the Mazaband Range area of Balochistan's Kech district, the military's media wing.**

According to a statement issued by the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), the operation was conducted on August 10-11.

"During the operation, two terrorists were sent to hell and one terrorist got injured besides recovery of a large cache of arms and ammunition," the ISPR said.

The slain terrorists, it added, were involved in targeting innocent civilians and law enforcement agencies.

"Security forces of Pakistan remain committed towards eliminating the menace of terrorism and thwart nefarious designs of the enemies of Pakistan at all costs," the statement concluded.

Last month, as many as 12 soldiers of the Pakistan Army embraced martyrdom in separate military operations in the Zhob and Sui areas of Balochistan.

This was the military's highest single-day death toll from terrorist attacks reported this year. Before this, 10 personnel were martyred in a 'fire raid' in Balochistan's Kech district in February 2022.

Pakistan has seen an uptick in terror activities, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, after the outlawed TTP ended its ceasefire with the government in November last year.

A report released by think tank Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies in July said the first half of the current year witnessed a steady and alarming rise in terror and suicide attacks, claiming the lives of 389 people across the country.

**SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 11, 2023**

# 'TTP, Daesh militants' among 21 arrested by Punjab CTD

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**The Punjab Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) said its personnel have arrested 21 alleged terrorists of banned militant outfits – who purportedly intended to carry out terrorism activities and fan sectarian tensions – during intelligence-based operations (IBOs) in several cities of the province.**

The CTD said in a statement it had conducted 135 operations in the province, during which it interrogated 135 suspects and arrested 21 alleged militants.

According to the CTD, the arrested men were from Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan, Sapiyah-i-Sahaba Pakistan, Daesh and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, among other banned militant groups.

“The arrested [suspects] planned to target important installations and religious places in acts of terrorism and fan sectarian tensions by sharing hate material on social media,” the statement said, adding that 18 first information reports (FIR) were registered against them while they had been moved to an unknown place for investigation.

The CTD said the IBOs for the arrests were conducted in Lahore, Narowal, Dera Ghazi Khan, Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Muzaffargarh, Gujranwala, Sargodha, Layyah, Bahawalpur, Attock, and Sahiwal. It added that 5,118 grams of explosives, two hand grenades, as many improvised explosive devices, 30 detonators, 77.3-foot-long safety fuse wires, 6.3 feet of prima chords, a 30 bore pistol, a 9mm pistol along with 13 bullets, 13 books containing literature of banned militant groups, three magazines, 82 pamphlets, 27 flags, a receipt book and cash worth Rs113,740 were seized from the arrested men.

Separately, the statement said, the Punjab CTD conducted 700 combing operations during the past week with the assistance of police and security institutions. During these operations, 29,829 people were checked, 49 suspects were arrested, 32 FIRs were registered and 21 people were recovered, it added.

In July, the Punjab CTD conducted IBOs in various parts of the province resulting in the arrest of 17 militants associated with banned militant organisations.

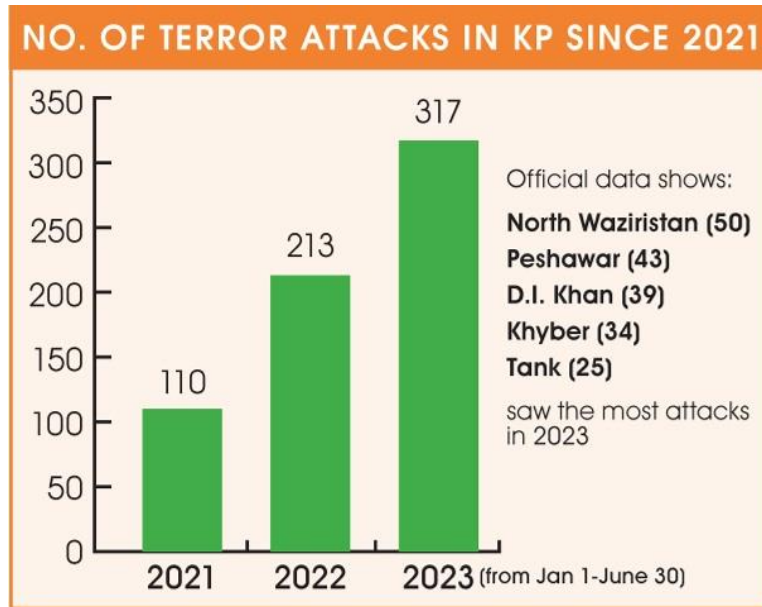
According to a CTD spokesperson, 132 IBOs were carried out in Punjab, specifically targeting expected terrorism activities by defunct organisations, particularly against Chinese nationals and worship places during Muharram.

SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 12, 2023



# Situationer: Can Kabul 'edict' ease anti-TTP pressure from Pakistan?

ISMAIL KHAN



On July 25, a couple of weeks before Qari Ansaar was to tie the knot, the 20-something decided to take a different journey though the rugged Shalman valley – a few kilometers northeast of the Torkham border crossing – to enter Pakistan.

Holed up in a mosque in Khyber district's Jamrud area, he blew himself up, bringing down the mosque and killing a police officer.

The interrogation of a suspect picked up from the spot yielded not just the identity of the bomber, but also links to the network that operated from across the border in Afghanistan.

Such attacks have heightened tensions between Kabul and Islamabad, drawing a sharp rebuke from the top brass, which received an uncharacteristically terse response from the Afghan leadership.

Now, an edict from the Taliban's supreme leader has raised hopes for a solution to the longstanding issue that has become a major spoiler in the relationship between the two neighbours.

### **Brass perturbed**

The Khyber bombing came on the heels of a series of militant attacks in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In unusually strong comments in the wake of the attacks, army chief Gen Asim Munir slammed the Afghan Taliban for “the safe haven and liberty of action available to TTP in Afghanistan”. Three days later, the 258th Corps Commanders’ Conference at GHQ “noted” as major reasons impacting the security of Pakistan “the sanctuaries and liberty of action available to terrorists of proscribed TTP and other groups of that ilk in a neighbouring country and availability of latest weapons to terrorists. “

Then, last week, speaking at a jirga of tribal notables in Peshawar, Gen Asim expressed his concerns yet again to remind the Afghan Taliban of their commitments in Doha Agreement.

Evidently, to borrow a few words from the famous rem-arks of former spymaster at Kabul’s five start hotel, everything is not “okay”, between the two neighbours.

The banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and its leadership’s presence in Afghanistan presents the most challenging and singular biggest irritant between the two countries leading to public sparing in recent days.

### **And there is a reason**

The security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has gone from bad to worse since the Taliban takeover of Kabul in August 2021. Militant attacks in KP recorded a 93.6 per cent spike from January to June 2021 and 2022, according to official statistics seen by Dawn.

Militant attacks in the province saw a further increase of 48.8pc in the two years since the Afghan Taliban returned to power. Comparing the percentage increase between the two years shows a whopping 188.2 percent increase in attacks.

Peshawar alone saw a 290.9 percent increase in attacks between Jan to June 2021 and the corresponding period in 2023, while KP’s southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa – including North and South Waziristan continue to bear the brunt of militant attacks, while violence in the Khyber and Bajaur tribal districts has also registered a considerable spike.

Armed with sophisticated night vision and thermal gadgets and sniper weapons, the TTP has also escalated night attacks on outlying and isolated police stations in the districts including Peshawar, from just ten in Jan-June 2021 to 40 in the corresponding period in 2023, killing 29 policemen compared with just seven before the return of the Afghan Taliban.

### **Afghan reaction**

In a rejoinder to statements from Pakistan, the spokesman for the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan “strongly” rejected the allegations, denying that his country’s soil was being used against any country in the region.

“The IEA once again reiterates its principled position that the territory of Afghanistan will not be used against the security of any country, however, it does not mean that Afghanistan is responsible for the security failure of any country in the region,” Zabihullah Mujahid said in a rather terse statement last week.

“It is not our responsibility to prevent and control attacks inside the territory of Pakistan,” he said.

He recalled that Kabul had shared information with Pakistan and other countries that militants from the so-called Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) would target clerics and seminaries, but no action was taken.

He claimed that the Taliban’s General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) had killed 18 Pakistani members of IS-K and captured several others.

“All the documents and evidence are with us.”

But instead of blaming Pakistan, the ‘IEA’, he said, strengthened its own security. Instead of blaming Afghanistan, he said, it was Pakistan’s responsibility to find a solution on its own.

### **Backchannel efforts**

Despite the public sparring, the countries have been engaged in quiet diplomacy, away-from-the-public eye, to find a solution to the TTP problem.

Officials familiar with the talks say the Afghan side had offered to relocate the TTP away from the border region and had sought ‘assistance’ from Pakistan to do so, but little or no headway was made as no concrete proposal was brought to the table.

While Pakistan acknowledges the Islamic Emirate’s “TTP predicament” owing to their mutual and long-standing ideological and tribal affinities, there is also growing unease and concern in Islamabad over the escalation in attacks and Kabul’s inability or reluctance to rein in their Pakistani brothers in arms.

While there are several proposals on the table over how to sway the Afghan Taliban to take Pakistan’s concerns more seriously, officials say Islamabad would need to “manage” its relations with its western neighbor. “It is a long haul.”

### **Religious decree**

Recently, the Afghan Taliban revealed a little-known decree by their spiritual leader Mullah Hibatullah, barring Afghans from participating in militant activities across the border.

This was lent credence by their Defence Minister Yaqoob Mujahid, who told a gathering that “obedience and compliance of the emir’s order was obligatory and binding” and that anyone going abroad to wage holy war or jihad without the emir’s permission, would be indulging in an act of war and terrorism.”

The IEA's Council of Religious Decrees following this up with a ruling that barred mujahideen from participating in war without the explicit approval of the emir.

Many in Pakistan, including the Jamaat-i-Islami leader Sirajul Haq, hailed the decree, even though some analysts were quick to point out that the edict was being taken out of context and that it pertained to Afghan mujahideen only.

The 27-page document in Pashto however, doesn't draw any national distinction.

It refers to 'mujahideen' at large and points out the three conditions that could lead to declaration of 'jihad' which could only be undertaken on the orders of the emir.

Officials say senior Afghan Taliban figures have been making efforts to spread the word around and enforce the edict as the final word of their emir.

The outlawed TTP has so far not formally commented on the edict, but officials say they were aware of some arrests of Afghan Taliban by the GDI who were motivating others to join the so-called 'jihad' in Pakistan.

While officials say the edict offers a glimmer of hope, its impact would only become clear in the weeks to come.

**SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 15, 2023**

## 2 terrorists killed in intelligence-based operation in North Waziristan's Razmak

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**Two terrorists were killed by security forces in an intelligence-based operation in the Ramzak area of North Waziristan district, the military's media wing said.**

According to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the operation was conducted on the reported presence of terrorists on the night of August 14/15.

While carrying out the operation, security forces surrounded the terrorists' location and after an intense exchange of fire, "two terrorists were sent to hell", the ISPR said.

Weapons and ammunition were recovered from the slain terrorists, the statement said, adding that they "remained actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces as well as extortion and target killing of innocent citizens".

Sanitisation of the area was being carried out to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area, it said. "Locals of the area appreciated the operation and expressed their full support to eliminate the menace of terrorism," said the army's media affairs wing.

The security operation comes as Pakistan faces an uptick in terror activities, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, after the outlawed TTP ended its ceasefire with the government in November last year.

On August 12, two people were killed in what police described were targeted attacks in North Waziristan. On August 8, two policemen were among four people killed in separate attacks in North Waziristan and Peshawar. Last month, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police said 665 militant attacks, including 15 suicide bombings, were reported in the province between June 18, 2022, and June 18, 2023.

A report released in July by think tank Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies said the first half of the current year witnessed a steady and alarming rise in terror and suicide attacks, claiming the lives of 389 people across the country.

In a press conference in June, Inter-Services Public Relations Director General Maj Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry said that the security forces conducted 13,619 intelligence operations this year in which 1,172 terrorists were killed or arrested.

**SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 16, 2023**



## A timeline of attacks on religious minorities over the last 12 months

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On Wednesday, August 16, a mob stormed and vandalised five churches, several homes of Christian families and even a cemetery in Faisalabad's Jaranwala district.

The violence erupted after some locals alleged that several desecrated pages of the Holy Quran had been found near a house at Cinema Chowk in Jaranwala, where two Christian brothers resided. Soon after, members of the Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) took the matter into their own hands, inviting people to reach the site of the incident to take action.

Thousands of men gathered, burning down the accused brothers' home as well as several places of worship in Christian-majority communities. Fortunately, no lives were lost, but hundreds had to evacuate and many reportedly spent the night in the fields, afraid to go back home. Section 144 has since been imposed in Faisalabad and the Punjab Rangers have been called in to maintain peace.

There have been condemnations from various quarters, including leading Islamic scholars, and authorities have promised to bring the perpetrators to book.

But we have been here before. Over the last few decades, we have seen a sharp spike in the incidence of faith-based violence, where Pakistan's minority communities have borne the brunt of mob brutality, bomb attacks, arsons, lynchings and other forms of violence.

Here, we present a timeline of faith-based acts of violence and incidents of persecution targeting religious minorities in the past year alone. Needless to say, this list is not exhaustive and only relies on the incidents that made their way to the mainstream media.



Religious

minorities come together to march against persecution in Pakistan at the first Minorities Rights March in Karachi

## August

**August 12:** Naseer Ahmad, a 62-year-old Ahmadi man was repeatedly stabbed and killed on the spot in Rabwah over his refusal to chant slogans in praise of a far-right Islamic party while waiting at a bus stop for his Friday ritual of paying respects at a graveyard.

**August 21:** Ashok Kumar, a Hindu sanitation worker, was taken into custody on charges of blasphemy in Hyderabad on Aug 21 for allegedly desecrating the Holy Quran. A formal complaint was registered against him under Section 295-B of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC).

Following the allegation, a mob attempted to forcibly enter Kumar's apartment complex to capture him. The police issued 200 arrest warrants and arrested 42 suspects for involvement in the attack.

Hyderabad SSP Amjad Sheikh claimed that the mob wanted to burn the flats of the Hindu families living in the complex. He added: "Unruly mobs tried to attack temples at four places but police foiled their attempts. We had anticipated such attacks would follow and, therefore, deployed police there".

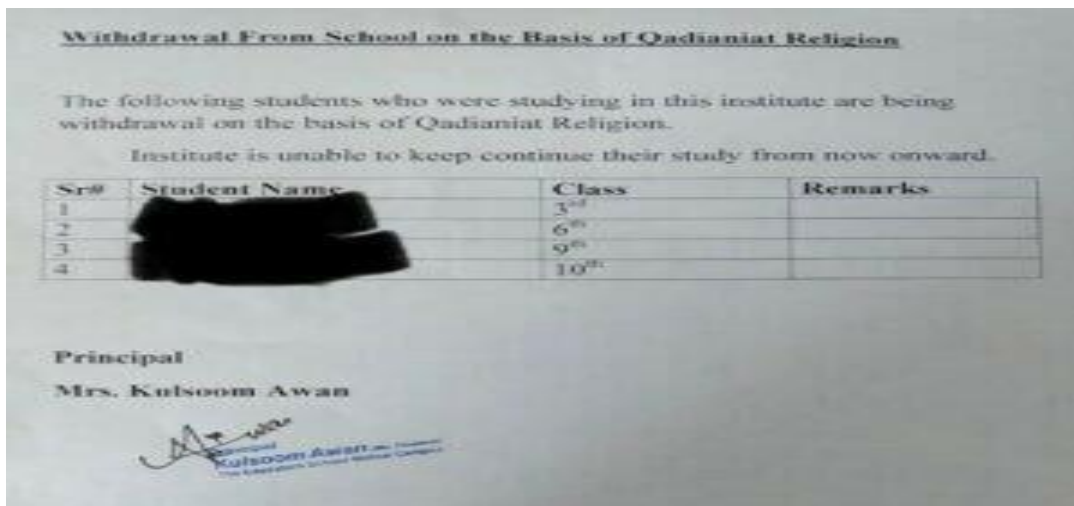


Police use tear gas to disperse a crowd following an alleged incident of Quran desecration in Hyderabad

## September

**September 23:** A school expelled four Ahmadi students based on their faith in Punjab's Attock district.

One of the students had been facing persistent harassment from a classmate. The decision to expel these students was prompted by parents who contacted the school principal, Kulsoom Awan. Tahir Khan, a relative of the students presented a document from the school that explicitly stated: "The following students who were studying in this institute are being withdrawal (sic) on the basis of Qadianiat Religion".



The document presented by Khan – The Friday Times



## October

**October 9:** In a video circulating on social media, TLP cleric Muhammad Naeem Chattha Qadri urged followers to “chant loud enough to cause the miscarriage of pregnant Ahmadi women. Such a blasphemer should not be born, and those that are, we [will not] leave them alive”.

**October 12:** Chanda Mehraj, a young Hindu girl, was abducted in Hyderabad. She was abducted while heading back home from the factory where she was employed.

She was later recovered from Gulshan-e-Hadeed and insisted that she was 19 years old and had married out of her own will. Pakistan Darawar Ittehad chairman Faqira Sheva Kachhi claimed that the medical examination established her age as 16 years but the court remanded her custody to Daraul Aman, where her parents were not allowed to meet her.

## 2023

### January

**January 10:** An Ahmadi historical place of worship, located in Moti Bazar, Wazirabad, established in 1905, was desecrated by the district police.



Ahmadi place of worship in Wazirabad desecrated by police

Irfan Iliyas Butt, a local representative of the TLP, lodged a formal complaint with the Assistant Commissioner of Wazirabad, alleging that the Ahmadi community had constructed a room that closely resembled a nearby mosque with minarets. He sought action under sections 298-B and 298-C of the PPC.

## February

**February 2:** An Ahmadi place of worship in Karachi was vandalised. The incident took place in the jurisdiction of Preedy police station when unidentified men, chanting slogans against the community, vandalised the minarets of the worship place. A video of the incident that circulated widely on social media, showed policemen deployed outside the site, failing to keep the mob away.

**February 3:** In Noor Nagar village of District Umerkot in Sindh, several people entered an Ahmadi place of worship by scaling the outer wall and setting fire to the furniture after dousing it with petrol.

In another attack on the same day, the minarets of another Baitul Zikr in Mirpurkhas were dismantled.

**February 11:** A mob stormed a police station in Nankana Sahib, Punjab, where a man accused of desecrating the Holy Quran was being held. The mob vandalised the building and lynched the accused.





Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif ordered a prompt investigation of the incident.

## April

**15 April:** A Chinese national, who was working as the head of heavy transport at a major hydro-power project in Mansehra, was taken into custody after being accused of insulting the Holy Prophet.

According to locals, the man had complained to workers at the dam that “precious time” was being lost due to prayer breaks and urged them to speed up their pace.

This enraged some of the workers and they fanned out to nearby villages, whipping up emotions. A large frenzied crowd then made its way towards Kamila Bazaar and blocked the Karakoram Highway (KKH), threatening to storm the Dasu Hydropower Project (DHP) site if the Chinese man was not arrested.

“We have arrested the foreigner suspect under blasphemy and terrorism charges and airlifted him from here to present him before the anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Abbottabad,” Mohammad Khalid, the district police officer (DPO) in Upper Kohistan, told reporters.

**April 24:** Forty-six-year-old Mussarat Bibi, a Christian woman, and Muhammad Sarmad, a Muslim man, were accused of burning pages of the Holy Quran while cleaning the storeroom of the Government Girls Higher Secondary School in Arifwala tehsil of Pakpattan District, Punjab.

The allegations were levelled by Kashif Nadeem, a resident of the town.

Both workers had been told to clean the storeroom which was filled with paper and other scrapped items. The complainant only named the Christian woman. However, the investigation revealed Sarmad to also be involved. Both had not burned the pages intentionally as they were illiterate. The police arrested them to avoid unrest by protesters.

The duo was set free less than a month after the arrest.

## May

**May 18:** Two Christian teenagers Simon Nadeem, 12, and Adil Baber, 17, were booked under Section 295-C of the PPC. Both boys were arrested after a complaint was made against them by police constable Zahid Sohail, accusing them of disrespecting the Holy Prophet.

Babar’s father informed the media that both boys were in conversation on the street when Sohail picked a fight with them and alleged that they had committed blasphemy. “When elders of the neighbourhood asked Sohail to substantiate his accusation with evidence, he failed to satisfy them and left,” said Babar’s father.

Race Course police later raided the locality and arrested both the boys.

## June

**June 10:** A 15-year-old Hindu girl was abducted from her home in Benazirabad district, Sindh, and reportedly forced to convert and marry a Muslim. The victim was kidnapped at gunpoint by her tutor and his aides in front of her mother. Kumari’s father filed a police report, alleging that nine armed men kidnapped his daughter, a student of class-VIII, from his home and also took away Rs100,000 cash and gold jewellery. The Sindh police recovered Kumari by taking immediate action and presented her in court where she recorded her statement and declared that she wanted to go with her family, following which custody was granted to the family.

## July

**July 3:** Punjab Police registered five FIRs against members of the Ahmadi community for slaughtering or attempting to slaughter sacrificial animals on Eidul Azha. The FIRs under section 298-C of PPC were registered in Lahore, Faisalabad, Nankana Sahib, and Gojra.

In addition to these FIRs, police officials in some other towns and districts of Punjab barred Ahmadi from offering sacrifice. In a viral social media video, Faisalabad police raided the house of an Ahmadi individual a day before Eid and “recovered” three goats.

The DPO Hafizabad issued an official order, directing all Station House Officers to meet members of the Ahmadi community and make them take an oath to not perform animal sacrifice on Eid.

The action came despite a 2022 judgement of the Supreme Court, ruling that obstructing non-Muslims from practicing their religion within the confines of their place of worship was against the Constitution.

**July 5:** The construction of an Ahmadi place of worship was halted and the building was sealed by the Sanghar police at the insistence of a mob.

The construction of the house of an Ahmadi leader and the Baitul Zikr had sparked outrage among locals as the architecture of the Baitul Zikr allegedly included a minaret.

**July 8:** Sargodha Police arrested a 35-year-old Christian man after a case was filed against him under Sections 295-A and 298 of the PPC.

The charges were brought forward by Muhammad Awais, a local resident, who alleged that Zaki had shared a blasphemous post on Facebook. Despite receiving support from the Imam of the village mosque and other Muslims from the neighbourhood, who confirmed that Zaki’s post did not disrespect any religion, he was taken into custody.

Zaki’s brother explained that the post was written by a Muslim individual criticising those involved in food adulteration. The family believes that the case against Zaki stems from a long-standing land dispute with individuals who continue to harbour grudges, despite attempts at reconciliation through village elders.

**July 16:** A gang of dacoits attacked a place of worship – reportedly with rocket launchers – belonging to members of the Hindu community in Sindh’s Kashmore. The assailants also attacked adjoining homes belonging to the community in the jurisdiction of Ghouspur police station.

They fired indiscriminately, prompting a police unit led by Kashmore-Kandhkot SSP Irfan Sammo to reach the scene. The police official said that the dacoits fired rocket launchers at the place of worship, which was closed during the attack.

**July 25:** An Ahmadi place of worship was vandalised in Karachi’s Drigh Road area. Korangi Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Tariq Nawaz said that around four people damaged the minarets.



## August

**August 16:** Mobs stormed and vandalised five different churches, many homes of Christian families and even a cemetery in Faisalabad's Jaranwala district following blasphemy allegations.

**SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 18, 2023**

# Who set fire to Jaranwala?

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UMAIR JAVED

**INCIDENTS of anti-minority mob violence under the pretext of blasphemy allegations have risen steadily since the mid-2000s. As per the usual, formulaic response, last week's incident in Jaranwala was followed by a range of condemnations from the civil and military leadership and from the mainstream, high-profile clerics of all denominations.**

The specificity with which places of worship were targeted by a large crowd is evidence of both the scale of the rot within society and the high level of local organisation required to make it possible. TLP, other Barelvi extremists, and their backers have much to answer for.

A preliminary analysis of the Jaranwala tragedy shows that anti-minority mob violence has two aspects. The first of these is the law-and-order aspect, which is what state officials tend to focus on. The assumption is that in any society there will be instances where violence can become likely.

However, local authorities should be able to take administrative steps required to defuse any potential situation, such as a blasphemy allegation, that may result in violence. If law-and-order administration is effective and far-sighted enough, such an intervention would help mitigate the risk of a full-blown riot. In the Jaranwala case, it was not.

Failing to resolve a situation prior to its escalation, the law-and-order aspect of the response would then involve managing a mob to limit its ability to carry out violence. Whether this is through riot control, detention, or other use of force, is immaterial. The aim should be to prevent any loss of life and property of a community at risk.

In the Jaranwala case, this too did not happen. In fact, if video evidence is anything to go by, local law enforcement remained passive, while administrators attempted to negotiate with the extremists from a position of weakness.

The third stage, having failed at the first two, involves punitive consequences for those involved in the violence. This would mean strong punishments that are sufficient to act as a deterrent. The idea being that while one unfortunate incident has happened, the consequences would be enough to prevent another one from taking place.

Worth pointing out that there were zero convictions from the 2013 Joseph Colony incident so there is no deterrence to speak of. A hundred houses were burnt and 115 accused persons were acquitted. It seems the houses set themselves on fire.

Beyond the law-and-order aspect, the second aspect of mob violence is social and political. Mobs are not instant creations. The ideas that rile them up do not appear out of nowhere. The methods they use for violence are not spontaneously learned. The resources they draw on do not magically descend from heaven (or, as would be more appropriate, ascend from hell). All of these things have definitive roots in society.

The sociopolitical aspect of violent incidents such as the one in Jaranwala is far harder to tackle because it is so wide-ranging. A toxic mix of extremist clerics, pandering politicians, conniving generals, status-seeking businessmen, and honour-seeking young men all feeds into it.

Over the past decade and a half, Pakistani society has witnessed the Barelvi far-right gain recognition, prestige, and massive followership by weaponising the issue of blasphemy and respect for the Prophet (PBUH).

Drawing on global incidents, they have domesticated the idea of a threat to Islam in a country that is 95 per cent Muslim. Incidents like Jaranwala happen because of the takeover of mosques, the discrediting of mainstream clerics, and the use of grassroots organising and digital outreach.

But they also happen because generals are happy to co-opt these movements for political ends. They happen, in part, because a braying mob paid a few thousand rupees each is useful to cut down a political government to size. And because a few thousand votes are useful to achieve the desired election result.

They happen because a politician who gets up and says he would cut off the head of an alleged blasphemer ends up validating vigilante violence as a source of prestige.

A politician who says he will not forgive others for endangering respect for the Prophet (PBUH) by attempting to make a procedural change in some legal document is also part of the problem.

A politician who makes unfathomable changes to marriage documents in a bid to publicise his pious credentials has also contributed to the issue. And an assembly that attempts to pass legislation widening the ambit of blasphemy and endangering an entire sect is adding explosive fuel to an already burning fire.

There are other contributions at play here as well. There is the local bureaucrat who doesn't want to ruffle any feathers. There's a businessman who wants to earn a bit of recognition in the community, so ends up sponsoring a few religious gatherings and donates to a local TLP chapter.

Maybe he does it under pressure, maybe he believes in what's being preached, or maybe he's just in it for the name on the banner or the plaque outside the mosque. The intentions are immaterial because the outcome is the same.

And then there is the actual mob itself. Young men, with little prospects of upward social and material mobility. Religious rhetoric provides them with a sense of community and of being a part of something bigger. Indoctrinated with notions of honour and masculinity that can only be



validated by taking revenge from some vulnerable minority over an imagined crime they probably didn't even commit.

Even in a state of heightened pessimism, one could see the possibility of a low-capacity state like Pakistan fixing the law-and-order aspect of mob violence to some degree. Addressing the toxic social and political aspect, however, seems far more difficult.

**SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 21, 2023**

## 8 Ahmadis arrested in Lahore's Badami Bagh area

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**The Lahore investigation police arrested eight members of the Ahmadi community for alleged preaching of their beliefs in the Badami Bagh area.**

Police acted after a violent mob, believed to be of the members of the Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), allegedly attacked a factory, owned by an Ahmadi man. There were reports that the attackers held some members of the Ahmadi community hostage, damaged the furniture and some parts of the factory. The situation turned ugly after the attackers reportedly thrashed the Ahmadis and one of them called police for help.

However, police denied the attack by the TLP men, claiming that the members of the Ahmadi community were preaching their religion, which was not allowed under the law.

However, according to some conflicting reports, the owner of the factory and his son were booked by the Badami Bagh police under Section 298-C of the Pakistan Penal Code for preaching in the area while posing as Muslims.

The first information report (FIR) was registered on July 31, nominating the factory owner and his son who closed down their business (factory) and went underground.

The reports stated that some members of the Ahmadi community revisited the factory to take back some leftover luggage when the mob of the TLP men attacked them.

Police arrived and took eight Ahmadis into custody from the spot and shifted them to the undisclosed location, the sources said, adding that a delegation of the community later met the police high-ups and complained to them about the local police's excessive action.

A video clip of the police action also went viral on social media, showing the policemen taking some Ahmadis into custody in a van and several charged people raising slogans against the community.

Inspector General of Police Dr Usman Anwar contradicted the social media reports, saying the TLP was not involved in the matter and it was raised by some local residents.

Quoting the official version of the Lahore police, he said all the arrests came following the FIR lodged against the Ahmadis.

"The factory was not stormed by the TLP workers," he said and added that there was a facebook post regarding the son of the factory owner who used to preach Ahmadi faith.

On query by the locals, the IGP said, the owner closed down his factory and fled along with his son to avoid arrest.

The Badami Bagh police lodged a case against them on the complaint of a local man.

Some two days back, Dr Anwar said, six Ahmadis were nominated in the supplementary statement by the Lahore investigation wing and were shifted to the South Cantt Police Station to save them from the wrath of the religious people.

The video clip that went viral on social media was of the later incident, he said, adding that no one got injured and the factory and other valuables were not damaged.

**SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 21, 2023**

## Four terrorists killed, 6 soldiers martyred in an exchange of fire in South Waziristan

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**Four terrorists were killed and six soldiers embraced martyrdom in an exchange of fire in South Waziristan district, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement.**

“On 22 August 2023, [a] fire exchange took place between own troops and terrorists in general area Asman Manza, South Waziristan District,” the ISPR said. According to the military’s media wing, the armed forces effectively engaged with the terrorists’ location and consequently, “four terrorists were sent to hell, while two terrorists were injured”.

ISPR confirmed that “six brave soldiers having fought gallantly, embraced martyrdom after an intense exchange of fire”. “Sanitisation of the area is being carried out to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area,” the ISPR continued.

The ISPR said that the Pakistani armed forces are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism, adding that “such sacrifice of our brave soldiers further strengthen[s] our resolve”.

The security operation comes as Pakistan faces an uptick in terror activities, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, after the outlawed TTP ended its ceasefire with the government in November last year. The armed forces killed two terrorists on August 19 during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in the Bara area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s Khyber district, ISPR said last week. On August 12, two people were killed in what police described were targeted attacks in North Waziristan. On August 8, two policemen were among four people killed in separate attacks in North Waziristan and Peshawar.

Last month, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police said 665 militant attacks, including 15 suicide bombings, were reported in the province between June 18, 2022, and June 18, 2023.

A report released in July by the think tank Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies said the first half of the current year witnessed a steady and alarming rise in terror and suicide attacks, claiming the lives of 389 people across the country.

In a press conference in June, Inter-Services Public Relations Director General Maj Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry said that the security forces conducted 13,619 intelligence operations this year in which 1,172 terrorists were killed or arrested.

**SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 22, 2023**

## ‘Gender crime cell at NPB to be upgraded as policing unit’



Supreme Court Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah poses for a photograph with other participants of the conference in Islamabad.

**ISLAMABAD: The Gender Crime Cell established by the federal government at the National Police Bureau (NPB) will be upgraded to a proper Gender Responsive Policing Unit with more policewomen, more recruitments, training and enhanced protection for victims of violence.**

This was stated by NPB Director Ehsan Sadiq at a conference organised by UN Women and the Legal Aid and Justice Authority on “Gender based violence: from legislation to implementation.”

He added, “There have been some structural changes in the police stations. We now have separate divisions, sections for dealing with GBV and an online complaint system.” He also highlighted the significance of forensic evidence in getting convictions in cases of gender-based violence (GBV).

The event brought together service providers at the national level for exchanging views, best practices and expertise from their respective work areas and amplify the ownership and commitment of government stakeholders. Prominent experts, practitioners and policymakers

from a range of fields, including law enforcement, judiciary, social services, health and civil society, shared their perspectives on effective responsiveness to GBV.

Sharmeela Rassoool, Country Representative of UN Women, said, “Ending gender-based violence requires a united national effort, where every individual becomes a voice against silence. Let us join hands and work together tirelessly until every corner of our nation is free from the shadows of GBV. The National Conference of Service Providers serves as a pivotal endeavour in fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange on a national scale, contributing to the broader international mission to eradicate GBV.”

She added, “The formal justice system cannot or rarely delivers justice to survivors of GBV – it is not geared to do so – because the formal justice system treats the survivor as a mere witness in the justice chain. Nobody has asked her or him what he or she wants. My colleague led a survivors’ journey mapping and they told us we don’t want to repeat our story again and again in a courtroom, we want accountability from the perpetrator, we want to be heard and we want to be believed not victim-blamed.”

She shared recent positive developments as Pakistan has moved away from being gender insensitive to being somewhat gender sensitive in their formal system. The two-finger test is banned as of 2021, the admissibility of the character of the victim is no longer accepted in courts, and on-camera proceedings are taking place so that the survivor can talk about the incident respectfully.

Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Supreme Court Justice, was the chief guest at the conference.

He said, “What we require more than legislation is realisation of the problem. The issue is the mind-set and I see that every day in the cases that come to the court, I see a closed and stereotyped mind-set; I see intolerance and judgemental views.”

Speaking of characteristics leading to GBV like control and power dynamics, normalisation and trivialisation of violence, rigid gender norms and stereotypes, economic inequality which can trap individuals in abusive relationships, cultural and religious beliefs, and lack of education, he said, “Addressing GBV requires comprehensive, multi-faceted approaches, from legal reforms and policies to societal shifts in attitudes and behaviours. Prevention and education are key to my mind as is support and resource for survivors.”

Ayesha Raza Farooq, Chairperson Special Committee on Anti-Rape Law, shared structures established under the Anti-Rape Law, and their effective functioning.

She said, “We have seen a steady increase in gender-based crime in the country. According to a study by the Human Rights Watch, a woman is raped every two hours in Pakistan and that translates to 12 women raped across the country on a daily basis – and these are only the reported cases. Our patriarchal norms, the social stigma and fear of retributive violence, prevent women from coming forward and reporting gender-based violence.”



She added, “Our commitment to enhancing GBV laws is intrinsically linked to improving mechanisms for supporting survivors. This conference acts as a cornerstone in aligning our legal framework with the specific needs of survivors, driving a survivor-centric approach.”

Supreme Court Justice Ayesha Malik said, “To strength our society, we must extend our care to our most vulnerable members. The National Conference of Service Providers has illuminated a path towards progress, one where survivors are empowered, laws are fortified, and justice prevails. Our collective efforts are the beacon of hope that guides us toward a safer, more equitable future.”

**PUBLISHED IN DAWN, AUGUST 30, 2023**

## Beyond reason

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THE violation of fundamental rights – including the right to due process, to freedom of association and speech – across the country, is now beyond farce. There is not even the pretence of adhering to the law, only a relentless determination to erase all dissent through whatever means can be conjured up to illegally deprive recalcitrant individuals of their liberty, and to silence them.

Consider the travails of lawyer and vocal critic of enforced disappearances, Imaan Hazir Mazari. Her ‘original sin’, a fiery speech made at a PTM rally in Islamabad, has been used to file three FIRs against her. She was first arrested on multiple charges, including sedition, rioting and dacoity, etc – by law-enforcement personnel who reportedly barged into her residence in the early hours without an arrest warrant.

Granted post-arrest bail in one case, Ms Mazari was kept in custody until she obtained bail in the second one as well. Shortly after her release, she was rearrested outside the prison gates – this time on far-fetched allegations of ‘terror financing’ – an arrest that her lawyer has claimed violated the Islamabad High Court’s orders.

Outspoken PTM leader Ali Wazir, arrested alongside Ms Mazari, is yet to be granted bail. The former South Waziristan MNA was an exception earlier for having been kept behind bars on various pretexts for over two years, despite being acquitted and granted bail several times. But post May 9, there is a sinister predictability to the pattern of repeated incarceration at the pleasure of the authorities.

Ms Mazari’s mother, former PTI MNA Shireen Mazari, was subjected to the same until she announced she was leaving her party. Many other PTI leaders – including Shehryar Afridi, arrested an outrageous 10 times – have been made to go through this ‘revolving door imprisonment’, which makes a mockery of the courts. Those turning their backs on the party ‘won’ their freedom.

While PTI’s lawyers are preoccupied with defending Imran Khan, the legal troubles of other party leaders – not to mention ordinary PTI supporters – are getting scant attention. Several of them are in the security establishment’s custody and facing trials in military courts.

The Punjab caretaker government informed the Lahore High Court that the detainees are not allowed to meet their families or legal counsel of their choice. Are these foreign enemy agents or citizens of Pakistan?

The flagrant abuse of power being witnessed today leaves Pakistan looking like a country virtually unmoored from the universal principles of justice on which its Constitution and its international human rights obligations are based. One wonders whether the centres of power are cognisant of how this affects the country's global standing. Or is that not a priority in these times? As for the caretakers, pleading helplessness is not an option. They are complicit.

**SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 31, 2023**

## 9 soldiers martyred, 5 injured in suicide attack in KP's Bannu

Nine soldiers were martyred while five others were injured in a suicide attack at a military convoy in the Jani Khel general area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bannu district, the military's media affairs wing said.

According to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), a "motorcycle-borne suicide bomber exploded himself on a military convoy".

"Resultantly, nine soldiers including Naib Subedar Sanobar Ali embraced shahadat, while five soldiers were injured," it said.

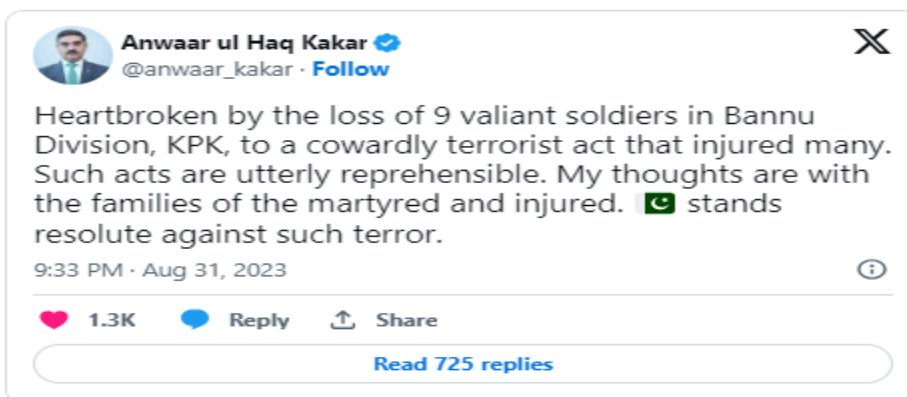
The area has been cordoned off by security forces and sanitisation is being carried out to eliminate any terrorists found in the area, the ISPR said.

"The security forces of Pakistan are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve," the statement added.

Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar has condemned the attack and expressed grief over the martyrdom of the soldiers.

Taking to social media platform X, formerly Twitter, he said: "Heartbroken by the loss of 9 valiant soldiers in Bannu Division, KP, to a cowardly terrorist act that injured many."

The premier called such acts "utterly reprehensible" and said his thoughts were with the families of the martyred and injured. "Pakistan stands resolute against such terror," he added.



Pakistan has witnessed an uptick in terror activities in recent months, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, after the outlawed TTP ended its ceasefire with the government in November last year.

On August 22, six soldiers embraced martyrdom in an exchange of fire in South Waziristan district, the military's media wing said last week. At least four terrorists were killed in the gun battle.

Last month, as many as 12 soldiers of the Pakistan Army embraced martyrdom in separate military operations in the Zhob and Sui areas of Balochistan.

This was the military's highest single-day death toll from terrorist attacks reported this year. Before this, 10 personnel were martyred in a 'fire raid' in Balochistan's Kech district in February 2022.

A report released in July by the think tank Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies said the first half of the current year witnessed a steady and alarming rise in terror and suicide attacks, claiming the lives of 389 people across the country.

**SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 31, 2023**