

August Fact Sheet — Human Rights Situation in Pakistan

1. Situation of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan

"Pray for Me, I Am Dying": Afghan migrants die crossing into Iran (Aug 3)

A viral final video of a young Afghan man named Hayatullah, filmed as he lay dying of heat and thirst, drew nationwide outrage after 19 Afghan citizens died trying to cross illegally from Nimruz province into Iran through the Reg-e-Lalo and Dasht-e-Margo desert regions, where temperatures reach roughly 45°C. The group, mostly from Qulghi village in Badghis province, had set out in mid-July 2026 in search of work when their vehicle broke down; bodies were recovered over several days, some buried under sand. The episode illustrates the desperation driving irregular Afghan labour migration and the limited support available to affected families — Afghanistan's Taliban administration offered each bereaved family only about 20,000 Afghani (roughly US\$300). The story is included here because it reflects the wider precarity of Afghan lives caught between Pakistan's deportation drive and economic collapse at home, pushing many toward equally dangerous routes onward.

Peshawar High Court restrains deportation of Peshawar man over blocked ID card (Jul 27–28)

A Peshawar businessman, whose computerised national identity card (CNIC — Pakistan's mandatory ID, issued and databased by NADRA, the National Database and Registration Authority) was blocked without notice on suspicion that he was an undocumented Afghan, had all his bank accounts and SIM cards frozen as a result. The Peshawar High Court (PHC) halted his deportation and ordered NADRA to explain the block and refer the case to its verification board, after his lawyer argued the man held identity documents predating 1979 — the year mass Afghan migration into Pakistan began — proving he was not a refugee. The case illustrates a recurring problem: Pakistan's identity-verification systems, tightened amid the deportation campaign, have also ensnared Pakistani citizens, particularly Pashtuns whose family or dialect makes officials suspicious, disrupting their livelihoods pending lengthy court review.

"Waiting for Identity": An Afghan family's story on World Humanitarian Day (Aug 19)

Marking World Humanitarian Day, this profile follows Murad, an Afghan national who has lived in Peshawar for years, married to a Pakistani woman with whom he has five children. His arrest under the deportation drive left the family without its main earner; relatives have now petitioned the Peshawar High Court for his release and for recognition of his legal status in Pakistan. The piece situates his case within Pakistan's broader Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan, under which more than 600,000 Afghans have been returned to Afghanistan in 2026 so far, and highlights the particular hardship faced by mixed Pakistani-Afghan families, who often have no clear legal pathway to keep an Afghan spouse or parent in the country even after decades of residence.

87 Afghan students petition Islamabad High Court over suspended visas (Aug 29)

Eighty-seven Afghan students — 58 men and 29 women — enrolled in bachelor's, master's and doctoral programmes at universities in Islamabad petitioned the Islamabad High Court (IHC) after their student visa extensions were frozen, leaving them mid-degree and facing the threat of detention or deportation. The petition asks the court to intervene so that academic study can continue while their immigration status is resolved; the IHC has so far questioned whether the petition is even maintainable, i.e. whether the court has the legal standing to hear it at this stage. The case shows how the deportation campaign, aimed mainly at undocumented migrants, has also disrupted lawful, visa-holding Afghans who came to Pakistan specifically for education, caught up in an administrative freeze rather than any wrongdoing of their own.

Dawn — Afghan Deportations (Aug 10)

Punjab's Foreign National Security Cell reported it had identified, arrested and deported approximately 140,468 "illegal" Afghan nationals from the province since the repatriation drive began, based on checks conducted in residential neighbourhoods and markets. The figure is one province's tally within Pakistan's nationwide Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan, launched after the government said it could no longer sustain hosting Afghans amid a domestic economic crisis and worsening security ties with the Taliban government. UNHCR and other rights groups have continued to raise concerns about the pace of the returns and the risk that some registered refugees — those formally recognised as needing international protection — are being swept up alongside undocumented migrants without adequate case-by-case screening.

EU Ambassador interview — Afghan refugees section (Aug 31)

In a wide-ranging interview tied to Pakistan's GSP+ trade status (explained further under category 9 below), EU Ambassador Raimundas Karoblis said Afghan refugees have lived in Pakistan for roughly 40 years, are well-integrated, and have contributed to the economy rather than burdened it — though he acknowledged Pakistan's official position has shifted as the country faces its own economic crisis. He said the EU expects Pakistan to honour the principle of non-refoulement (not returning people to a country where they face serious danger), even though Pakistan has not ratified all refugee conventions, and that people eligible for international protection, along with vulnerable groups, should not be deported. For others, he said, any return process should be organised with dignity and with guarantees over their property and other rights.

2. Attacks on Religious Minorities

A Bleak Road to Justice: Mob rule, forced conversions (Aug 22)

Published to mark the UN International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief, this feature argues that Pakistan's promise of equal citizenship for religious minorities remains largely unfulfilled. It revisits the 2023 Jaranwala riots, in which a mob attacked Christian homes and churches in Faisalabad district over an alleged blasphemous social-media post, noting that three years on almost no one has been convicted. It also recalls blasphemy-related death sentences handed to Christians Shagufta Kiran and Asif Pervaiz, and situates the decade-old Kot Radha Kishan lynching (see next item) and ongoing forced-conversion cases of minor Christian and Hindu girls as part of a wider pattern in which mob violence and legal coercion against minorities go largely unpunished, despite constitutional guarantees of equal protection.

Supreme Court acquits final 3 in Shama & Shahzad Masih lynching, Kot Radha Kishan (Aug 18)

Twelve years after a Christian couple, Shama and Shahzad Masih, were beaten and burned alive by a mob in the town of Kot Radha Kishan, Kasur district, over a false blasphemy accusation in 2014, the Supreme Court issued its final written order acquitting the last three of 106 people who had been accused. With this ruling, every single accused person has now been acquitted at some stage of the judicial process — meaning that, over a decade later, no one has been held criminally responsible for the couple's murder. Rights groups cite the case as the starkest example of impunity for mob violence triggered by blasphemy allegations, where the difficulty of securing convictions is often linked to witness intimidation, community pressure on courts, and the political sensitivity of blasphemy cases generally.

EU Ambassador interview — Ahmadiyya community (Aug 31)

Discussing minority rights in the same GSP+ interview, EU Ambassador Karoblis described the situation of Pakistan's Ahmadiyya community — a group that identifies as Muslim but is constitutionally defined in Pakistan as non-Muslim, and whose members face specific legal restrictions on religious practice — as "another concern, and a major concern." He said Ahmadis are citizens of Pakistan whose rights should be respected, calling for protection of their physical security and places of worship, and noted the EU is discussing related issues such as marriage registration and documentation with the government, though "there is not yet anything concrete." He urged the issue be addressed "sooner rather than later," at the latest by the time Pakistan reapplies for GSP+ trade status.

Ahmadiyya: A leading international human rights organisation strongly condemned the removal of an Ahmadi Muslim from a government position in Pakistan's Punjab province following an organised campaign by extremist groups targeting the official over his religious identity.

Christian mother challenges forced marriage of 12-year-old daughter, Faisalabad (Jul 31)

A Christian mother petitioned a civil court in Faisalabad to annul the marriage of her 12-year-old daughter, Amber Nadeem, arguing it violates Pakistan's recently amended child-marriage legislation as well as constitutional and minority-rights protections. According to the petition, the girl was abducted from a marketplace in June by a man named Mohsin Liaquat, who — allegedly with a marriage registrar's help — falsified her date of birth to make the marriage appear legal. The case was filed only after the accused was granted post-arrest bail. It is one of several cases cited in this fact sheet (see also the Aug 29 update below) illustrating a recurring pattern in Pakistan: minor girls from Christian or Hindu families abducted, forcibly converted to Islam, and married off, with age-falsification used to obscure that they are legally children.

Parents, activists demand safe recovery of Amber Nadeem (Aug 29)

A court granted custody of Amber Nadeem — the 12/13-year-old Christian girl from the case above — to her alleged abductor, prompting human rights activists, lawyers and minority advocacy groups to hold a press conference in Faisalabad condemning the decision. Critics argue that placing an underage girl back with the man accused of abducting her, before her legal age and safety could be properly established, undermines child-protection laws such as the Punjab Child Marriage Restraint Act and leaves her exposed to continued coercion. The family and activists are demanding her safe recovery and a fresh judicial review, framing the case as emblematic of how courts sometimes prioritise a disputed "marriage" document over a child's documented birth date and family's wishes.

Additional forced-conversion cases cited in 'A Bleak Road to Justice' (Aug 22)

The same feature article names several other minor girls from religious-minority families cited as recent forced-conversion and forced-marriage cases: Sataish Mariam, 14, from Chichawatni; Mariam Asif, 12, from Vehari; and Maria Shahbaz, 13. These cases are referenced collectively rather than reported individually in this month's coverage, but are listed by rights advocates as part of a continuing pattern in Punjab in which underage Christian girls are abducted, converted to Islam, and married to their abductors, with police and lower courts frequently slow to act, or accepting disputed documentation of the girls' ages that allows the marriages to stand.

3. Misuse of Blasphemy Provisions

Families demand inquiry into 'Blasphemy Business Gang' honey-trapping (Aug 22)

Families of men falsely accused of blasphemy held a press conference in Islamabad demanding a judicial inquiry commission into what they call the "Blasphemy Business Gang" — a network alleged to use women

posing online ("honey-traps") to lure young men into compromising conversations, then extort them or have them falsely charged with blasphemy, an offence that in Pakistan can carry the death penalty and often triggers vigilante violence regardless of a case's outcome. Government figures cited at the press conference show more than 120 people have been acquitted or bailed in such cases, but around 300 remain in prison in Punjab. A European Commission report is cited as saying the network has trapped more than 800 people, mostly young men, and that as of April 2026 over 300 falsely accused people remained jailed despite existing legal safeguards. Families also demanded the reopening of the long-stalled "Noor Fatima" writ petition — a 2024 constitutional case seeking an inquiry commission into the gang, whose hearings have been repeatedly suspended and delayed since a July 2025 court order was overturned — and a fresh, independent investigation into the killing of Abdullah Shah, a young man whose death they link to the same honey-trapping network; they allege the earlier IHC-ordered inquiry into his murder was quietly obstructed. They also asked why an alleged ringleader, known as Komal Ismail alias "Iman," remains at large despite a standing arrest order, and called for protection of judges from mob pressure and social-media harassment in blasphemy-related cases.

A Bleak Road to Justice: Mob rule, forced conversions (Aug 22)

The same feature discussed under categories 1 and 2 also documents how blasphemy allegations have repeatedly served as a trigger for mob violence against religious minorities, citing the Jaranwala riots and the Kot Radha Kishan lynching as the clearest examples, alongside the death sentences given to Christians Shagufta Kiran and Asif Pervaiz. Taken together with the honey-trapping cases above, it argues that Pakistan's blasphemy laws function less as an ordinary criminal statute and more as a tool that can be weaponised — by mobs, by individuals settling personal scores, or by organised networks — against both religious minorities and vulnerable young Muslim men, with the accused facing danger even where courts eventually acquit them.

Supreme Court acquits final 3 in Shama & Shahzad Masih lynching (Aug 18)

As detailed above, the mob violence that killed this Christian couple in 2014 was triggered by a since-discredited blasphemy allegation against them. Its inclusion in this category underscores how, even when a blasphemy accusation is baseless, the mere allegation can be enough to provoke lethal mob violence — and how the resulting prosecutions of the mob's members can still end, twelve years on, in acquittals across the board, leaving both the original allegation and the killings themselves unresolved by the courts.

EU Ambassador interview — blasphemy cases section (Aug 31)

Ambassador Karoblis welcomed a reduction in the number of new blasphemy cases from their peak several years ago, and noted court decisions in Islamabad and Sindh releasing more than 100 people on bail. However, he said Punjab remains a major concern, with roughly 500 people — including young people — still affected by pending cases, and that so-called "blasphemy gangs," while reduced in influence, remain active. He called for "credible guarantees" that such provocations will not keep succeeding, noting the issue has been flagged by the European Parliament since 2021 as a factor in Pakistan's GSP+ trade preferences (see category 9).

Reuters figure cited in the honey-trapping story

Citing a Reuters report dated August 6, 2026, based on Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) data, only 13 new blasphemy cases have been registered nationwide so far in 2026 — a reduction of roughly two-thirds compared with previous years. Reuters attributed the decline to a state crackdown on extremist religious groups and a shift in official policy, quoting Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry as saying the government and military are aligned on curbing such groups. Advocates for those already

imprisoned argue this same "zero tolerance" approach toward extremism should be extended to the networks accused of fabricating blasphemy allegations for profit.

4. Civilian Harm and Internal Displacement in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan

Balochistan: 6 killed, including 4 labourers; forces claim 37 militants killed (Aug 22)

Four apple-orchard labourers were killed and three injured near Mastung, Balochistan, in what survivors described as a drone or airborne-explosive strike, while two more unidentified bodies — both shot dead — were found nearby; separately, militants blew up a small bridge on the Quetta-Karachi highway (N-25), disrupting a key trade route. Mastung is a district where banned Baloch separatist groups such as the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) are active, and the province's home minister had recently survived an attack in the same area. In a separate statement, ISPR (Inter-Services Public Relations, the Pakistani military's media wing) said security forces killed 37 BLA militants in Balochistan and 12 fighters linked to the Pakistani Taliban (Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, or TTP) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) over the same period — illustrating both the civilian toll of the ongoing Baloch insurgency and the difficulty of independently verifying military claims about militant casualties.

Pishin: Bodies of 5 Punjab labourers recovered after attack (Aug 25)

Five grape and fruit traders from Jhang and Pakpattan districts in Punjab were abducted from Qilla Abdullah a day earlier, driven to an area near Pishin, and shot dead; a sixth, the driver, survived by feigning death despite multiple gunshot wounds. Police attributed the killing to the banned Baloch Liberation Army, which had also bombed a nearby police station days before. The attack fits a wider, worsening pattern this year of banned Baloch militant groups deliberately targeting non-local labourers and traders — seen by militants as symbols of the Punjabi-dominated state — in a bid to disrupt trade and infrastructure projects and stoke fear among "outsiders" working in the province.

5. Enforced Disappearances

Dawn — Enforced Disappearances section (Jul 26, closest to August coverage)

Family members of Asif Baloch, an alleged victim of enforced disappearance (a term used for people, mostly ethnic Baloch, who rights groups say are picked up by security agencies without acknowledgment or due process), protested outside the Quetta Press Club alongside the Voice for Baloch Missing Persons (VBMP), a long-running advocacy group that maintains a permanent protest camp and documents such cases. They described enforced disappearances as a grave human-rights violation and called for due process for anyone accused of a crime, rather than extrajudicial detention. The VBMP's protest camp and documentation work remained a recurring theme in coverage of Balochistan through the month, reflecting how normalized — and how contested — the practice of enforced disappearance has become in the province.

EU Ambassador interview — enforced disappearances section (Aug 31)

Ambassador Karoblis identified enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings as top-tier "red zone" concerns threatening Pakistan's GSP+ trade status. He said Pakistani officials often cite the country's security situation — Pakistan ranks first on the Global Terrorism Index — in response, but that the EU's position is that human-rights guarantees, including the right to a defence and family access to detainees,

must still apply even amid counter-terrorism operations, and that perpetrators should be held accountable. He called for enhanced monitoring of disappearance cases, saying government responses on the issue have varied by official, and that real progress here is essential to the EU's assessment.

6. Judicial Proceedings Raising Fair-Trial Concerns

Imaan Mazari & Hadi Ali Chattha ask SC to fix sentence-suspension hearing (Aug 1)

Human-rights lawyer Imaan Zainab Mazari and her husband Hadi Ali Chattha asked the Supreme Court for an early hearing of their sentence-suspension appeals, after the Islamabad High Court (IHC) indefinitely adjourned the matter despite the Supreme Court's own earlier direction that it be decided within two weeks. Mazari is a prominent lawyer and activist known for representing political detainees and criticising the security establishment; the specifics of the underlying conviction are not detailed in this item, but the repeated procedural delays are cited by rights groups as symptomatic of how politically sensitive cases can be slow-walked through Pakistan's court system.

SC laments delays in Imaan & Hadi appeals; adjourns to Sept 17 (Aug 20)

The Supreme Court adjourned Mazari and Chattha's sentence-suspension hearing to September 17, with the bench, led by Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan, remarking "let the system be fully exposed" after learning the IHC had repeatedly rescheduled the case despite the top court's directive. During the same hearing, veteran activist Tahira Abdullah was made to remove a keffiyeh (a checkered scarf associated with pro-Palestinian solidarity) before proceedings could continue — an incident cited by observers as an example of how even symbolic gestures by rights defenders can draw scrutiny inside Pakistani courtrooms.

SC dismisses Zahir Jaffar's review petition, Noor Mukadam case (decided Jun 4, reported Aug)

The Supreme Court dismissed a review petition by Zahir Jaffar, who was sentenced to death for the 2021 murder of Noor Mukadam — the daughter of a former Pakistani ambassador — in one of Pakistan's highest-profile femicide cases. His lawyers argued for leniency on grounds of mental illness, citing a 2015 psychiatric assessment describing a past drug-induced psychotic episode, but the court found no contemporaneous medical evidence he was incapacitated at the time of the murder or trial, noting he had engaged coherently with proceedings. The court also rejected arguments that a state-appointed lawyer made his trial unfair, and upheld the use of forensic evidence. The ruling is regarded as reinforcing accountability in gender-based violence cases, in contrast to the near-total impunity seen in cases like Kot Radha Kishan above.

EU Ambassador interview — military trials of civilians (Aug 31)

Ambassador Karoblis raised concern over Pakistan expanding the jurisdiction of military courts to try civilians, an issue the EU's GSP+ report also flags. He said this raises questions of proportionality under Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which guarantees fair-trial rights, and that UN experts should assess whether the practice complies with international obligations. He also referenced concerns over the detention conditions and fair-trial standards for jailed opposition figures, including a former prime minister, while stressing the EU does not intervene in the merits of individual cases and expects courts alone to decide guilt or innocence. Separately, he noted EU concern over recent constitutional amendments creating a Federal Constitutional Court, saying the principle is not itself problematic but that how judges are appointed to it could raise independence concerns.

LHC: compromise cannot secure bail in honour-killing case, Rajanpur (Aug 25)

The Lahore High Court (LHC) rejected post-arrest bail for two men accused of killing 18-year-old Najma Mai in an honour killing in Rajanpur district, ruling that a "raazinama" — a customary family compromise or reconciliation agreement, often used in Pakistan to settle disputes including some murders — cannot secure bail because honour-killing offences are legally "non-compoundable," meaning the state, not just the family, has an interest in prosecuting the crime and it cannot simply be forgiven by relatives. This is a significant judicial safeguard, since honour killings are frequently perpetrated by family members, who can otherwise pressure other relatives to "forgive" the killer and effectively end the case.

Families of Army Public School martyrs still await justice (Aug 21)

Marking the International Day of Remembrance of Victims of Terrorism, this piece revisits the 2014 Army Public School (APS) attack in Peshawar, in which Taliban gunmen killed 147 people, most of them schoolchildren — one of the deadliest terrorist attacks in Pakistan's history. More than 11 years later, the recommendations of the judicial commission that investigated security lapses enabling the attack remain unimplemented, and the families' pursuit of accountability is now stalled before the newly created Federal Constitutional Court, illustrating how even Pakistan's most nationally unifying tragedy has not produced full accountability for the officials responsible for the security failures that preceded it.

7. Gender-Based Violence, Including Honour Killings

16-year-old gang-raped, Nowshera (Aug 1)

A 16-year-old girl working at a beauty parlour in Nowshera district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, was lured away after being falsely told her father had been in an accident, then abducted by four men — including her own cousin — drugged with chloroform, and gang-raped. She escaped, reported the attack, and a medical exam confirmed the assault; one suspect has been arrested while police search for the others. The article also cites recent Senate testimony highlighting Pakistan's near-zero conviction rate in gender-based violence (GBV) cases, underscoring that even when victims report attacks immediately, as this one did, successful prosecution remains the exception rather than the rule.

Police official accused of assaulting his mother, Rawalpindi (Aug 1)

A serving police officer, Farrukh Munir, allegedly flew into a rage over a lost house key and beat his elderly mother, Shamshad Begum, tearing her clothes and scratching her face, then assaulted his brother who intervened to protect her. Two days after a case was filed, the suspect remained at large, having sought pre-arrest bail through the courts rather than face arrest; investigating officers cited the case's "domestic" nature as a reason for a cautious approach. The mother has appealed for police protection, fearing retaliation given her son's position within the force — a case that illustrates both domestic violence against elderly women and the reluctance sometimes shown by police toward pursuing one of their own.

Father, brother arrested for TikToker Shamsu Bibi's honour killing (Aug 22)

Shamsu Bibi, known online as Ayesha Galamna, a TikTok creator with over 1.3 million followers, was shot in Taxila on August 14 in an attack her family initially reported as a robbery-related shooting linked to a financial dispute. Police later arrested her father, brother, cousin and two other relatives after they confessed the killing was staged: using more than 100 CCTV feeds and other evidence, investigators determined it was in fact an honour killing, reportedly carried out because of her social-media career, though police say it is still unclear whether the murder followed a jirga (an informal tribal or community council) decision. The case highlights how women's online visibility and independence can themselves become a pretext for lethal "honour"-based violence by male relatives.

SC dismisses Zahir Jaffar's review petition — Noor Mukadam case (Aug 20–22 reporting)

As detailed under category 6, the Supreme Court's dismissal of Jaffar's appeal upheld his death sentence for murdering Noor Mukadam. In its ruling, the Court characterised the crime as part of a systemic pattern of gender-motivated violence rather than an isolated incident, and Dawn's coverage notes the Court separately held, in mid-August, that women exercising lawful rights — such as securing a divorce — should not face violence with impunity, in a different case where a man murdered his ex-wife two days after her divorce was finalised. Together these rulings mark rare instances of the judiciary explicitly naming femicide as a structural problem rather than treating each case in isolation.

16-year-old Farwa Qaimkhani shot dead over tattoo, Tando Allahyar (Aug 20)

Sixteen-year-old Farwa Qaimkhani was shot dead in Tando Allahyar, Sindh, in a killing initially staged to look like a suicide. Police grew suspicious after noting that lettering had been tattooed on the victim's arm, raising suspicion she was killed over perceived dishonour connected to the tattoo — tattoos being widely viewed as religiously and socially transgressive in conservative rural communities. Her father and other relatives have been named as accused. The case is one of several this month from Sindh province illustrating that "honour"-based killings can be triggered by acts as minor as a tattoo or a social-media post, not only allegations of a romantic or sexual relationship.

Brother confesses to honour killing sister Sonia Bibi, Sargodha (Aug 20)

In Bhalwal, Sargodha district, Punjab, a man named Muhammad Afaq shot his sister Sonia Bibi after accusing her of "illicit relationships" and telling her she had "no right" to be his sister; she died of her wounds en route to hospital. Police, who happened to be passing the house on an unrelated matter, helped arrange emergency transport, and Afaq was later arrested and confessed to the killing "in the name of honour." The report cites Punjab police data showing honour killings reported in the province have fluctuated between roughly 11 and 19 cases a year in recent years, and references a 2025 study recording 89 such cases, underscoring that these killings remain a persistent, rather than declining, feature of gender-based violence in Punjab.

Hina Javed murder, Rawalpindi (Aug 20 onward, multiple follow-ups)

Hina Javed, a 45-year-old digital-media professional, was found dead in her Rawalpindi home just nine months after her marriage; before attempting to stage the death as a suicide, her killers reportedly tied her hands and feet and strangled her. Her husband and a domestic worker have been arrested, while her father-in-law, a retired army colonel named in the police report (FIR), remains free. The Punjab Prosecution Department has declared the case "high-profile," forming a senior team to oversee it while awaiting forensic and polygraph results; a public #JusticeForHina campaign and an August 31 candlelight vigil (see next item) have kept pressure on authorities, with the victim's family alleging the domestic worker has repeatedly changed his statement and that the father-in-law's position has shielded him from arrest so far.

Candlelight vigil / WDF declares femicide a 'national emergency' (Aug 31)

The Women Democratic Front (WDF), a feminist advocacy group, held a candlelight vigil outside the Islamabad Press Club for Hina Javed, declaring femicide — the killing of women because they are women — a national emergency. Citing child-rights and gender-violence monitor Sahil's "Six Months Cruel Numbers" report, organisers noted 3,172 gender-based-violence cases were recorded in the first half of 2026 through media monitoring alone, including 644 murders and 132 honour killings, with more than half occurring inside victims' own homes and 18 involving transgender individuals; they stressed these figures likely undercount the true scale, since they capture only cases reported in the news. Speakers demanded a

nationally coordinated action plan with fixed timelines, better-enforced protection orders, funded shelters, and a national femicide register tracking prior complaints and case outcomes, arguing that police too often pressure women back into dangerous marriages rather than treating domestic violence as life-threatening.

LHC: compromise cannot secure bail in honour killing (Najma Mai, Rajanpur) (Aug 25)

As also noted under category 6, the Lahore High Court's ruling that family "compromise" agreements cannot secure bail in the honour killing of 18-year-old Najma Mai reinforces a legal principle — that such killings are non-compoundable, state-prosecuted crimes rather than private family matters — that campaigners see as essential to preventing families from being pressured into shielding relatives who kill female family members.

Dawn — Women's Rights and Honour Killings sections (multiple Aug dates)

Beyond the cases above, Dawn's August coverage recorded a woman allegedly killed for "honour" in Dasu, Upper Kohistan (Aug 12) — despite her family's claim it was a stray-bullet death, police suspected an honour motive, noting a similar case involving a police constable in the same area the previous month — and the strangling of Iqra Bibi in Khanewal (Aug 14) by her father, brothers and uncles after she contracted a court marriage (a civil marriage arranged without family consent) against their wishes. A Dawn op-ed on Aug 24 also noted Pakistan continues to rank poorly on global gender-gap indices, citing girls out of school, a wide digital divide, high rates of violence, and low female representation in leadership roles.

8. Children's Rights

9-year-old Faizan killed by madrassah cleric's physical abuse, Bhakkar (Aug 28)

Nine-year-old Faizan, sent by his family to a madrassah (religious seminary) for Quranic education, died from sustained physical abuse inflicted by the cleric responsible for his care; the cleric initially told the family the boy had simply fallen ill, but the severity of the injuries on his body revealed otherwise, and the cleric has since fled. The case is listed separately from the sexual-abuse cases below because the abuse here was physical rather than sexual, but it reflects the same underlying problem: religious seminaries in Pakistan operate with minimal government oversight of how children in their care are treated, leaving abusive clerics largely unaccountable unless a case becomes public.

HRCP report: Online child sexual exploitation, Muzaffargarh case (Aug 16)

A Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) report found that online child sexual exploitation (OCSEA) is widespread in Pakistan but remains largely hidden due to weak reporting mechanisms, fragmented institutional responsibility, and low digital literacy among families and officials. Its centrepiece case, from Muzaffargarh in Punjab, found that at least 50 children were exploited at a facility disguised as a "fighting" or self-defence training school, with recordings of their abuse sold online. The report calls for stronger legislation, coordinated investigations across agencies, child-sensitive interview and court procedures, and long-term protection — including psychological support, privacy safeguards and monitoring against renewed blackmail — for survivors.

Spate of abuse cases involving madrassa students in Punjab (brief item)

Citing a wider pattern of violent and sexual abuse cases involving students at madrassas (religious seminaries) in Punjab, the National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC), a federal statutory body, called for stricter government monitoring of seminaries, madrassas, schools and other child-care

institutions, warning that the current oversight regime is inadequate to protect children entrusted to these settings.

Dawn — Children’s Rights/Abuse section (Aug 6, mid-Aug)

Dawn reported a 17-year-old suspect arrested in Karachi’s Qayyumabad area after a minor girl was allegedly raped and killed (Aug 6), and a mid-August report on an attempted rape of an 11-year-old girl in Sheikhpura, which noted that Punjab accounted for 80 percent of the 1,914 child-abuse cases recorded nationwide in the first half of 2026, according to child-rights group Sahil. That report also referenced an earlier Bahawalnagar case in which a cleric was arrested for allegedly assaulting and impregnating his 14-year-old student over a two-year period — a case Dawn’s editorial pages repeatedly cited through August as an example of institutional failure to protect children.

5-year-old Ayat Noor raped and murdered, Haripur (Aug 25)

After a 14-day search that drew nationwide attention, five-year-old Ayat Noor was found dead in a dry well in Haripur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Investigators, using extensive CCTV and technical data, arrested four neighbourhood suspects — including minors — in connection with her abduction, sexual assault and murder; one has already confessed. Thousands attended vigils, and local businesses observed a day of mourning, with the public demanding swift and complete accountability for everyone involved, including any adults who may have facilitated or covered up the crime by the minors implicated.

No item specifically on child labour was carried in this month’s coverage; the subcategory is retained here to flag the gap for future monitoring.

9. Torture

18-year-old Christian man Daud Masih dies after alleged police torture, Lodhran (Aug 25)

Daud Masih, an 18-year-old Christian and 10th-grade student, died after allegedly being tortured by police who stopped him during a motorcycle check near Kahrur Pakka in Lodhran district, Punjab, and after he fell into a canal during the encounter. His father’s complaint led to an FIR (First Information Report, the document that formally opens a criminal case in Pakistan) naming two police officials and one unidentified person; the charge was upgraded from attempted murder to murder under Section 302 of the Pakistan Penal Code after his body was recovered nearly 28 hours later. The nominated police suspects have not yet been arrested, though local police say an investigation team has been formed and arrests are expected — a case that, coming from a religious-minority family, has drawn added scrutiny over whether minority status affected how the initial police stop and its aftermath were handled.

10. Freedom of Expression

Under Attack: Press freedom shrinks in Balochistan amid PECA misuse (Aug 4)

Journalists and activists in Balochistan described a pattern of temporary detentions, legal notices and cases filed under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) — a 2016 cybercrime law, since twice amended, that press-freedom groups say has increasingly been used to silence critical reporting rather than genuine cybercrime. Cases cited include those of Dawn investigative journalist Akbar Notezai, digital-outlet head Farhan Malik, editor Agha Obaid (who says he was threatened with a month-long detention under the colonial-era Maintenance of Public Order law after reporting on alleged corruption), and lawyer Jalila Haider. While provincial officials insist such cases are filed by private individuals rather than the

government, journalists point out that some complainants are themselves sitting ministers or officials, and press bodies including Reporters Without Borders have called on the government to repeal or substantially amend PECA to protect press freedom.

HRCP roundtable: charter of demands for press freedom (Aug 19)

Media professionals and civil-society figures adopted a seven-point charter of demands at a roundtable in Karachi organised by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), calling for the repeal or amendment of PECA and other laws seen as restricting expression, protection of editorial independence from political and advertiser pressure, safer conditions for women and freelance journalists, modernised and more democratic journalists' unions and press clubs, fair wages and job security for media workers, and recognition of the distinct press-freedom challenges across Pakistan's different provinces and regions, including Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The charter frames freedom of expression as a constitutional right rather than something granted at the state's discretion.

EU Ambassador interview — defamation laws and PECA (Aug 31)

Ambassador Karoblis named freedom of expression and treatment of journalists as another GSP+ "red zone," citing doubts about Pakistan's ability to implement relevant UN conventions given both the text and practical application of the amended PECA law, Punjab's separate defamation legislation, and aspects of counter-terrorism law that can be used against speech. He said these are issues that "really should be addressed" to improve the situation for journalists.

EU Ambassador interview — internet shutdowns (Aug 31)

The ambassador also raised proportionality concerns over the extended internet shutdown in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK, the Pakistan-administered part of the disputed Kashmir region — see category 14), noting it fell outside the reporting period of the EU's most recent GSP+ report but that internet restrictions, even where imposed for genuine security reasons, must be proportionate. He said he was personally doubtful the AJK shutdown met that standard, given it was not tied to a counter-terrorism or military operation, and that further assessment against UN standards would be needed.

11. Health Rights

PIMS Hospital nursery fire kills at least 14 newborns, Islamabad (Aug 26)

At least 14 newborns died from suffocation and burns after a fire broke out in the nursery of Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS), a major public hospital in Islamabad, caused by an air-conditioning compressor burst that ignited nearby oxygen cylinders. Initial findings showed emergency exits were locked and staff had received no training for such an emergency, while the hospital's firefighting equipment was inadequate and not properly maintained. The federal Health Secretary was suspended and multiple inquiry committees were formed to investigate; the tragedy has drawn attention to chronic underinvestment in safety infrastructure and emergency preparedness even at Pakistan's flagship public hospitals, where the country's most vulnerable patients — including premature infants — are treated.

12. Law and Order Situation

Army deployment in Rawalpindi under Article 245 (Aug 24)

The federal Ministry of Interior approved the deployment of roughly three Pakistan Army companies (an estimated 300–450 troops) in Rawalpindi for six months to assist local police, invoking Article 245 of the

Constitution, which allows the armed forces to be called in aid of civil power and, when invoked, can also curtail the jurisdiction of the High Courts over related matters (Article 245(3)). The deployment, requested by the Punjab Home Department to secure sensitive installations and manage potential emergencies, drew sharp criticism from politicians and legal experts, including Senator Farhatullah Babar, who argued it was made without parliamentary debate and could set a troubling precedent for normalising military involvement in ordinary civilian policing, given the ouster of judicial oversight that Article 245 triggers.

Gunfire and physical altercations at Sarhad University student protest, Islamabad (Aug 25)

A student protest at Sarhad University's Islamabad campus, sparked by the suspension of a department head over harassment and corruption allegations, turned violent when a serving army lieutenant colonel — the husband of a staff member — arrived at the scene, leading to physical altercations and shots fired into the air. Police said they would pursue action against the officer under the Army Act (the law governing military discipline and offences by service members), and normal campus operations have since resumed; the episode raised concern about the presence and conduct of military personnel in civilian disputes on university campuses.

Punjab Control of Habitual Offenders and Anti-Social Behaviour Bill 2026 halted (brief item)

The Speaker of the Punjab Assembly announced that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz had halted the proposed Control of Habitual Offenders and Anti-Social Behaviour Bill 2026 pending reconsideration, directing the Assembly Secretariat to act accordingly. While details of the bill's specific provisions are not given in this item, "habitual offender" and preventive-detention style legislation of this kind has historically drawn criticism from rights groups in Pakistan for granting police broad discretion to detain people without a specific criminal charge, based on a general designation of being a repeat troublemaker.

13. Democracy

The long road to the ballot box: Women in Lower Dir still wait to be counted (Aug 1)

Women in Lower Dir district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, remain significantly less likely than men to be registered voters — with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) citing roughly 61 percent of men registered against just 48 percent of women — prompting the ECP to launch a fresh voter-registration drive in the district. Activists point to entrenched conservative social norms, some families' reluctance to have women's photographs or personal data on official documents, and limited political-party interest in courting female voters as long-standing structural barriers to closing the gap, arguing this systemic under-registration effectively silences women's political voice in one of Pakistan's more socially conservative regions even before polling day arrives.

14. Azad Jammu & Kashmir Human Rights Situation

HRCP mission finds AJK unrest deepened by state crackdown, rights restrictions (Aug 30)

A Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) fact-finding mission examined months of unrest in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), the Pakistan-administered portion of the disputed Kashmir region, which grew out of 2023 protests over electricity and flour prices and elite privilege, led by the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC). After talks over a 38-point October 2025 agreement broke down in May 2026, the AJK government banned JAAC under anti-terrorism law on June 5 and launched a crackdown, offering a Rs10 million reward for information on JAAC leader Shoukat Nawaz Mir, who was reportedly arrested on June 30 without ever being formally produced before a court. HRCP says authorities reported

38 security personnel killed and 742 injured since June, but could not obtain comparably verified figures on civilian casualties, partly because its mission could not access Rawalakot, one of the worst-affected areas; it found at least 157 people — activists, journalists and residents — placed on the "Fourth Schedule," a watch-list under anti-terrorism law that imposes movement and reporting restrictions without a criminal conviction. A prolonged internet and mobile shutdown disrupted banking, healthcare, education and commerce, especially around Rawalakot, and elections were held in a phased format for the first time in AJK's history amid boycotts and security concerns. HRCP has called for an independent, impartial investigation into all deaths and alleged abuses since June, a review of anti-terrorism law provisions, and inclusive political dialogue rather than further coercive measures.