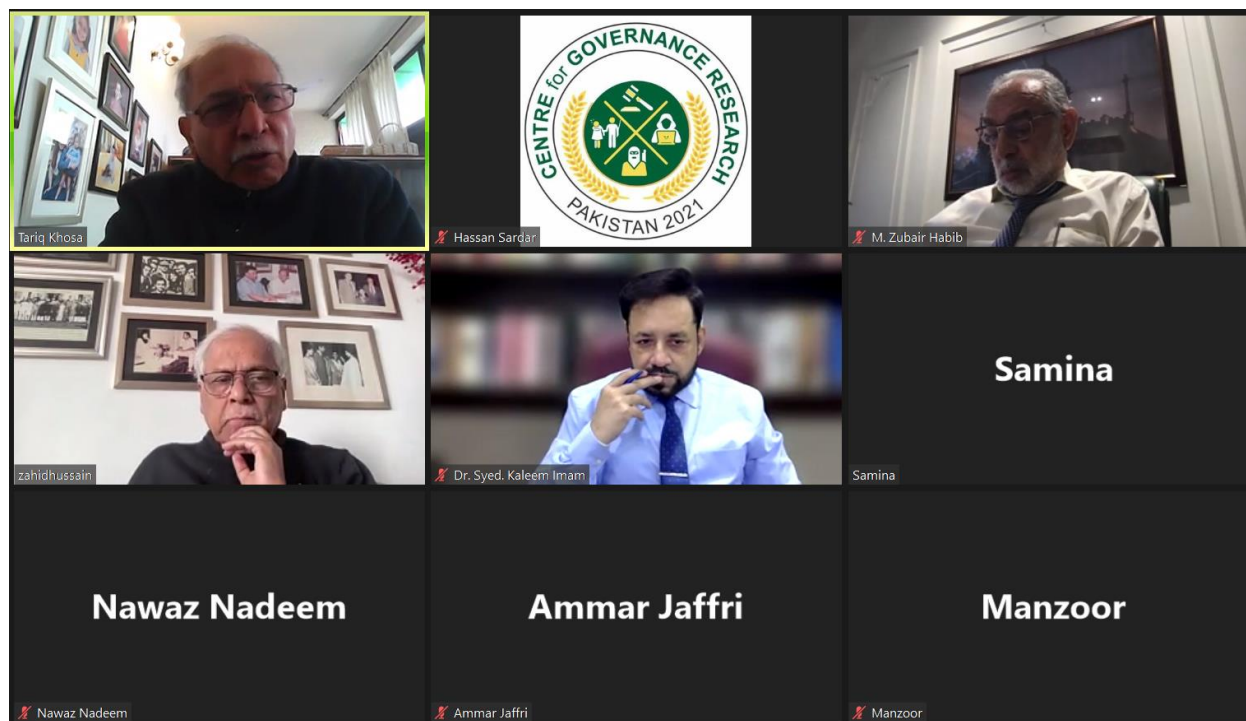


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NIOC's 46th Advisory Board Meeting



The 46th Advisory Board Meeting of NIOC took place on 11 January 2024. The following board members participated: Zahid Hussain, Samina Ahmed, Manzoor Ahmad, and Zubair Habib. Tariq Parvez and Jawaid Akhtar could not attend due to their prior commitments. NIOC Directorate was represented by the following: Tariq Khosa, Sarmad Saeed, Kaleem Imam, Nawaz Nadeem, Ammar Jaffri, and Hassan Sardar.

The following issues came under discussion:

- 1) CGR-NIOC will launch an Ideas of the Year Initiative to spotlight issues related with good governance and the rule of law. First Position Paper on Good Governance will be released in January 2024, prior to the national polls on 5 Feb 2024.
- 2) CGR-NIOC played an active role during the UNTOC Review Process in 2023. It will continue to actively participate in the Constructive Dialogues and other UNTOC-related activities at the UN Forums during 2024.
- 3) A Project Proposal on Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) was submitted to the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) which was under consideration.
- 4) CGR-NIOC will continue to support the UNTOC National Focal Person during the meetings and interactions related with the Working Groups on Human Rights and Trafficking in Persons.

Reform Pakistan's criminal justice system in 2024

DR SYED KALEEM IMAM

Pakistan witnessed a staggering 60% surge in militancy-related incidents in 2023. The country mourned the loss of 78 lives every month on average. Notably, 57% of all incidents occurred in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and 41% in the restive southwestern Balochistan province. The country's western borders bore the brunt of the violence, with 98% of the incidents occurring in areas adjacent to them.

At the same time, other global urban centers also grappled with persistent crime and militancy influenced by socio-economic factors. As of 2023, there were 27 ongoing conflicts in the world, primarily in Asia and Africa, involving civil wars, territorial disputes, interstate tensions, instability and sectarian strife. Organizations such as Daesh remained prominent in the global context, with varying levels of support and activity across the world.

In Pakistan, as sectarian divides, religious extremism, and criminal mafias continued to pose considerable challenges in 2023, it's time to reflect on what went wrong and what can be cured this year.

Firstly, poor governance was tolerated and characterized by a disregard for merit and a preference for loyalty over professionalism. Transparency and accountability remained lacking, allowing corruption to thrive. There was no coherent new plan to tackle these issues, and pre-existing plans were left to collect dust. Despite clear indicators – such as the pressing need to strengthen institutions and due process – Pakistan opted for quick fixes which ultimately led to adverse results.

Secondly, there was a glaring absence of the rule of law. This pushed individuals and institutions to resort to extrajudicial measures and eroding trust in state organizations. This utterly regrettable course of action inflicted significant costs, including the loss of life and property, yet there was little remorse on offer. This resulted in the radicalization of youth and widespread discontent among the masses. It led to a disturbing increase in counterattacks on law enforcement agencies, which were responded to with militarized actions and, of course, human rights violations.

Persistent political instability, driven by intellectual dishonesty and a flawed comprehension of domestic issues, pushed Pakistan dangerously close to chaos in the fight against terrorism. More concerning was the complete absence of guilt for propagating falsehoods, deception, and the wide spread of disinformation in the pursuit of populist politics. There was little regard for ensuing repercussions.

In the absence of accountability, some actors have emerged willing to burn down their own country in the quest for control.

In 2024, we must prioritize handling root causes and countering key enablers of extremism. This entails strengthening governance and the rule of law, eradicating radicalization, handling economic vulnerability, countering online propaganda, and managing militancy. Radicalization fuelled a drastic surge in militancy post-2001, with the number of militant attacks skyrocketing into the thousands in 2013. It took ten military operations to restore a semblance of normalcy to Pakistan. It is important that we do not return to those dark days. The initiation of de-radicalization programs and the development of an inclusive counter-narrative is critical.

Achieving political stability must be a paramount goal. We must also consider establishing a charter of good governance to enforce rule of law and cooperation among political parties, which will ensure continuity of policy and unity in the face of adversity.

There are significant threats in Pakistan from the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), Baloch Republican Army (BRA), Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) and Daesh. Negotiating with non-conformist groups has proven ineffective, and appeasement policies have repeatedly failed. It is high time we fence up our remaining border regions.

Crimes and smuggling, a known source of terror funding, must be prosecuted aggressively in the realm of law. There is no doubt that any latitude is detrimental to respect for law and justice, which ultimately leads to increased oppression and bad laws.

A reform of the criminal justice system is the new year's gift this country deserves. The pain we suffered in 2023 must alter us, lest it hurt us in the coming years as well.

SOURCE: ARAB NEWS, JANUARY 5, 2024

2 terrorists, including ‘high-value target’, killed in Tank operation

Two terrorists, including a “high-value target”, were killed in an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s Tank district, the military’s media affairs wing said.

In a statement, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said security forces conducted an operation late last night on the “reported presence of terrorists”.

“After an intense fire exchange, two terrorists, including HVT Gul Yousaf Toor, were sent to hell,” it said.

The ISPR stated that Toor had “remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against security forces, including high-profile terrorist attacks in Tank and Dera Ismail Khan districts as well as extortion and target killing of innocent civilians”.

“He was highly wanted by the law enforcement agencies and [the] government had fixed head money of Rs2.5 million on him,” the ISPR added.

The military said residents of the area appreciated the security forces’ efforts in “maintaining peace and stability in the area”.

“Security forces of Pakistan, in step with the nation, remain determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism from the country,” the statement concluded.

Pakistan has witnessed an uptick in terror activities in the past year, especially in KP and Balochistan after the banned militant Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan had ended its ceasefire with the government in November 2022.

In the deadliest attack on security forces in the outgoing year, at least 23 Pakistan Army soldiers were martyred and more than 30 troops wounded on Dec 12 after militants belonging to the Tehreek-i-Jihad Pakistan stormed a compound used by the military in Dera Ismail Khan’s Daraban area.

According to an annual security report issued by the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), Pakistan witnessed 1,524 violence-related fatalities and 1,463 injuries from 789 terror attacks and counter-terror operations in 2023 – marking a record six-year high.

KP and Balochistan provinces were the primary centres of violence, accounting for over 90 per cent of all fatalities and 84pc of attacks, including incidents of terrorism and security forces operations.

SOURCE: DAWN, JANUARY 5, 2024

4 killed, 3 injured in firing on passenger coach in KP's Kurram



An Ambulance stands outside the Parachinar district headquarters hospital on Jan 7.

Four people were killed and three others were wounded in firing on a passenger coach and a vehicle near Sadda Bazaar in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Kurram district, police said.

District Police Officer (DPO) Muhammad Imran told Dawn.com that the vehicles were targeted by gunmen with automated weapons.

He said two security personnel were also among the deceased. Efforts were under way to find and arrest the culprits, the DPO added.

Dr Qaiser Abbas, the deputy medical superintendent of Parachinar district headquarters hospital, also confirmed the death toll to Dawn.com. He added that the wounded were currently receiving treatment at the hospital.

Local tribes of Turi Bangash have called for an emergency jirga (meeting) to decide on a plan of action about the attacks.

Last month, nine people were killed and 25 injured in a "terrorist" attack on a passenger bus in Gilgit-Baltistan's Chilas.

SOURCE: DAWN, JANUARY 7, 2024

Six cops on polio duty martyred in Bajaur attack



Paramedics shift an injured policeman to a hospital following the roadside bomb blast in Bajaur district.

BAJAUR / PESHAWAR: Six cops and a soldier embraced martyrdom in two acts of terrorism in Bajaur and North Waziristan districts.

An explosive device targeted a vehicle carrying police personnel for escorting polio vaccinators in Mamond tehsil, leaving six cops dead and 28 others wounded.

Police and Rescue 1122 officials said the blast occurred at about 9am in the Billoot area, some 24km northwest of Khar, the headquarters of Bajaur district.

In North Waziristan, a soldier lost his life while an injured militant was arrested following an exchange of fire between security forces and militants.

The truck carrying cops from the police line for deploying them to perform duty with vaccinators on the first day of the anti-polio campaign was hit by a roadside improvised explosive device in the Billoot area, DPO Kashif Zulfiqar confirmed while talking to reporters.

Five policemen died on the spot while another one succumbed to injuries at a hospital in Peshawar, police spokesman Israr Khan told Dawn.

Soon after the explosion police and security personnel rushed to the area to trace those involved in the attack.

Rescue 1122 ambulances transported the wounded to the district headquarters hospital Khar where emergency was already declared. Scores of the area residents instantly reached the hospital to donate blood for the wounded.

Senior officials of the hospital and Rescue 1122 told Dawn that some of the personnel were later referred to hospitals in Peshawar owing to their precious condition.

A total of 13 critically injured personnel were referred to hospitals in Peshawar, Dr Wazir Khan Safi, medical superintendent at the district headquarters hospital, told Dawn.

According to the Rescue 1122 statement, the deceased were identified as Habib Raheem, Manasab Khan, Moha-mmad Raouf, Jan Mohammad, Ali Rahman, and Imran Khan.

Senior officials of the district administration, police and security forces, including Deputy Commissioner Moham-mad Anwaarul Haq, visited the hospital in Khar and directed its management to ensure the best treatment facilities to the wounded.

Meanwhile, a police official told Dawn that they had launched an investigation into the incident to find out those responsible for the attack, saying they had collected evidence from the blast site. Funeral prayers for five of the six personnel were offered at the police line in Khar.



Besides family members and friends, government officials and workers of political and religious parties also attended the funeral. Later, the bodies were shifted to their native areas for burial.

Meanwhile, the polio reduction campaign has been postponed in Mamond tehsil.

According to a statement issued from the deputy commissioner's office, the administration postponed the drive on the directives of Malakand Division Commissioner Saqib Raza.

The outlawed TTP claimed responsibility for the attack, according to media reports.

Waziristan gun battle

A security man was martyred and an injured militant arrested after an exchange of fire between security forces and suspected militants in North Waziristan district.

A statement issued by the ISPR read that security forces effectively engaged the militants' location and apprehended one militant in injured condition.

"However, during an intense exchange of fire, 41-year-old Havaldar Muhammad Zahir, a resident of district Mardan, having fought gallantly, embraced shahadat," it said.

Condemnation

Paying tribute to security personnel and polio workers, caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar said, "The terrorists would never succeed in their nefarious designs".

In a statement, the PM reiterated his resolve to continue the anti-polio campaign till complete eradication of the virus from the country.

Caretaker KP Chief Minister Syed Arshad Hussain Shah strongly condemned the Bajaur blast.

In a statement, the CM expressed grave concern over the loss of precious lives in the terrorist attack and extended heartfelt sympathies to the victim families.

SOURCE: DAWN, JANUARY 9, 2024

9, including 3 children, injured in Quetta blast



This image shows the scene at the blast on Quetta's Zarghoon Road.

Nine people, including a traffic policeman and three children, were injured in a blast on Quetta's Zarghoon Road, according to police. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operation Jawad Tariq confirmed the number of injured to Dawn.com. He said that explosive material was planted in a heap of trash that had been lying for some time.

The explosion occurred when children, who were picking trash, were sifting through the garbage, he said. It was unclear what kind of explosive device was used, Tariq said. "The explosion was not a security lapse," he asserted. "Foolproof security arrangements have been made with regards to the elections," he added.

The head of the Quetta Trauma Centre, Dr Arbab Kamran, said that the injured were shifted to Civil Hospital. He added that two people were reported to be in critical condition.

On Tuesday, PPP candidate Mir Asghar Rind had survived a grenade attack in Turbat. The incident occurred when an unknown motorcyclist threw a grenade at his residence in Overseas Colony. Rind, a PPP leader and candidate for the Balochistan Assembly, remained unharmed but his brother sustained injuries. On Monday, the premises of Government Model High School in Kharan was targeted by unknown men during a training session for polling staff.

SOURCE: DAWN, JANUARY 17, 2024

Policing Beyond Retirement

DR SYED KALEEM IMAM

“Information is not knowledge. The only source of knowledge is experience. You need experience to gain wisdom” - Albert Einstein

Retirement from service is a blessing: An opportunity to explore the nature, do gardening, play with the grandchildren, and read as much as you can. Some set to write their memoirs as well. If few turn into a recluse, many set to pass on their rich experience to the next generation. When we begin a practical life as a young enthusiast, we do come across the challenges we had never thought of, but then come to our rescue our elders at home as well as at workplace. For me, my father being a government servant, was a source of confidence. Though not in a senior cadre, he knew through his hard-earned experience what to do and how.

I was lucky to have some seniors who were epitome of honesty and professionalism. I vividly remember when I was made OSD, though for standing steadfast on a professional matter, I got little disturbed. Then came a telephone call from a senior officer, known as “Babae OSD” (Father of OSD). Gohar Zaman sahab, then DG IB, laughingly said, “The feather of OSD decorates the honest officers. Abhi ishq kei aur bhin imtahan aangei. (Many tests of love have yet to come). Relax and enjoy your OSD tenure” My anxiety flew in the air.

I am indebted to luminaries such as Zafar Iqbal Rathore, Afzal Ali Shigri, Dr. Shoaib Suddle, Tariq Pervaz, Saud Gohar, Tariq Khosa, Javed Noor, Pervez Rahim Rajput, and Asghar Reza Gardezi, whose mentorship has left an indelible mark on my life and the field of law enforcement.

Policing in the face of deteriorating governance, security challenges, and economic instability is an arduous task. In a society grappling with instability and a fraying rule of law, the police cannot evade scrutiny. They are often perceived as corrupt, a perception that holds some truth. However, merely criticizing without implementing corrective measures is a graver sin. We must not forget the sacrifices made by martyrs and those injured in the line of duty; to do so would be unforgivable. Allowing decay and corruption to persist in various state institutions while scapegoating a few, others as virtuous is unjust. It reveals a senseless mindset and underscores the reality that we are only exacerbating our problems by failing to address the root issues.

During service, I always remained in touch with the retired officers because I knew they carry the tag of experience which one cannot buy, it comes through time alone. A young officer may be competent, intelligent, hardworking, and enthusiastic but he is likely to err if not guided well by his or her seniors. For elderly officers, nothing is more important than passing on their knowledge to the right people at the right time.

Ihsan Ghani, then DG of the National Police Bureau, led a group of retired police officers in 2015 to establish an association for retired Inspector Generals of Police. While no longer in positions of power, they recognised that their collective wisdom and the strength of their ideas could still carry significant weight. These experienced veterans derive a sense of purpose and value when their recommendations are not only acknowledged but also translated into action. For instance, the findings of the Police Reforms Committee, initiated under the auspices of the Supreme Court, serve as a notable example, even though they have yet to be fully implemented.

Formed in 2017, the Association of Former Inspector Generals of Police (AFIGP) has contributed significantly to the national cause since its inception. It holds regular conferences annually where many former IGs participate enthusiastically. The deliberations and outcomes are shared with the police organisations and the government for consideration.

This year, the conference took place on December 8-9, 2023, at the National Highway and Motorway Police auditorium. AFIGP extended gratitude to NHMP, SDPI, Mobilink Jazz, FC, Sindh, AJK, and FC Balochistan for their valuable logistic support. Record attendance helped make the conference a resounding success, with a tacit reminder that law enforcement faces pressing challenges and the current situation needs to be addressed.

‘Navigating the Complexities of State Response in the Criminal Justice System’ was the theme of this year’s conference. During five sessions, participants discussed law enforcement challenges and the rule of law in relation to criminal justice in tough times. The reverend speakers Rai Tahir, Mohammed Ali Babakhel, Ali Naseer, Ehsan Sadiq, Sultan Khawaja, and Dr. Abid Suleri deliberated in length on these critical topics. They shared their experiences and after a very exhaustive academic but frank and candid discussion, some real jewels of wisdom emerged.

We had the honor of having chief guest for the occasion the fervent interim Prime Minister Mr. Anwar Ul Haq Kakar. During his speech, he called the former police officers, “the chosen one” and lauded Siffat Ghayur, Malik Saad, and Hamid Shakeel among others. He said that we forget that each one of us is the best creation of Allah. The sacrifices of police and armed forces in the fight against terrorism should always be held in high esteem. Amid the prevalent cynicism and focus on the negative aspects of life, it remains an undeniable fact that a significant portion of police officers, particularly those in lower ranks, struggle to make both ends meet. This statement draws from my service experience, where I had the opportunity to visit the families of martyrs, getting firsthand insight into the modest and often hand-to-mouth lifestyles that many police officers and their families live.

Lastly, the resolve of AFIGP is to continue working for the betterment of the country. It is a great forum for the veterans to see each other after a long time and share their thoughts. They have removed uniform but not their “will and commitment. The rank never retires!

On a lighter note, retirement is a privilege, but let’s not get so old that our heavenly friends wonder if we’ll ever arrive.

SOURCE: THE NATION, DECEMBER 19, 2023

7 terrorists killed in intelligence-based operation in Zhob

Seven terrorists were killed during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in the Sambaza sector of Balochistan's Zhob district, near the Pak-Afghan border, the army's media wing said.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), army troops "effectively surrounded and engaged fleeing terrorists" during an exchange of fire.

As a result, seven militants were killed, it added. The ISPR said that the militants "remained actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces as well as killing of innocent civilians".

It added that arms, ammunition, and explosives were also recovered from the terrorists.

"Sanitisation operation is being carried out to eliminate any other terrorists present in the area. Security forces of Pakistan are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism," the ISPR said.

On January 13, four militants including a "high-value terrorist" were killed in two separate operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A day prior, security forces had also killed two terrorists in an IBO in the province's North Waziristan district.

Pakistan has witnessed an uptick in terror activities in the past year, especially in KP and Balochistan after the banned militant Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan ended its ceasefire with the government in November 2022.

According to an annual security report issued by the Centre for Research and Security Studies, Pakistan witnessed 1,524 violence-related fatalities and 1,463 injuries from 789 terror attacks and counter-terror operations in 2023 – marking a record six-year high.

KP and Balochistan were the primary centres of violence, accounting for over 90 per cent of all fatalities and 84pc of attacks, including incidents of terrorism and security forces operations.

SOURCE: DAWN, JANUARY 22, 2024

Human smuggling

AZWAR SHAKEEL

THOUGH rampant, human smuggling in Pakistan remains poorly documented. Only when a tragedy occurs does the issue take centre stage. A nationwide crackdown was announced after a fishing boat carrying hundreds of Pakistani migrants capsized off the southern coast of Greece last June. Yet, interest in the issue and sympathy with the victims waned just as fast as it rose.

Lack of sympathy stems from lack of awareness, particularly of the human rights violations that take place during a migrant's journey. Human smuggling is considered consensual, as opposed to human trafficking, which features coercive practices such as bonded labour and sexual exploitation. Here, we endeavour to explain the factors driving irregular migration, the annual number of migrants, popular routes, operations of smuggling networks, and the Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) role. We also identify human rights violations, and the reforms required to address them.

According to estimates, over one million irregular migrants cross international borders annually. In Pakistan, the figure varies between 80,000 to 100,000. Most migrants are from Punjab. Cities such as Gujrat, Gujranwala, Phalia, Mandi Bahauddin, Kharian, Jhelum, Mirpur, and Sialkot serve as major catchment areas. Due to its low cost and ease of movement, the Balochistan-Iran-Turkiye route, with onwards travel to Europe via the Mediterranean Sea, is the most popular. Other routes include sea travel from Gwadar to Iran through the Arabian Sea, and onwards to Turkiye and Europe. On the pricier side, there's legal air travel from Karachi to Dubai, followed by irregular migration to Turkiye or Libya, and onwards to Italy or Greece.

Unemployment, lack of opportunity, poverty, and insecurity remain the primary drivers pushing people out. Pressures of traditional masculinity is another prominent push factor. Many young men leave to be able to earn more and support their families. It is established that factors driving irregular migration are not just absolute deprivation, but also relative deprivation. The sense that one would be better off in some other country serves as a pull factor. Migrants also leave because they see countries like Turkiye or Libya as stepping stones to Europe.

Smugglers operate on the basis of an organised network model. Each smuggling ring comprises a series of sub-networks; each sub-network consists of agents and sub-agents. The sub-networks are co-dependent. A typical smuggling network operates as follows: sub-agents in Gujrat recruit migrants, and bring them to the agent, who will stipulate the conditions of travel and the costs involved. The agent from Gujrat contacts an agent from Multan and shares the names of the migrants via a text message. All agents operate under an alias. The Multan agent receives the migrants at a designated spot and facilitates onwards movement to Quetta, from where they are

sent to Iran, Turkiye, and Europe by other agents along the way. The operations remain seamless, with each agent responsible for the operations of the smuggling ring within their own territory.

The journey can cost anywhere from Rs100,000 to Rs1,500,000 per migrant depending on the terms of the deal, ie, mode of travel, comfort of travel (front seat or trunk of the car, below or above the deck on a ship, etc), number of attempts, and documentation.

The FIA is the law-enforcement agency tasked by law to crack down on smugglers and safeguard the rights of migrants. But it is seen as complicit in the entire process. Officials ignore the actions of smugglers in return for kickbacks. Considering the complexities involved, transnational operations of this magnitude would not be possible without the knowledge of the FIA. Corruption among law-enforcement officials is common to all countries where human smuggling rackets thrive. Smuggled Somalis, Ethiopians, and Kenyans, have all recounted witnessing public officials accepting bribes from smugglers.

Smugglers exploit desperate and vulnerable individuals. The migrants are misinformed and deceived about the dangers and actual costs involved. They are also abused, beaten, and robbed along the way. Those who are unable to pay are tortured. The houses in which they are kept along the way are overcrowded and unhygienic. Law-enforcement agencies do not protect them and the states through which they pass shirk their responsibilities, disregarding international humanitarian laws.

To address these rights violations, we must first reframe the narrative. Migrants must be treated as victims, and not in a manner that implies criminality. International and domestic anti-smuggling laws must be made human rights-centric. But most importantly, we must address the state's failure to protect and provide for its citizens, compelling migrants to leave.

SOURCE: DAWN, JANUARY 24, 2024