

HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING

PAKISTAN

Human Rights Fact Sheet

Developments, Protection Concerns and Priority Recommendations

Reporting Period: May – July 2026

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Executive Summary

This update reviews reported human rights developments in Pakistan during May, June and July 2026. Key concerns include the return and deportation of Afghan nationals; civilian harm and displacement in KP and Balochistan; restrictions on peaceful assembly in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK); misuse or alleged misuse of blasphemy provisions; violence and discrimination affecting religious minorities; the Maria Shahbaz child-marriage case; alleged enforced disappearances and due-process concerns; and violence against women, children and transgender persons, including child labour and abuse.

Across the cases reviewed, victims and families reported delayed complaints, weak investigations, intimidation, limited compensation, prolonged detention and unequal access to justice. While authorities and courts took some positive steps, including investigations, judicial hearings and limited protection against deportation, broader accountability gaps remain. Priority action is needed to protect civilians and displaced persons, uphold peaceful assembly and due process, protect minorities and children, enforce laws against gender-based violence and child abuse, and strengthen independent oversight and effective remedies.

KEY INDICATORS REPORTED DURING THE PERIOD

INDICATOR	REPORTED FIGURE
Afghan nationals who left Pakistan since September 2023	2.4 million+
Blasphemy cases registered over the last five years	333+
Children engaged in labour in Pakistan	Approximately 8.6 million
Gender-based violence incidents, January–June 2026	3,172
Honour killings, January–June 2026	132

Source: Voicepk / Dawn reporting, July 2026 issue

1. Principal Human Rights Developments

A. RIGHT TO PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY — AZAD JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Pakistan, as a State Party to the ICCPR and under Article 16 of its Constitution, is obligated to protect peaceful assembly. In AJK, authorities proscribed the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) on 5 June 2026 under anti-terrorism legislation. Reported arrests, protest restrictions, internet and mobile shut-downs, media limitations and clashes in which more than 30 people were reportedly killed raise serious concerns over assembly, life and due process. On 31 July, rights organisations protesting the AJK situation were reportedly met with police action in Lahore, with several arrests. Independent investigation and accountability are urgently needed.

B. AFGHAN NATIONALS: DEPORTATION, LEGAL IDENTITY AND PROPERTY RIGHTS

The continued implementation of Pakistan's repatriation policy has created serious protection concerns for Afghan nationals, including long-term residents and people with pending visa or resettlement applications. More than 2.4 million Afghan nationals are reported to have left Pakistan since September 2023. Families and business owners described pressure to sell property, goods and businesses below market value before departure, while children faced interrupted education and adults faced uncertainty over work, housing and legal status.

Reported court proceedings show the importance of effective remedies. The Peshawar High Court stayed the deportation of two Afghan brothers who stated that they had worked with United States forces and were awaiting resettlement to Canada. Other cases concerned people born or raised in Pakistan who lacked recognized identity documents despite having Pakistani mothers. Separately, Afghan students and doctors at King Edward Medical University were instructed to vacate hostels unless their visas were extended, although some applications had reportedly remained undecided for six to ten months.

ASSESSMENT

Any return process should be individualized, transparent and subject to review. Authorities should prevent refoulement, protect property and wages, maintain family unity, preserve access to education and health care, and provide accessible legal remedies before removal. Mass arrest or deportation without status determination and appeal safeguards is incompatible with a rights-based approach.

C. CONFLICT-AFFECTED AREAS AND INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

In KP Province insecurity continued to affect the rights to life, security, movement, education and livelihood. In the Tirah Valley, approximately 34,000 displaced families were registered, with additional families seeking inclusion. HRCP (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan) fact-finding report described deaths, injuries, restrictions on food and medicine, loss of shops and livelihoods, and inadequate compensation during displacement. Officials disputed aspects of the account, underscoring the need for independent verification and transparent civilian-harm investigations.

Displaced families reported incomplete registration, delayed assistance and uncertainty over safe and dignified return. The proposed October return window raised concerns about weather conditions and preparedness.

Reports of drone and mortar strikes affecting homes and children, as well as prolonged mobile-internet restrictions in North Waziristan, indicate that civilian protection must include access to education, communications and essential services, not only physical security.

ASSESSMENT

Returns must be voluntary, informed, safe and dignified. Authorities should publish verified displacement data, complete registration, compensate affected families, investigate alleged civilian harm, restore essential communications where security permits, and ensure that humanitarian assistance is not conditioned on political or security affiliation.

D. FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF AND PROTECTION OF MINORITIES

Parliamentary discussions reportedly identified more than 333 blasphemy cases registered over five years, with concerns that some cases arose from personal disputes or were fabricated. The reported use of blasphemy allegations to trigger arrest, public pressure or mob violence creates an acute risk to life, liberty, property and freedom of religion or belief. The killing of Dr Shahnawaz Kumbhar following a blasphemy allegation, and allegations that the police encounter was staged, illustrate the need for independent investigations and accountability across the chain of command.

Three years after the Jaranwala attacks, parliamentary proceedings reportedly indicated that victims had not received compensation and that many suspects remained at large or on bail. The killing of an elderly Sikh caretaker couple in Mardan further highlighted the insecurity faced by minority communities. Reports concerning the abduction, conversion and marriage of minor Christian and Hindu girls raised concerns about age verification, coercion, police responsiveness and the protection of children from exploitation.

Maria Shahbaz Case — Child Marriage

Human rights groups criticised a Federal Constitutional Court ruling recognising the marriage of Maria Shahbaz, whom her family says was 13 when allegedly abducted, and denying custody to her father. Rights groups warned that the ruling conflicts with laws prohibiting marriage below 18 and could weaken child-marriage protections. On 24 July, the Court admitted a review petition; Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi said cases involving underage girls being lured away concern society as a whole, not a particular religion. The Court summoned Maria, her husband and the Attorney General.

ASSESSMENT

The State should protect minorities from violence and discrimination, ensure prompt prosecution of perpetrators, prevent mob mobilisation, and guarantee that blasphemy allegations do not displace due process. All marriage and conversion cases involving minors require child-sensitive, independent age and consent assessments.

E. ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES, DETENTION AND FAIR-TRIAL GUARANTEES

The family of Sindhi writer Saeed Ahmed Memon reportedly remained without reliable information about his whereabouts 52 days after his disappearance on a Balochistan highway. The family stated that investigators made little or no contact after the initial day. Such cases require immediate disclosure of a person's fate and whereabouts, access to counsel and family contact, and an independent investigation capable of examining official involvement.

Other proceedings raised fair-trial concerns. Lawyers criticised the life sentence imposed on Balochistan activists Dr Mahrang Baloch and Sibghatullah Shahjee, citing a video-linked trial, limited defence preparation, state-appointed counsel and alleged inconsistencies in the FIR. In the Imaan Mazari and Hadi Ali Chatha case, proceedings continued over sentences imposed under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act for posts concerning missing persons. Courts also considered complaints regarding the repeated non-production of Ali Wazir and the death of a detainee after alleged medical neglect and prior torture.

ASSESSMENT

Detention must be lawful, registered and reviewable. Authorities should criminalise and prevent en-

forced disappearance, disclose detention locations, provide prompt judicial control, investigate allegations of torture and custodial death, and guarantee independent counsel, equality of arms and public, reasoned judgments.

F. WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Sahil's reported national compilation recorded 3,172 gender-based violence incidents between January and June 2026: 644 murders, 514 assault or torture cases, 462 abductions, 363 suicides, 280 rapes and 132 honour killings. Punjab accounted for approximately 74 per cent of the reported cases. More than half reportedly occurred in the victim's home, and acquaintances or spouses were frequently identified as alleged perpetrators.

Cases involving killings after free-will marriage, alleged confinement by family members, jirga-ordered violence and delayed registration of rape complaints demonstrate the continuing interaction between patriarchal control, informal justice and institutional failure. The killing of Khalida (Rubina) Chandio following an alleged jirga decision is particularly concerning because it indicates the substitution of informal authority for lawful judicial process. The Supreme Court's direction requiring harassment committees and visible codes of conduct in schools and colleges is a constructive measure, but implementation and monitoring will determine its effect.

ASSESSMENT

Police must register complaints immediately, protect survivors and witnesses, and investigate without regard to family, political or social pressure. Jirgas or other informal bodies must not decide criminal cases or impose penalties affecting women's life, liberty, marriage or bodily integrity.

G. TRANSGENDER PERSONS

The reported abduction and gang rape of Noor Hira, a transgender dancer in Karachi, and threats linked to her pursuit of justice illustrate the heightened risks faced by transgender persons. Community representatives also reported attacks on homes and called for meaningful political representation.

Authorities should investigate violence against transgender persons as serious rights violations, protect complainants from retaliation, ensure access to medical and psychosocial services, and enforce equality and non-discrimination protections in practice.

2. Overall Assessment

The cases reviewed point to recurring structural weaknesses: incomplete accountability for security-related abuses and attacks on minorities; barriers to registering complaints; unequal protection for women, children, refugees and transgender persons; weak oversight of detention and informal justice; and limited compensation or remedy.

Positive judicial and administrative interventions show that remedies are possible. Their impact will depend on independence, prompt implementation, transparent reporting and protection from retaliation. Pakistan should treat the protection of civilians, due process and equal access to justice as operational requirements, not discretionary policy goals.

3. Priority Recommendations

To the Government of Pakistan

1. **Afghan nationals:** Suspend removals where individual protection risks, pending applications or legal challenges have not been assessed; guarantee non-refoulement, family unity, property protection, access to counsel and review; and maintain children's access to education and health care. Pakistan should sign and ratify the CMW (International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families) and sign or ratify the 1951 UN Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol.
2. **Conflict and displacement:** Protect civilians, investigate alleged unlawful attacks, complete IDP registration, provide timely assistance and compensation, and facilitate voluntary, safe and dignified returns.
3. **Accountability:** Establish prompt, independent investigations into enforced disappearances, custodial deaths, torture, honour killings, attacks on minorities and violence against transgender persons.
4. **Women and children:** Enforce laws on gender-based violence, child marriage, sexual abuse and child labour; require safeguarding systems in madrassas and other residential institutions; and ensure survivor-centred services.
5. **Religion or belief:** Review the laws of blasphemy and prevent misuse of blasphemy provisions, protect accused persons and communities from mob violence, and prosecute perpetrators of attacks on religious minorities.