



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Pakistan: Internal relocation

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Assessment

Updated on 29 March 2023

About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is information in the [country information](#), refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of whether, **in general**:

- a person is reasonably able to relocate within Pakistan

Decision makers **must**, however, still consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case's specific facts.

1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

1.1 Credibility

- 1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 1.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 1.1.3 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person's claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

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1.2 Exclusion

- 1.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.
 - 1.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
 - 1.2.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).
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The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

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2. Internal relocation

- 2.1.1 In general, a person fearing ‘rogue’ state actors and non-state actors is likely to be able to internally relocate to another area of Pakistan, particularly larger urban areas and cities such as (but not limited to) Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad.
- 2.1.2 While the onus is on the person to establish a well-founded fear of persecution or real risk of serious harm, decision makers must demonstrate that internal relocation is reasonable (or not unduly harsh) having regard to the individual circumstances of the person.
- 2.1.3 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to relocate to escape that risk.
- 2.1.4 For information on internal relocation for minority groups, including ethnic and religious minorities, LGBTI persons, and women, see the relevant [Pakistan Country Policy and Information Note](#).
- 2.1.5 Pakistan is a diverse society with an estimated total population of nearly 243 million (2022 estimate). The country is divided into 4 provinces: Balochistan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Punjab and Sindh, 2 administered areas – Azad Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan, and the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) (see the Country Information Note: Pakistan, available on request).
- 2.1.6 There are numerous urban centres and large cities with populations of between 1 million to over 17 million. Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore have ethnically and religiously diverse populations. Punjab is the most densely populated province (see the Country Information Note: Pakistan, available on request).
- 2.1.7 The law provides for freedom of movement, subject to certain restrictions. For example, access to some areas may be limited for security reasons (see Freedom of movement – [Legal rights](#) and [Restrictions](#)). Internal migration is widespread (see [Internal migration](#)) and all main cities are connected by major highways (see the Country Information Note: Pakistan, available on request).
- 2.1.8 There is a shortage of formal housing, which is said to be generally unaffordable. Half of all urban households are overcrowded or live in informal settlements with inadequate access to basic infrastructure and services. Tenant registration is mandatory and takes place at local police stations (see [Property and housing](#) and [Tenant registration](#)).
- 2.1.9 A number of social welfare programmes exist. Healthcare is free to all citizens although public facilities are poor quality. Private facilities are better

and available to those with the means to pay (see the [Country Policy and Information Note on Pakistan: Medical and healthcare provisions](#)).

- 2.1.10 For further guidance on considering internal relocation and factors to be taken into account see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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Country information

About the country information

This contains publicly available or disclosable country of origin information (COI) which has been gathered, collated and analysed in line with the [research methodology](#). It provides the evidence base for the assessment.

The structure and content of this section follows a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to the scope of this note.

Decision makers must use relevant country information as the evidential basis for decisions.

Section updated: 29 March 2023

3. Freedom of movement

3.1 Legal rights

- 3.1.1 Article 15 of the Constitution guarantees the right to free movement and to reside in Pakistan, 'subject to any reasonable restriction imposed by law in the public interest.'¹

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3.2 Restrictions

- 3.2.1 The US Department of State human rights report for 2022 (USSD HR Report 2022) indicated that the government limited rights on foreign travel, emigration and repatriation and added, in regard to internal travel, that 'Citing security concerns, government restrictions on access to certain areas of the former FATA and Balochistan hindered freedom of movement. The government required an approved NOC for travel to areas of the country designated "sensitive."²
- 3.2.2 Freedom House noted in its Freedom in the World 2022 report that 'There are some legal limitations on travel and the ability to change one's residence, employment, or institutions of higher learning. Authorities routinely hinder internal movement in some parts of the country for security reasons.'³

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3.3 Internal migration

- 3.3.1 According to the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) report on Pakistan, published in January 2022, based on a range of sources, 'Internal migration is widespread and common, but it depends on having both the financial means and family, tribal and/or ethnic networks to establish oneself in a new location. Single women find it especially difficult to relocate... For some groups (such as Hazaras), travel

¹ Pakistan.org, '[The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan](#)' (Article 15), 1973

² USSD, '[Country Report on Human Rights Practices](#)' (section 2d), 20 March 2023

³ Freedom House, '[Freedom in the World 2022 – Pakistan](#)' (G1), 24 February 2022

by road is unsafe in certain parts of the country, and those who must travel and can afford to fly do so.⁴

- 3.3.2 The same source stated that ‘Large urban centres such as Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore have ethnically and religiously diverse populations, and offer some anonymity for people fleeing violence by non-state actors. Some groups, such as Pashtuns, occupy enclaves in these cities, while others, such as Ahmadis and Hazaras, avoid living in enclaves to reduce the risk of being targeted. Certain types of threats (such as honour killings) are persistent, and even if people relocate they can be tracked down and killed years later...’⁵

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3.4 Property and housing

- 3.4.1 Pakistan’s constitution protects property rights. Article 24 of the Constitution states ‘No person shall be compulsorily deprived of his property save in accordance with law.’⁶
- 3.4.2 A report published by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), dated December 2018, noted that ‘Pakistan has a huge housing deficit of nearly 10 million units and growing. Urban population growth in the country has not been matched by growth in housing units or equitable access to land, resulting in housing shortages and the growth of slums. The number of slums is an indication of rising inequalities. Almost 55 percent of the population in Karachi lives in slums.’⁷
- 3.4.3 According to a World Bank blog, published 11 March 2022, ‘Half of all urban households are overcrowded or live in informal settlements with inadequate access to basic infrastructure and services. Formal housing is out of reach for most of the population and mainly owned by men.’⁸
- 3.4.4 The World Bank supported Pakistan to increase access to affordable housing and mortgage finance for low-income households in urban Punjab through the [Pakistan Housing Finance project](#), the [Punjab Urban Land Systems Enhancement project](#) and the [Punjab Affordable Housing Program](#)⁹.

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3.5 Tenant registration

- 3.5.1 The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) Research Directorate cited 3 sources in a response, dated 23 January 2018, that tenant registration systems were in place in the provinces of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Sindh, as well as the Islamabad Capital Territory¹⁰. According to sources consulted by the Research Directorate, tenant registration was mandatory. While one source stated that this system

⁴ DFAT, ‘[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)’ (paragraph 5.23), 25 January 2022

⁵ DFAT, ‘[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)’ (paragraph 5.24), 25 January 2022

⁶ Pakistan.org, ‘[The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan](#)’ (Article 24), 1973

⁷ UNDP, ‘[Sustainable Urbanization](#)’ (page 1), December 2018

⁸ World Bank Blogs, ‘[Managing supply and demand: The key to getting “housing”...](#)’, 11 March 2022

⁹ World Bank, ‘[World Bank Supports Pakistan to Improve Property Rights...](#)’, 10 March 2022

¹⁰ IRB, ‘[Pakistan: Tenant registration systems, including implementation...](#)’, 23 January 2018

'is being strictly implemented' in all 4 provinces, another source argued that it was 'not widely implemented', but that police were becoming increasingly proactive in encouraging citizens to register. Registration took place at the tenant's local police station¹¹.

- 3.5.2 For further information on Pakistan's tenant registration systems, including implementation, requirements and procedures, enforcement, how the system works in each province and whether the authorities share information, consult the full [IRB response](#)¹².

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4. Humanitarian situation

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 The European Commission's European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations noted in October 2022 that:

'Pakistan is one of the world's most disaster-prone countries. On top of this, it suffers some of the worst food shortages and chronic malnutrition rates in the world. The situation is compounded by the presence of an estimated 3 million Afghans, including more than 1.3 million registered refugees. Moreover, for many years, military and insurgent operations in Pakistan have caused human suffering and large-scale internal displacement...

'Pakistan experiences frequent disasters such as earthquakes, floods and recurrent droughts. Malnutrition and limited access to water, sanitation and medical services have compromised the health care capacities of the most vulnerable communities. In addition, COVID-19 added to existing humanitarian needs.'¹³

- 4.1.2 For the most up-to-date country information on the humanitarian situation in Pakistan, consult:

[Reliefweb – Pakistan](#)

[Humanitarian Response – Pakistan](#)

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4.2 Floods

- 4.2.1 In June 2022, unprecedented heavy rains triggered one of the worst floods in decades, causing floods and flash floods in the south and north-west of the country^{14 15}.

- 4.2.2 In October 2022, The World Bank reported that:

'The ongoing floods have had an unprecedent impact on Pakistan. Almost 15 percent of the country is underwater, and 33 million people are affected. 541,000 people are in evacuation camps. The National Disaster

¹¹ IRB, '[Pakistan: Tenant registration systems, including implementation...](#)', 23 January 2018

¹² IRB, '[Pakistan: Tenant registration systems, including implementation...](#)', 23 January 2018

¹³ European Commission, '[Pakistan Factsheet](#)', 4 October 2022

¹⁴ UNHCR, '[Pakistan: Protection Analysis Update: October 2022](#)' (page 2), 1 November 2022

¹⁵ European Commission, '[ECHO Daily Flash](#)', 6 July 2022

Management Agency (NDMA) as well as the Provincial Disaster Management Agencies (PDMAs) reported over 1.755 partially or fully damaged houses. Loss of life has also been considerable with 1,481 fatalities reported by September 13. An estimated 908,000 livestock perished, adversely affecting rural livelihoods. Reduced agricultural yields and limited access to markets are driving up food prices. These recent events point to downside risks, with a likely increase in poverty in the immediate term and very severe impacts in disaster affected areas.¹⁶

4.2.3 In December 2022, UNICEF (UN Children’s Fund) provided an overview of the humanitarian situation, focussing on monsoon-related flooding:

‘The humanitarian situation in Pakistan has deteriorated since the monsoon season due to unprecedented flooding, especially impacting already vulnerable populations. Compounded by the political volatility, economic deterioration, the residual impact of COVID-19 and the protracted nutrition emergency, with high rates of global acute malnutrition (on average 23 per cent in the districts most affected by floods), children have been pushed to the brink. During the monsoon season, rainfall was equivalent to nearly 2.9 times the national 30-year average, causing widespread flooding and landslides with severe repercussions for human lives, property, and infrastructure. An estimated 20.6 million people, including 9.6 million children, need humanitarian assistance. To date, 94 districts have been declared ‘calamity hit’ by the Government of Pakistan. Many of the hardest-hit districts are amongst the most vulnerable districts in Pakistan, where children already suffer from high malnutrition, poor access to water and sanitation, low school enrolment, and other deprivations.

‘In mountainous and high altitude areas of Pakistan, many also affected by the floods, have received snowfall and temperatures have fallen below 0 Celsius, particularly in the northern and northwestern parts of Pakistan including Khyber Pakhtunkwa (KP), Gilgit Baltistan (GB), Pakistan Administered Kashmir (PAK) and northern Balochistan. The coldest place in Pakistan usually are the glacial parts of GB, where in winters the average temperature remains below -20...’¹⁷

4.2.4 The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) stated in March 2023 that ‘The water levels have decreased: imagery from the United Nations Satellite Centre (UNOSAT) shows that 1.8 million people live by stagnant floodwater, down from 4.5 million people in January.’¹⁸

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4.3 Internally displaced persons (IDPs)

4.3.1 The USSD HR Report 2022 stated that:

‘Large population displacements occurred beginning in 2008 because of militant activity and military operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the former FATA. Returns continued amid improved security conditions. The government and UN agencies such as UNHCR, UNICEF, and the UN World

¹⁶ World Bank, ‘[Poverty & Equity Briefs](#)’ (Pakistan), October 2022

¹⁷ UNICEF, ‘[Pakistan Humanitarian Situation Report No. 8 \(Floods\)](#)’, 15 December 2022

¹⁸ UNOCHA, ‘[Pakistan: 2022 Monsoon Floods - Situation Report No. 15](#)’, 9 March 2023

Food Program collaborated to assist and protect those affected by conflict, who generally resided with host families, in rented accommodations, or to a lesser extent, in camps. Several internally displaced persons (IDP) populations settled in informal settlements outside of cities such as Dera Ismail Khan, Bannu, Peshawar, Lahore, and Karachi.¹⁹

- 4.3.2 In October 2022, UNHCR reported that ‘Approximately 7.9 million people have been estimated to have been displaced as a result of the flooding. The displacement ratio was significantly higher in Sindh where over 40% of the affected population has been displaced. The districts which were reported to have the highest proportion of those displaced include Dadu, Jamshoro, Kambar Shahdaskot, Nowshero Feroze, Sanghar and Shaheed Benazirabad.’²⁰
- 4.3.3 The UNOCHA reported in January 2023 stated that, due to flooding, ‘According to the Provincial Disaster Management Authority of Sindh, over 89,000 people remain displaced in the province as of 2 January 2023, down from 6.5 million in early September. The IDPs living in ten districts including Dadu, Shikarpur, Matiari, Mirpur Khas, Jaccobabad, Jamshoro, Tando Allahyar, Thatta, Khairpur and Karachi with the highest number of IDPs in Dadu (41,742) and the lowest in Karachi (356 IDPs).’²¹

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5. Returnees

5.1 Treatment on return

- 5.1.1 Information on the treatment of returnees was limited amongst the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).
- 5.1.2 The January 2022 DFAT report provided information on treatment of returnees:

‘Returnees tend to leave Pakistan on valid travel documents and therefore do not commit immigration offences under Pakistani law. Those who return voluntarily and with valid travel documentation are typically processed like any other citizen returning to Pakistan. The government issues “genuine” returnees with temporary documents when they arrive. A genuine returnee is defined as someone who exited Pakistan legally irrespective of how they entered destination countries. Those who are returned involuntarily or who travel on emergency travel documents are likely to attract attention from the authorities upon arrival. Immigration officials will interview failed returnees and release them if their exit was deemed to be legal but may detain those deemed to have departed illegally.

‘People suspected of or charged with criminal offences in Pakistan are likely to face questioning on return, irrespective of whether they departed legally or not. DFAT understands that people returned to Pakistan involuntarily are typically questioned upon arrival to ascertain whether they left the country

¹⁹ USSD, ‘[Country Report on Human Rights Practices](#)’ (section 2f), 20 March 2023

²⁰ UNHCR, ‘[Pakistan: Protection Analysis Update: October 2022](#)’ (page 4), 1 November 2022

²¹ UNOCHA, ‘[Pakistan: 2022 Monsoon Floods - Situation Report No. 13](#)’, 6 January 2023

illegally, are wanted for crimes in Pakistan, or have committed offences while abroad. Those who left Pakistan on valid travel documentation and have not committed any other crimes are typically released within a couple of hours. Those found to have contravened Pakistani immigration laws are typically arrested and detained. These people are usually released within a few days after being bailed out by their families or having paid a fine, although the law provides for prison sentences. Those wanted for a crime in Pakistan or who have committed a serious offence abroad may be arrested and held on remand or required to report regularly to police.

‘... Returnees are typically able to reintegrate into the Pakistani community without repercussions stemming from their migration attempt, although involuntary returnees who took on debt to fund their migration tend to face a higher risk of financial hardship and familial shame.’²²

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²² DFAT, [‘Country Information Report Pakistan’](#) (paragraph 5.28 to 5.30), 25 January 2022

Research methodology

The country of origin information (COI) has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2013. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

All the COI included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the 'cut-off' date(s). Any event taking place or report/article published after these date(s) is not included.

All information is publicly accessible or can be made publicly available. Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources.

Multiple sourcing is used to ensure that the information is accurate and balanced, which is compared and contrasted where appropriate so that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture is provided of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

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Terms of Reference

A 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) is a broad outline of what the CPIN seeks to cover. They form the basis for the [country information](#).

The Home Office uses some standardised ToR, depending on the subject, and these are then adapted depending on the country concerned.

For this particular CPIN, the following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Freedom of movement - legal status and documentation required to move within and into/out of country, legal and physical restrictions
- Treatment of returnees on and after arrival
- Humanitarian situation - areas affected by conflict/natural disasters, conditions these areas, including availability of food, water and shelter, internally displaced populations, government and non-government support and services provided to displaced populations

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Version control and feedback

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **1.0**
- valid from **3 April 2023**

Official – sensitive: Start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: End of section

Changes from last version of this note

First version of discrete CPIN on internal relocation.

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Feedback to the Home Office

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

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Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support him in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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