
HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING

PAKISTAN

Human Rights Fact Sheet
Developments, Protection Concerns and Priority Recommendations

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Executive Summary

This update reviews reported human rights developments in Pakistan during September 2026, together with several late-August items closely linked to the month's coverage. Key concerns include a directive to remove Afghan medical and dental students from Pakistani institutions, since suspended by the Lahore High Court for the petitioners; renewed targeted attacks on Ahmadis, the contested destruction of a historic Hindu temple in Narowal and the abduction and forced conversion of minor girls; blasphemy accusations and the prolonged detention of Junaid Hafeez; a surge in militant violence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, including the Kohat Police Lines attack that killed 23 people; enforced disappearances, including the death of Imran Ali after a year of concealment; fair-trial concerns, notably the re-arrest of lawyers Imaan Mazari and Hadi Ali Chattha; a sustained pattern of gender-based violence, honour killings and femicide that again drew parliamentary attention; sexual abuse and online exploitation of children and continuing child marriage; restrictions on peaceful protest and preventive detention of opposition figures ahead of a planned march on Islamabad; the use of cybercrime law and counter-terrorism powers against journalists and critics; accountability gaps after the PIMS newborn-nursery fire; the Punjab Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Bill's provision for anonymous trials; contested political legitimacy in Azad Jammu and Kashmir; climate-related floods; fatal accidents in Balochistan's coal mines; and the European Union's warning that GSP+ benefits cannot be taken for granted.

Courts and parliamentary committees sent mixed signals. Judicial rulings on Afghan students, child marriage, solitary confinement, dower and marital rape, and the admission of Junaid Hafeez's appeal, offered protection; other decisions – the acquittal of the last officers accused in the Naezeebullah Mehsud case, the ruling upholding the ban on Ahmadi scriptures and the narrowing of the workplace harassment law – illustrated continuing accountability gaps. Priority action is needed to protect civilians and displaced persons, safeguard due process and fair trial, protect minorities, women and children, curb misuse of blasphemy, cybercrime and counter-terrorism provisions, and strengthen independent oversight and effective remedies. Each section below identifies the human rights standards most closely engaged – articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), international conventions and the Constitution of Pakistan – and sources are listed at the end of the document.

KEY INDICATORS REPORTED DURING THE PERIOD

INDICATOR	REPORTED FIGURE
Afghan medical/dental students at risk of removal under PM&DC directives (Lahore alone, per HRCP)	~100 (20–40 women); directives suspended by LHC for petitioners on 11 Sept
Afghan nationals returned or deported in 2025 (Senate committee briefing)	1,155,221
Reported attacks on Ahmadis, 2–21 September	3 attacks: 1 killed, 3 injured
Kohat Police Lines attack, 18 September	23 killed (17 police, 6 civilians); 100+ injured
Persons still missing before the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances (10,900+ cases received since 2011)	1,400+
Children sexually exploited online in Pakistan in one year (UNICEF)	~1.5 million (71% told no one)
Gender-based violence cases recorded in 2025 (Sahil)	7,071 (5,253 in 2024)
Ever-married women aged 15–49 who own land alone or jointly (SDPI)	~2%
Newborns killed in the PIMS Islamabad nursery fire, 26 August	14 (8 officials ordered suspended)
Coal miners killed in Balochistan in 2026 to date	48 (six incidents)
PTI supporters reportedly detained ahead of planned march (party claim)	~1,500
EU GSP+: current scheme ends / transition period ends	31 Dec 2026 / 31 Dec 2028

Source: Dawn / Voicepk.net / HRCP / UNICEF / Sahil / SDPI / PICSS / UN experts / EU Delegation reporting, September 2026 issue. Figures are as reported by the cited sources and, where noted, are claims or estimates not independently verified.

1. Principal Human Rights Developments

A. AFGHAN NATIONALS: STUDENTS, EDUCATION AND RETURN

The Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PM&DC) directed medical and dental institutions nationwide that Afghan students already enrolled must return to Afghanistan and that no admission, placement, transfer or migration may be granted to Afghan nationals during the current academic session, following council decisions of 30–31 July and a letter dated 1 September. Institutions were told to issue no-objection certificates and arrange departures; one Lahore university letter set a 24-hour compliance deadline and listed 21 students. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) condemned the decision on 10 September, saying around 100 Afghan medical and dental students in Lahore alone – an estimated 20 to 40 of them women – were at risk, that some had sought safe shelter, and that no student should be returned without an individual risk assessment.

Official accounts differed. The Foreign Office said there was no decision to send all Afghan students back at once: those not enrolled are being returned, while students with valid visas who are enrolled will complete their degrees. PM&DC said its rules apply to all foreign students and that, of more than 200 Afghan medical students identified, only 22 are registered with it, with 176 files under verification. A Ministry of Health official told Voicepk the decision followed recent tension between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Students, many admitted under the HEC's Allama Muhammad Iqbal Scholarship, said about 1,000 Afghan students study across Pakistan, many in their final year, and that women would face the ban on female education if returned (figures are the students' own).

On 11 September the Lahore High Court (Justice Khalid Ishaq) suspended both PM&DC directives for the petitioners, ordered that no adverse action be taken, and allowed them to attend classes, sit examinations and return to hostels. On 18 September it granted PM&DC more time to reply; the interim relief remains in force. Counsel for petitioners reported that colleges are gradually readmitting students, that some students still face difficulties, and that the "national policy" cited by PM&DC has not been disclosed. A Senate committee was separately told that 1,155,221 Afghan nationals were returned or deported in 2025; the Foreign Office reiterated that anyone without a valid visa and passport is treated as illegal under the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan.

ASSESSMENT

Education should not be used as an instrument of collective penalty. Authorities should withdraw the PM&DC directives, allow enrolled students to complete their degrees, conduct individual risk assessments before any return – with particular attention to women and girls – and publish the policy on which the directives rely.

APPLICABLE HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS

UDHR	Art. 14 (right to seek asylum); Art. 26 (right to education); Arts. 2 and 7 (non-discrimination and equal protection).
International conventions and standards	Non-refoulement: CAT Art. 3 and ICCPR Art. 7 (Pakistan is a party to both); 1951 Refugee Convention Art. 33 (Pakistan is not a party, but the principle is widely regarded as binding customary law); ICCPR Art. 13 (safeguards on expulsion); ICESCR Art. 13 and CRC Arts. 22 and 28 (education; refugee children); CEDAW Art. 10 (women's equal access to education).
Constitution of Pakistan	Art. 4 (right to be treated in accordance with law, extended to every person within Pakistan); Art. 9 (security of person); Art. 10A (due process); Art. 25A (free education, ages 5–16).

Sources: [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

B. ATTACKS ON RELIGIOUS MINORITIES, FORCED CONVERSION AND RELIGIOUS-FREEDOM RULINGS

Ahmadis. Mirza Safdar Mahmood (65), a local Ahmadiyya office-bearer, was shot dead in Mandi Bahauddin on 2 September. The FIR (sections 302/34 PPC and section 7 of the Anti-Terrorism Act) names two

unidentified assailants; no arrests were reported. On 19 September in Sargodha, Malik Mahmood Mubarak (70) and his son Ayaz Mubarak (40) were shot and injured by motorcyclists (FIR under sections 324/34 PPC), and on 21 September Hamid Javed was injured in a knife attack near Lathianwala, Faisalabad (FIR 1670/26). Banners inciting hatred were displayed on University Road, Sargodha, on 7 September. The community says violence that had declined after the October 2025 crackdown on the TLP may be rising and reported no government response to the Faisalabad attack. On 7 September UN experts urged Pakistan to end the persecution of Ahmadis and “break the pattern of impunity”; on 9 September the Federal Constitutional Court dismissed petitions against the Punjab ban on the 23-volume Rohani Khazain, holding that freedom of religion under Article 20 is subject to law, public order and morality and that petitioners had not shown the forfeiture to be unlawful.

Hindu heritage and forced conversion. The Punjab government and the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) say a century-old Hindu temple in Siraj village, Narowal, collapsed in torrential rain on 21 August and has been promised restoration; minority-rights activists allege it was demolished, citing hammer marks on bricks, removal of materials and the temple’s metal crown, and an adjoining seminary. They also allege that an ETPB order of 29 January 2026 cancelling the seminary’s lease was never enforced. These claims were not independently verified. The Foreign Office rejected Indian criticism as “false and politically motivated”. Separately, two Hindu sisters, Sita (14) and Ropi (13), were allegedly abducted in Tando Allahyar on 27 August; an FIR including the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2013 was registered on 4 September, and the girls were recovered, told the court they wished to go with their parents and were placed in a safe house. Lawyers cited 22 abduction and forced-conversion cases in Sindh in nine months (an advocate’s figure).

Christians. Saba Mehboob (21), a Christian woman, was shot dead in her home in Rawalpindi on 3 September by a neighbour who, according to the FIR, accused her of infidelity; her stepbrother was held for 21 hours and the main suspect remains a fugitive. The Church of Pakistan (21 September) rejected the Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Christian Family Laws Bills, 2026 in their present form and called for denomination-wide consultation, while a Punjab Assembly committee on 30 September unanimously approved the Christian Marriage Bill, 2026, which would replace the 1872 Act, raise the minimum marriage age to 18 for both parties (currently 16 for males and 13 for females) and require union-council and NADRA registration.

Positive signals. On 7 September the Supreme Court upheld an order requiring Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal to pay Rs10,000 a month, with a 10 per cent annual increase, to two minor Hindu girls, noting the particular vulnerability of minorities. Ceremonies for the 487th death anniversary of Guru Nanak began at Kartarpur on 21 September with extensive security arrangements.

ASSESSMENT

The State should investigate every attack on Ahmadis as a possible hate crime, prosecute incitement as well as violence, order an independent inquiry into the Narowal temple and restore it, and require child-sensitive, independent age and consent verification in all conversion and marriage cases involving minors. Personal-law reform affecting religious communities should follow genuine consultation.

APPLICABLE HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS

UDHR	Art. 18 (freedom of thought, conscience and religion); Art. 3 (life, liberty and security); Art. 7 (protection against discrimination and incitement); Art. 16(2) (marriage only with free and full consent).
International conventions and standards	ICCPR Art. 18 (religion), Art. 20(2) (advocacy of religious hatred constituting incitement to violence), Art. 27 (minorities) and Art. 6 (life); CEDAW Art. 16(2) and CRC Arts. 19 and 24(3) (child marriage; protection from violence); 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.
Constitution of Pakistan	Art. 20 (profess, practise and propagate religion; manage religious institutions); Art. 36 (protection of minorities); Art. 25 (equality; Art. 25(3) special provision for women and children); Art. 9 (security of person).

Sources: [6] [7] [8] [9] [10] [11] [12] [13] [14] [15] [16] [17]

C. MISUSE OF BLASPHEMY PROVISIONS

Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari faced security concerns after the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) responded on 4 September to her suggestion that the in-camera trial provision in the proposed Anti-Terrorism Act amendment could be applied to section 295-C cases to protect the accused from mob violence. The TLP called the idea a conspiracy and warned that anyone crossing its “red line” would “become a lesson”.

Samuel Arif (26), a Christian man, was arrested in Lahore under FIR 806/26 (Muslim Town police station, sections 295-C and 298-A PPC) registered on 29 August on a complaint that he had spoken to two minor girls about a dream and used derogatory language. These are allegations in an FIR and have not been established by a court. His family says he was falsely implicated in a personal dispute and that he was beaten by a gathered group before police intervened; he has been sent on judicial remand.

On 22 September the Lahore High Court admitted Junaid Hafeez’s appeal against his December 2019 death sentence for regular hearing, nearly seven years after conviction. The bench questioned how responsibility for posts in a Facebook group could be attributed to its administrator without establishing who posted them, and noted that the Punjab Forensic Science Agency had conducted no forensic examination of his accounts or devices. Hafeez was arrested in 2013 and has been held in solitary confinement in Multan jail; his earlier counsel, Rashid Rehman, was shot dead in 2014. A Dawn feature recalled that the UN Committee against Torture has criticised the isolation of blasphemy prisoners for periods far beyond what the law permits.

ASSESSMENT

Appeals in blasphemy cases should be heard promptly and decided on admissible evidence. Pakistan should end prolonged solitary confinement of blasphemy prisoners, protect the accused, their families, lawyers and officials from mob and political threats, and review procedural safeguards, including the cognizable character of blasphemy offences, to prevent misuse.

APPLICABLE HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS

UDHR	Art. 10 (fair and public hearing); Art. 11(1) (presumption of innocence); Arts. 18–19 (belief and expression); Art. 5 (no cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment).
International conventions and standards	ICCPR Art. 14 (fair trial), Art. 6(2) (death penalty only for the most serious crimes), Arts. 7 and 10 (humane detention), Arts. 18–19 and Human Rights Committee General Comment 34 (blasphemy laws are incompatible with the Covenant except as Art. 20(2) requires); CAT Art. 16; Nelson Mandela Rules 43–45 (limits on solitary confinement); CAT Committee Concluding Observations on Pakistan.
Constitution of Pakistan	Art. 10A (fair trial); Arts. 4 and 9 (due process; security of person); Art. 14 (inviolability of dignity); Art. 20 (religious freedom).

Sources: [18] [19] [20] [21]

D. CIVILIAN HARM, LAW AND ORDER AND INSECURITY IN KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA AND BALOCHISTAN

Militant violence remained high. On 18 September an explosives-laden vehicle was detonated near a mosque in the old Police Lines in Kohat during Friday prayers, after which attackers stormed the compound; 23 people were killed, including 17 police personnel and six civilians, and more than 100 were injured. The attack was claimed by the Hafiz Gul Bahadur-led Ittehadul Mujahideen. Police said eight attackers were killed; the interior minister said seven. On 20 September two officers and four others were killed in a fire exchange in Hangu. In Balochistan, six people, including five security personnel and a Customs official, were killed in an attack on a Customs House on 31 August–1 September, and, according to the provincial government, about 40 militants attacked a police station, bank and assistant commissioner’s office in Bhag. An Edhi Foundation ambulance was hijacked in Kalat on 23 September.

Military and state media reported large numbers of militants killed – for example 48 in 72 hours across Mastung, Quetta, Kalat and Sibi, 16 on 23 September, and more than 71 in Shaban – using terms such as

“Fitna al-Khawarij” and “Fitna al-Hindustan”; none of these figures could be independently verified. PICSS data cited by Dawn recorded 378 deaths in August, including 203 militants and 54 security personnel; attacks in Balochistan rose from 83 to 89, and in mainland Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the merged districts attacks rose 50 and 126 per cent respectively. The monitoring set contained no verifiable data on internal displacement for the month.

Violence against civilians also continued outside militant incidents: a Quetta businessman, Salahuddin Noorzai, was shot dead on 2 September, prompting his family to block Airport Road with his body, and Islamabad police registered nearly a dozen kidnapping and missing-person cases on a single day in mid-September, including girls aged 15 to 18, without reporting arrests.

ASSESSMENT

Authorities should ensure independent, transparent investigation of civilian casualties attributed to militants and to security operations alike, publish verifiable casualty and displacement data, protect places of worship, police stations and travellers, and equip and train police to counter modern threats within a rights-respecting framework. Unverified operational claims should not substitute for public accountability.

APPLICABLE HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS

UDHR	Art. 3 (life, liberty and security of person); Art. 8 (effective remedy).
International conventions and standards	ICCPR Art. 6 (right to life) and Art. 2(3) (effective remedy); Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions and customary international humanitarian law (protection of civilians, binding on all parties including armed groups); UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials.
Constitution of Pakistan	Art. 9 (security of person); Art. 4 (due process); Art. 15 (freedom of movement); Art. 245 (armed forces acting in aid of civil power, subject to law).

Sources: [22] [23] [24] [25] [26] [27] [28] [29] [30] [31] [32]

E. ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES AND ABDUCTIONS

On 4 September UN experts expressed grave concern over the alleged enforced disappearance, torture and extrajudicial killing of Imran Ali in Balochistan. He was reportedly abducted on 27 August 2025 by about 20 Counter-Terrorism Department personnel; his family received no official information for a year. At a hearing of the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances on 6 August 2026, a police officer said he had been killed in an alleged encounter in May 2026 and buried in June as authorities were unable to preserve his remains; his family identified him from photographs at Civil Hospital Quetta. Six other bodies brought in with his were reportedly never documented. The experts called the case part of a widespread and escalating pattern and demanded an independent investigation with forensic examination.

Baloch groups reported four new disappearances in Quetta and Dera Bugti between 31 July and 29 August, including a 17-year-old, and four recoveries. Around the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances (30 August), protesters in Islamabad urged Pakistan to sign and ratify the UN enforced-disappearance convention (78 states had ratified it by February 2026), enact a standalone criminal law and replace the existing commission with a victim-centred body. The commission’s July 2026 report records more than 10,900 cases since 2011, about 7,034 persons traced and more than 1,400 still missing; of those traced, 4,951 returned home, 1,034 are in internment centres, 740 in prisons and 309 were found dead. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (3,822) and Balochistan (2,951) account for the most cases.

Abductions also affected elected officials: provincial minister Fazal Shakoore Khan was reportedly abducted near Peshawar on 21 September, and MPA Sardar Muhammad Riaz was abducted with his driver and two gunmen on 25 September; at the time of reporting, whereabouts were unknown.

ASSESSMENT

Pakistan should criminalise enforced disappearance, sign and ratify the ICED, disclose the fate and whereabouts of all disappeared persons, end the burial of unidentified bodies without forensic documentation and notification of families, and establish an independent mechanism with powers to prosecute. The reported abductions of public officials should be investigated without delay.

APPLICABLE HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS

UDHR	Art. 3 (life, liberty and security); Art. 5 (no torture); Art. 6 (recognition as a person before the law); Art. 9 (no arbitrary arrest or detention).
International conventions and standards	ICED Arts. 1–2, 12, 17 and 24 (not signed or ratified by Pakistan); 1992 UN Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; ICCPR Arts. 2(3), 6, 7, 9 and 16; CAT Arts. 2, 12–13 (prevention; prompt and impartial investigation); CRC Art. 37 (children deprived of liberty).
Constitution of Pakistan	Art. 9 (security of person); Art. 10 (grounds of arrest, counsel, production before a magistrate within 24 hours); Art. 10A (fair trial); Art. 14 (dignity; no torture for evidence); Art. 199 (High Court habeas corpus jurisdiction).

Sources: [33] [34] [35] [36] [37]

F. JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS RAISING FAIR-TRIAL CONCERNS

On 1 September the Islamabad High Court held maintainable petitions over the alleged solitary confinement of Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi and directed Adiala jail authorities to ensure neither is held in solitary confinement, to facilitate meetings between them and with family, to arrange telephone calls with his sons (to be withdrawn if recordings are used for political purposes), and to provide newspapers, books and medical facilities, with a compliance report due in 15 days. The government denies solitary confinement and says the separate housing is for security reasons.

Lawyers and activists Imaan Zainab Mazari and Hadi Ali Chattha, whose sentences in the social-media-posts case were the subject of suspension appeals, were re-arrested at Adiala jail on the night of 17 September under FIR 276/25 (Kohsar police station) concerning a March 2025 protest at the Islamabad Press Club, to which an Anti-Terrorism Act provision was reportedly added; this came immediately after the Supreme Court had suspended their sentences and ordered release on bail. The Islamabad Bar Association and Balochistan Bar Council held a strike on 19 September, and the Islamabad Bar Council raised concern about the late addition of terrorism charges and about the court reportedly opening at unusual hours. For about a week counsel could not obtain signed powers of attorney from the jail; on 24 September the Anti-Terrorism Court directed jail authorities to process them, and on 29 September the pair were produced by video link, through an official's mobile phone, in a separate case after 248 days, with charges to be framed on 6 October. Hadi Ali Chattha told the court he had developed diabetes. Commentary in Dawn described the re-arrests as an attack on the bar.

An anti-terrorism court acquitted the last seven police officers accused in the 2018 killing of Nageebullah Mehsud for lack of evidence, following the 2023 acquittal of former SSP Rao Anwar and 17 others, although a police inquiry had found the encounter was staged. On 28 September the Supreme Court refused bail to a madrassa teacher accused of sexually assaulting a 14-year-old student in Taxila, observing that an accused who claims innocence should prove it at trial.

ASSESSMENT

Court orders must be honoured and not circumvented by successive arrests. Detainees must have unhindered access to counsel of their choice, prompt hearings and humane conditions. Impunity in staged-encounter cases, as in the Nageebullah Mehsud case, calls for a review of investigative and prosecutorial practice.

APPLICABLE HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS	
UDHR	Art. 8 (effective remedy); Art. 9 (no arbitrary detention); Art. 10 (independent and impartial tribunal); Art. 11 (presumption of innocence; guarantees of defence).
International conventions and standards	ICCPR Art. 14 (fair trial; counsel of choice; adequate facilities), Arts. 9–10 and 2(3); Human Rights Committee General Comment 32; UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (protection from reprisals and interference); Nelson Mandela Rules 43–45 (solitary confinement); ICCPR Art. 6 and UN Principles on Extra-legal Executions (staged encounters).
Constitution of Pakistan	Art. 10A (fair trial); Art. 10 (safeguards on arrest and detention); Arts. 4 and 9 (due process; liberty); Art. 14 (dignity); Art. 175(3) (separation of judiciary from executive); Art. 199 (writ jurisdiction).

Sources: [38] [39] [40] [41] [42] [43] [44] [45]

G. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, INCLUDING HONOUR KILLINGS AND FEMICIDE

Violence against women dominated public attention. The murder case of Hina Javed (found dead in Rawalpindi on 20 August) remained under investigation; police told a National Assembly committee that evidence showed it was neither a robbery nor a suicide, with 80 pieces of evidence collected and Punjab Forensic Agency reports pending. Her husband and a domestic worker were arrested; the committee also took up the rape and murder of five-year-old Ayat Noor and ordered a fresh probe. Candlelight vigils in Lahore on 5 September remembered Hina Javed, Hina Zareef, Ayesha Gilamana (Shamso Bibi) and Jannat Khatoon, and highlighted violence against transgender women and neglect of rural cases.

Other reported cases included the strangulation of Sundas Tanveer in Rawalpindi, which her family says was staged as suicide (husband and brother-in-law arrested); the abduction, murder and burial of Nabila Shaheen (28) on 12 September, with her brother-in-law arrested and her two daughters rescued; the shooting of Saba Mehboob (see Section B); and an assault on a pregnant woman in Gujranwala after an ultrasound reportedly showed she was carrying a girl. Acid attacks were reported in Karachi's Upper Gizri on 3 September (a woman with burns over about 15 per cent of her body) and in Liaquatabad, where police arrested the victim's husband for allegedly planning the attack. Dawn reported six alleged rapes and three cases of sexual harassment of girls in Lahore within days; a 20-year-old Azeri visitor was allegedly gang-raped near Raiwind Road, the second such case involving a foreign woman in the Defence-C police area in a short period; and four suspects were arrested in Peshawar for the gang-rape of two women of one family (see Section L).

Official and parliamentary responses were mixed. The Punjab police chief said 80 per cent of sexual crimes against women and children are committed by people known to the victim. The National Assembly Human Rights Committee criticised law-enforcement failures; the Special Parliamentary Committee on Gender Mainstreaming heard that spending specifically for women is only 0.3 per cent of the national budget and that the conviction rate for sexual crimes in Sindh has risen from 7 to 32 per cent. The Senate Interior Committee approved a bill raising the penalty for acid attacks to death, which activists said would not deliver certainty of punishment or rehabilitation. Sahil recorded 7,071 gender-based violence cases in 2025, up from 5,253; UNFPA data cited by Dawn indicate that 28 per cent of women have experienced physical or sexual violence.

Court rulings pointed in both directions. A Lahore anti-rape court sentenced a man to 10 years for marital rape (30 August); the Lahore High Court held a husband cannot reclaim dower gold as khula compensation (1 September); and the Supreme Court held that dower is a wife's right that must be paid in good faith and ordered nikah registrars to record terms carefully. However, on 29 September the Federal Constitutional Court held that the Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010 covers only conduct of a sexual nature, disagreeing with earlier Supreme Court judgments that had treated other workplace harassment as actionable. An SDPI study found that only about 2 per cent of ever-married women own land, and that 14 per cent of women, against 56 per cent of men, hold a full-service financial account. Women journalists in South Punjab described restricted beats, unequal pay and online harassment.

ASSESSMENT

Police must register complaints immediately and investigate without regard to family or social pressure. The State should adopt a coordinated, adequately funded national strategy that includes protection orders, secret and well-funded shelters, specialised investigation cells and courts, a national case-tracking register, rehabilitation for acid-attack survivors, and legislative action to ensure that non-sexual workplace harassment and discrimination have an effective remedy.

APPLICABLE HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS

UDHR	Art. 3 (life, liberty and security); Art. 5 (no cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment); Art. 7 (equal protection); Art. 8 (effective remedy); Art. 16 (equal rights in marriage and at its dissolution).
International conventions and standards	CEDAW Arts. 1–2, 5, 15–16 and General Recommendations 19 and 35 (gender-based violence as discrimination; State due diligence); CEDAW Arts. 11 and 13–14 (work, credit, rural women's land and finance); ICCPR Arts. 3, 6, 7 and 26; ICESCR Art. 3; CAT Arts. 1 and 12 (official acquiescence; investigation).
Constitution of Pakistan	Art. 9 (security of person); Art. 14 (dignity); Art. 25(2) (no discrimination on grounds of sex) and Art. 25(3); Art. 34 (full participation of women); Art. 35 (protection of family, mother and child); Arts. 23–24 (right to acquire, hold and dispose of property).

Sources: [46] [47] [48] [49] [50] [51] [52] [53] [54] [55] [56] [57] [58] [59] [60] [61] [62] [63] [64] [65]

H. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

A UNICEF report cited by AFP and Dawn estimates that about 1.5 million children in Pakistan experienced online sexual abuse in one year; around 85 per cent of perpetrators were known to the child, 71 per cent of victims told no one, and no surveyed child reported through formal channels such as police or helplines. The Punjab Assembly passed a resolution on 1 September seeking a legal ban on social-media accounts for children under 16, and the Islamabad High Court sought replies from ministries, PEMRA and PTA on a petition for a regulatory framework; critics cited loopholes and lack of implementation.

Sexual violence against children was again reported: a nine-month-old girl allegedly sexually abused in Mandi Bahauddin (a suspect was arrested); a three-year-old girl, Sakina, raped and murdered on the outskirts of Islamabad (brother-in-law arrested); a nine-year-old orphan, Ishmal, allegedly raped and shot in Madyan, Swat, prompting rare mass protests by women; and a 16-year-old boy allegedly gang-raped in Sahiwal on the pretext of TikTok promotion. The Supreme Court refused bail to a madrassa teacher accused of assaulting a 14-year-old student, and the National Commission on the Rights of Child has called for stricter oversight of seminaries and other child-care institutions. Sahil recorded 3,630 child-abuse cases in 2025 and 1,914 in January–June 2026.

On child marriage, the Lahore High Court held on 1 September that a minor's consent cannot legalise marriage under Punjab's new law and ordered an FIR in a case involving a 15-year-old in Kasur. The FIA stopped a 13-year-old at Faisalabad airport who was to be sent to Saudi Arabia as the "wife" of a man under a fake nikahnama arranged online, and arrested the registrar (see also Section B for the Tando Allahyar case).

A nutrition conference on 2–3 September highlighted that about 40 per cent of children under five are affected by stunting or malnutrition, at an estimated annual economic loss of at least US\$17 billion; Dawn noted that 70 per cent of households use contaminated water and about 25 million people still practise open defecation.

ASSESSMENT

The State should strengthen oversight of madrassas and residential child-care institutions, implement child-sensitive investigation and prosecution, and adopt a rights-based online child-protection framework (reporting channels, platform duties, digital literacy) rather than relying on age bans alone. Child marriage laws should be enforced and registrars held accountable, and malnutrition addressed across health, water, sanitation and social protection.

APPLICABLE HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS	
UDHR	Art. 25(2) (special care for childhood); Art. 26 (education); Arts. 3 and 5 (security; no degrading treatment); Art. 16(2) (free and full consent to marriage).
International conventions and standards	CRC Art. 3 (best interests), Art. 19 (protection from violence and abuse), Art. 24 (health and nutrition; Art. 24(3) harmful traditional practices), Art. 34 (sexual exploitation), Art. 35 (abduction), Arts. 16–17 (privacy; access to information); CRC Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; CEDAW Art. 16(2) (child marriage has no legal effect); ICESCR Arts. 11–12 (food; health).
Constitution of Pakistan	Art. 25(3) (special provision for children); Art. 25A (free and compulsory education, ages 5–16); Art. 35 (protection of mother and child); Arts. 9 and 14 (security of person; dignity); Art. 38(d) (basic necessities of life, including food and medical relief).

Sources: [66] [67] [68] [69] [70] [71] [72] [73] [45] [74] [75] [76] [77] [78]

I. FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY AND PROTEST

Ahead of a planned PTI march on Islamabad (originally 27 September, later reported postponed to 4 October), authorities in Punjab detained opposition figures under the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) ordinance, which allows 30-day detention orders and restricts judicial review. Imran Khan's sisters Aleema Khan (order of 20 September) and Uzma Khan and Noreen Niazi (21 September) were detained for 30 days; police in Sahiwal arrested a former mayor and the PTI city president. PTI claimed about 1,500 supporters had been detained and that about eight National Assembly members were held under MPO orders; over a hundred workers were reportedly produced in courts. The party's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister said it would "forcefully exercise" its right to protest, while government leaders said PTI protests have never been peaceful.

Punjab imposed Section 144 from 23 September to 5 October, banning assemblies of five or more people, and asked the federal interior ministry to jam or downgrade mobile and internet services at specified locations in Rawalpindi and Attock on 27 September. It also requisitioned Rangers for Rawalpindi, Attock, Jhelum and Mianwali from 22 September to 5 October under Article 245 of the Constitution and the Anti-Terrorism Act. In Islamabad, key intersections and sensitive buildings were sealed with shipping containers, more than 30,000 personnel were deployed, 24 educational institutions were closed and handed to police for accommodation, and emergency alerts were issued at hospitals. The opposition leader in the Senate offered talks through a political committee.

Police arrested several students during a protest at the Post Graduate Nursing Institute in Peshawar on 7 September. An Islamabad anti-terrorism court granted bail to all 96 accused over a 31 July demonstration in solidarity with Kashmiris (98 had been nominated, including a senator).

ASSESSMENT

Blanket bans on assembly, repeated use of preventive detention against political leaders without specific charges, communications jamming and paramilitary deployments should be necessary and proportionate and subject to judicial review. Authorities should negotiate with organisers and protect peaceful protesters, and release anyone held solely for planning or attending a peaceful protest.

APPLICABLE HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS	
UDHR	Art. 20(1) (peaceful assembly and association); Art. 19 (expression); Art. 9 (no arbitrary arrest or detention); Art. 21 (participation in government).
International conventions and standards	ICCPR Art. 21 (peaceful assembly), Arts. 19, 22 and 9; Human Rights Committee General Comment 37 (limits on blanket bans and internet shutdowns); UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms.

Constitution of Pakistan	Art. 16 (freedom of assembly, subject to reasonable restrictions in the interest of public order); Art. 17 (association; political parties); Art. 19; Art. 10 (safeguards against arbitrary arrest and preventive detention); Art. 15 (movement); Art. 245 (armed forces in aid of civil power).
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Sources: [79] [80] [81] [82] [83] [84] [85]

J. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Journalist Bilal Ghauri was arrested after the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency registered a case on 6 September under sections 20 and 26-A of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) over content about the appointment of the NACTA coordinator; a magistrate granted three-day physical remand on 7 September and a post-arrest bail application followed. Dr Ayesha Faiz, a former Quetta police surgeon, was remanded to Counter-Terrorism Department custody for three days on 7 September; the Balochistan home minister said the action concerned her statements against the state and its institutions.

Commentary on the re-arrest of lawyers Imaan Mazari and Hadi Ali Chattha (Section F) described their earlier conviction as arising from expressing solidarity with the disappeared and cited UN experts' statements that a lawyer's expression cannot be conflated with criminal conduct. A National Assembly panel directed that outstanding salaries and dues of media workers be paid, and women journalists in South Punjab described gender-based restrictions on beats, unequal pay and online harassment, including AI-generated content.

ASSESSMENT

Pakistan should amend or repeal the PECA provisions on "false information" and dignity, ensure that arrests of journalists and critics follow due process and judicial scrutiny, and protect women journalists from harassment. Media owners should pay overdue wages and publish equal-pay and anti-harassment policies.

APPLICABLE HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS

UDHR	Art. 19 (opinion and expression); Art. 12 (no arbitrary interference with privacy or reputation); Art. 23 (just remuneration; equal pay for equal work); Art. 9.
International conventions and standards	ICCPR Art. 19 and Human Rights Committee General Comment 34 (criminal defamation and "false news" offences; protection of journalists), Arts. 9 and 14; ICCPR Art. 22 and ICESCR Arts. 7–8 (unions; fair wages; equal pay); UN Human Rights Council Resolution 47/16 (rights apply online); CEDAW Art. 11 (equality in employment).
Constitution of Pakistan	Art. 19 (freedom of speech and press, subject to reasonable restrictions); Art. 19A (right to information); Art. 17 (association, including unions); Arts. 10 and 10A; Art. 25(2) (no discrimination on grounds of sex); Art. 37(e) (just and humane conditions of work).

Sources: [86] [87] [88] [43] [89] [65]

K. HEALTH RIGHTS AND INSTITUTIONAL SAFETY

Follow-up to the PIMS Islamabad nursery fire of 26 August, in which 14 newborns died and one of 15 infants was rescued by a nurse, continued. The Prime Minister ordered the suspension of eight officials, including the executive director, and criminal proceedings against them (29 August); an interim report said the precise source of ignition had not been conclusively established. On 9 September the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights directed that an FIR be registered immediately, that the names of responsible officials, including the former executive director, be placed on the Exit Control List, and that assets be attached, with the chairperson warning that suspension alone could let the accused flee.

In Sindh, the Assembly on 7 September rejected an opposition resolution for an independent commission to investigate an HIV outbreak linked to Sindh Employees' Social Security Institution hospitals, including Valika Hospital. In Balochistan, the chief minister launched an Essential Package of Health Services focused on mothers, girls and children.

ASSESSMENT

The State should ensure independent investigation of the PIMS fire and accountability of those responsible, publish findings, carry out safety audits of fire-prevention infrastructure in all public hospitals, and establish an independent inquiry into the HIV outbreak, with care and compensation for those affected.

APPLICABLE HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS

UDHR	Art. 25(1) (adequate standard of living, including medical care); Art. 3 (life); Art. 8 (effective remedy).
International conventions and standards	ICESCR Art. 12 and General Comment 14 (highest attainable standard of health; safe facilities); CRC Arts. 6 and 24; ICCPR Art. 6 (positive duty to protect life) and Art. 2(3) (effective remedy); CEDAW Art. 12.
Constitution of Pakistan	Art. 9 (right to life, read by the superior courts to cover quality of life); Art. 38(d) (medical relief); Art. 35 (protection of mother and child); Art. 4 (due process).

Sources: [90] [91] [92] [93] [94]

L. LAW AND ORDER: COUNTER-TERRORISM LEGISLATION, POLICING AND CUSTODIAL KILLINGS

On 31 August the Punjab Assembly passed the Anti-Terrorism (Punjab Amendment) Bill, 2026 despite an opposition walkout. It inserts section 21AAA into the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997, allowing a designated authority – an officer of at least BS-20 whose identity would remain confidential – to declare a “special security case”. The identities of judges, prosecutors, defence counsel, police and witnesses would not be disclosed; judicial orders would carry official titles and witnesses would be identified by codes; proceedings could be held at secure premises or by video link, including from prisons; and the record could be sealed. Critics noted that an accused could not meaningfully challenge the tribunal or seek recusal of a judge whose identity is concealed, and that sealed records could impede appeals. HRCP convened a roundtable on 11 September to plan resistance.

Concerns about killings of suspects in police custody grew in Peshawar. Four men arrested on 6 September for the alleged gang-rape of two women were reportedly killed by unidentified gunmen on 11 September while being taken to identify the crime scene; and on 22 September a 19-year-old suspect accused of desecrating a girl's grave was killed in what police described as an attack by six armed men on the escort party. The Peshawar police chief ordered an investigation committee; the chairperson of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women and a Peshawar High Court lawyer called for transparent investigation and described such killings as denying victims real justice and as extrajudicial.

ASSESSMENT

Section 21AAA should be repealed or fundamentally revised to preserve open, independent and verifiable trials, with protective measures limited to witnesses and tailored case by case under judicial supervision. Every death in custody must be investigated independently, and suspects must be brought before courts.

APPLICABLE HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS

UDHR	Art. 3 (life, liberty and security); Art. 5 (no torture); Art. 8 (effective remedy); Art. 10 (independent and impartial tribunal in a public hearing); Art. 11 (presumption of innocence).
International conventions and standards	ICCPR Art. 14 (the Human Rights Committee has found trials before anonymous “faceless” judges incompatible with Art. 14(1)), Arts. 6, 7 and 9; CAT Arts. 2, 12–13 and 16; UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms; UN Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions.
Constitution of Pakistan	Arts. 9–10 (liberty; arrest safeguards); Art. 10A (fair trial); Art. 14 (no torture for evidence); Art. 4 (due process, including for suspects); Art. 175(3) (separation of the judiciary).

Sources: [95] [96] [97] [98] [99] [44]

M. DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Secretariat wrote to the provincial police chief on 25 September reiterating that, under section 11 of the Provincial Assembly (Powers, Privileges and Immunities) Act, 2026, the Speaker's written permission is required before a member is arrested or detained. The federal interior minister criticised the position as incompatible with equality before law, and the letter is likely to deepen the rift between the federal government and the province. The same week, two members of the provincial government (a minister and an MPA) were reportedly abducted (Section E), and PTI says about eight of its National Assembly members were detained under MPO orders, five of them at Mianwali jail (Section I).

ASSESSMENT

Political competition should be conducted through lawful, transparent procedures. Elected representatives may be arrested only on specific, lawful charges with prompt judicial oversight, abductions of public officials should be investigated, and immunities should not become an obstacle to the accountability of members for criminal offences.

APPLICABLE HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS

UDHR	Art. 21 (participation in government through genuine elections); Art. 20 (assembly and association); Art. 9.
International conventions and standards	ICCPR Art. 25 (political participation), Art. 22 (association), Arts. 19, 9 and 26; CEDAW Art. 7 (women's political and public life).
Constitution of Pakistan	Art. 17(2) (right to form or belong to a political party); Art. 19; Arts. 9–10 (liberty; arrest safeguards); Art. 25 (equality); Art. 218(3) (Election Commission's duty to ensure honest, just and fair elections).

Sources: [37] [81]

N. AZAD JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Iftikhar Gillani, a PML-N lawyer who lost his own constituency in the recent elections, was chosen AJK Prime Minister on a reserved technocrat seat. Dawn commentary noted that polling could not be held on seven seats in Rawalakot and other districts because of continuing protests by the outlawed Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC), and that the legitimacy of elections held amid an uprising has been questioned, even by mainstream parties, as have the reserved refugee seats in Punjab that helped the PML-N emerge as the largest party.

On 29 August the Prime Minister promised to restore internet at educational institutions and to remove restrictions on road links with Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa within days, and to work on a policy for business losses, particularly in Mirpur, caused by the internet shutdown and protests. As of the reporting period, no independent verification of the restoration or of civilian casualties was available. An Islamabad anti-terrorism court granted bail to 96 people charged over a demonstration for Kashmir (Section I).

ASSESSMENT

AJK authorities should restore full communications access, review anti-terrorism listings (including the Fourth Schedule) used against activists, investigate deaths and abuses since June, and pursue inclusive political dialogue, including on reserved seats and representation, rather than further coercive measures.

APPLICABLE HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS

UDHR	Art. 19 (expression); Art. 20 (assembly); Art. 21 (participation in government); Art. 3 (life, liberty and security).
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International conventions and standards	ICCPR Arts. 19, 21, 25, 9 and 6; Human Rights Committee General Comment 37 (internet shutdowns during assemblies) and UN Human Rights Council Resolution 47/16; ICESCR Arts. 12–13 (health and education affected by shutdowns).
Constitution of Pakistan	AJK is governed by the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Interim Constitution Act, 1974 (fundamental rights provisions); Arts. 16, 17 and 19 of the Constitution of Pakistan are cited as the national benchmark for assembly, association and expression.

Sources: [100] [101] [85]

O. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS

Heavy rain on 1 September flooded low-lying areas of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, raised the water level in Leh Nullah and led to school closures; Senator Sherry Rehman said it exposed weaknesses in disaster preparedness and urban flood management. Cloudburst-induced floods blocked the Karakoram Highway and damaged homes, farmland and orchards in Ghizer and Hunza on 5–6 September, following earlier flash floods in August and an NDMA alert on glacier-melt-driven flooding in July. In Chitral's Kalash valleys, unseasonal rain threatened crops and livelihoods.

An SDPI study reported that more than nine in ten women farmers surveyed had experienced an extreme climate event in five years and more than 80 per cent reported crop losses, with borrowing the most common coping strategy. The Balochistan EPA held a public hearing on the Duddar lead-zinc project, and Punjab sealed five brick kilns in Sargodha and launched an enhanced air-quality dashboard.

ASSESSMENT

Disaster preparedness, urban drainage and early-warning systems should be strengthened, particularly in mountain and flood-prone communities; climate finance and adaptation measures should be gender-responsive; and environmental impact assessments for mining and industrial projects should include meaningful public participation.

APPLICABLE HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS

UDHR	Art. 25(1) (adequate standard of living); Art. 3 (life); Art. 22 (economic, social and cultural rights).
International conventions and standards	ICESCR Arts. 11–12 (food; health; healthy environment); CRC Art. 24(2)(c) and General Comment 26 (children's rights and the environment); CEDAW Art. 14 (rural women); UN General Assembly Resolution 76/300 (right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment); Paris Agreement (adaptation; loss and damage).
Constitution of Pakistan	Art. 9A (clean, healthy and sustainable environment, added by the 26th Amendment); Art. 9 (right to life, read by the courts to include a healthy environment); Art. 4 (due process in project approvals); Art. 199 (enforcement).

Sources: [102] [103] [104] [105] [106] [64] [107] [108]

P. GSP+ AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The EU Ambassador, Raimundas Karoblis, cautioned on 7 September that GSP+ benefits “cannot be taken for granted”. The current EU scheme expires at the end of 2026 and Pakistan must apply to the successor scheme, which carries stricter requirements; existing beneficiaries continue to receive preferences during a transition period ending on 31 December 2028, which does not guarantee rollover. A European Commission assessment covering 2023–25, released in July, found compliance issues and regression in several areas, with limited change on the ground, and identified significant concerns about enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings, freedom of expression, journalists and minority rights, judicial independence, access to justice and forced labour. The Foreign Office said the report did not present a sufficiently balanced picture, while committing to the conventions underlying the scheme.

ASSESSMENT

Pakistan should adopt a time-bound, benchmarked plan, developed with civil society, to address the issues in the Commission's assessment and publish regular compliance data. Many of the concerns – disappearances, press freedom, minority protection and fair trial – coincide with issues documented in this issue.

APPLICABLE HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS

UDHR	Art. 28 (an international order in which rights can be fully realised); Arts. 2 and 7 (non-discrimination).
International conventions and standards	GSP+ requires effective implementation of 27 core international conventions (Annex VIII to Regulation (EU) No 978/2012), including the ICCPR, ICESCR, CAT, CEDAW, CRC and the ILO fundamental conventions; see also the ICCPR Arts. 6, 7, 9, 14, 18, 19 and CAT Arts. 2, 12.
Constitution of Pakistan	Art. 8 (laws inconsistent with fundamental rights are void); Arts. 9, 10A, 19 and 20 (life and liberty, fair trial, expression and religion – the rights at issue in the EU's concerns).

Sources: [109] [110]

Q. LABOUR AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

At least 48 coal miners have been killed in six incidents in Balochistan in 2026, 46 of them in gas-related incidents. On 13 September four miners died and four were injured in a methane explosion at Mine No. 151, Shahrag; earlier, three miners, including two Afghan nationals, died from methane gas on 27 August, and two died and four were found unconscious on 23 August in Duki. Workers and families reportedly face unsafe mines, weak oversight and uncertain relief. Dawn commentary on 20 September described growing economic pressure on the middle class, and Section J noted unpaid dues of media workers.

ASSESSMENT

Provincial authorities should enforce mine-safety standards, including gas monitoring and ventilation, inspect mines independently, investigate every fatality, and provide prompt, adequate compensation to families. Wage arrears should be addressed through enforceable mechanisms.

APPLICABLE HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS

UDHR	Art. 23 (just and favourable conditions of work); Art. 24 (rest and leisure); Arts. 22 and 25(1) (social security; adequate standard of living); Art. 3 (life).
International conventions and standards	ICESCR Art. 7(b) (safe and healthy working conditions), Art. 9 (social security) and Art. 11; ILO Conventions No. 155 (occupational safety and health) and No. 176 (safety and health in mines); ICCPR Art. 6 (duty to protect life from foreseeable threats); CEDAW Art. 13.
Constitution of Pakistan	Art. 9 (right to life); Art. 11(3) (no child below 14 in any factory, mine or other hazardous employment); Art. 17 (trade unions); Art. 37(e) (just and humane conditions of work); Art. 38(a)–(b) (well-being of the people; facilities for work and adequate livelihood); Art. 3 (elimination of exploitation).

Sources: [111] [112] [89]

2. Overall Assessment

The cases reviewed in September 2026 point to recurring structural weaknesses across Pakistan's human rights landscape: the use of immigration and education policy against Afghan residents, including students with years of study invested; renewed targeted violence and incitement against Ahmadis, disputed responsibility for the destruction of minority places of worship and continuing abduction and forced conversion of minor girls; blasphemy accusations that expose the accused and their families to mob and political threats and trials that last more than a decade; insecurity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan in which casualty figures remain largely unverifiable; enforced disappearances and killings in custody without effective investigation or prosecution; a widening set of fair-trial concerns, including successive arrests that appear to frustrate court orders and a new law permitting anonymous trials; a sustained pattern of gender-based violence in which conviction rates remain low and shelters and prevention are under-funded; the exposure of children to sexual violence, exploitation and child marriage; the narrowing of space for peaceful protest, expression and political participation; weak institutional safety standards in hospitals and mines; deepening and only partially documented unrest and a legitimacy deficit in Azad Jammu and Kashmir; and climate-related disasters that disproportionately affect mountain communities and women farmers.

The EU Delegation and the European Commission's own assessment identified several of these issues – enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings, freedom of expression, minority rights, judicial independence and access to justice – as central to Pakistan's continued eligibility for GSP+ trade preferences. Positive judicial and administrative interventions during the month show that remedies are possible: the Lahore High Court's suspension of the PM&DC directives and its child-marriage ruling; the Islamabad High Court's order against solitary confinement; the admission of Junaid Hafeez's appeal; the Supreme Court's rulings on dower and on Bait-ul-Mal support for Hindu girls; the conviction for marital rape; the FIA's interception of a trafficked child bride; and Senate and National Assembly committees' directions on the PIMS fire and sexual violence. Their impact will depend on independence, prompt implementation, transparent reporting and protection from retaliation.

***Note on sources.** This issue draws on press reports (Dawn, Voicepk.net, The Express Tribune, The News, Geo News), statements by HRCP and UN experts, and civil-society data. Allegations in FIRs, claims by parties to disputes, operational figures issued by security agencies, and advocates' statistics are identified as such in the text and have not been independently verified.*

3. Priority Recommendations

To the Government of Pakistan (federal)

1. **Afghan nationals:** Withdraw the PM&DC directives and allow enrolled Afghan students, including women, to complete their degrees; apply individualised, transparent identity and risk assessment before any removal; prevent refoulement of persons eligible for international protection; and publish the “national policy” relied upon.
2. **Religious minorities and Ahmadis:** Investigate attacks on Ahmadis as potential hate crimes, prosecute incitement, and provide protection to targeted communities; order an independent inquiry into the Narowal temple and restore it; require independent age and consent verification in all conversion and marriage cases involving minors; and ensure that reform of Christian personal law follows genuine consultation with all denominations.
3. **Blasphemy provisions:** Expedite pending appeals (including that of Junaid Hafeez), end prolonged solitary confinement of blasphemy prisoners, protect accused persons, lawyers, officials and judges from mob and political threats, and review the provisions and procedures that enable misuse.
4. **Security and civilian protection:** Ensure independent investigation of civilian deaths in operations and attacks, publish verifiable casualty and displacement data, protect labourers, travellers and places of worship, and train and equip police within a rights-respecting counter-terrorism framework.
5. **Enforced disappearances and custodial deaths:** Criminalise enforced disappearance and ratify the ICED; replace the existing commission with an independent, victim-centred body able to prosecute; ensure an independent, forensic investigation of the death of Imran Ali and all unidentified burials in Quetta; investigate killings of suspects in police custody; and account for abducted public officials.
6. **Fair trial and judicial independence:** Repeal or revise section 21AAA of the Anti-Terrorism Act (Punjab) so that trials remain open, independent and verifiable; comply fully with court bail and suspension orders and refrain from successive arrests that frustrate them; ensure unhindered lawyer access to detainees; and review investigative practice in staged-encounter cases.
7. **Women:** Adopt a funded national action plan against gender-based violence and femicide, with protection orders, confidential shelters, specialised investigation cells and courts, and a national case-tracking register; pair any increase in penalties for acid attacks with certainty of prosecution and survivor rehabilitation; and legislate to ensure that non-sexual workplace harassment and discrimination have an effective remedy.
8. **Children:** Strengthen oversight of madrassas and residential child-care institutions; implement child-sensitive procedures and safe reporting channels for online and offline exploitation; adopt a rights-based online-safety framework rather than relying on age bans alone; enforce child-marriage laws and hold registrars accountable; and expand nutrition, water and sanitation programmes.
9. **Assembly, expression and political participation:** Limit preventive detention, blanket Section 144 orders, communications jamming and Article 245 deployments to what is necessary, proportionate and subject to judicial review; release persons held solely for peaceful protest; amend or repeal the provisions of PECA used against journalists; ensure due process for Bilal Ghauri, Dr Ayesha Faiz and others; and investigate the abductions of elected representatives.
10. **Health, labour and institutional safety:** Complete an independent investigation of the PIMS fire and carry out fire-safety audits of public hospitals; establish an independent inquiry into the HIV outbreak in Sindh; and enforce mine-safety standards with independent inspections and prompt compensation.
11. **Climate and environment:** Strengthen flood early warning and urban drainage, adopt gender-responsive adaptation finance for women farmers, and ensure meaningful public participation in environmental impact assessments.
12. **GSP+:** Adopt a time-bound, benchmarked compliance roadmap, developed with civil society, and publish annual progress against the issues identified by the European Commission.

To provincial governments and the AJK administration

13. **Punjab:** Reconsider the Anti-Terrorism (Punjab Amendment) Act, 2026; review the use of MPO detention and Section 144 against political opponents; enforce the Child Marriage Restraint Act and the new Christian Marriage legislation; and implement the funding and policing commitments made for survivors of sexual violence.
14. **Sindh:** Establish an independent inquiry into the HIV outbreak; enforce child-marriage and anti-conversion safeguards and ensure that cases of abducted minor girls proceed promptly.
15. **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan:** Ensure independent investigation of killings in police custody and of attacks on civilians; implement mine-safety inspections; and publish disaggregated data on violence and displacement.
16. **Azad Jammu and Kashmir:** Restore full internet and communications access, review Fourth Schedule listings and counter-terrorism provisions used against activists, investigate deaths and abuses since June, and open an inclusive dialogue on representation, including reserved seats.

To the judiciary and independent oversight institutions

17. Hear pending appeals and bail matters promptly; ensure consistent protection of due process for all accused persons, including in cases of religious offences and terrorism; and enforce orders on prison conditions and access to counsel.
18. Empower the National Commission for Human Rights, the National Commission on the Status of Women, the National Commission on the Rights of Child and the Election Commission to monitor, investigate and publish findings on the issues in this fact sheet.

To international partners

19. Link GSP+ and other cooperation to clear, public benchmarks on disappearances, fair trial, freedom of expression and minority protection; support Pakistan's ratification and implementation of the ICED; encourage visits by UN special procedures; and support independent monitoring and survivor services for gender-based and child sexual violence.

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References are numbered in order of first citation and correspond to the "Sources" line at the end of each section. Where the Word file supplied by the editor did not include a direct article link, the outlet's homepage is shown and the article can be located by its title, author and date.

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