



Home Office

# **Country Policy and Information Note**

## **Pakistan: Political parties and affiliation**

**Version 2.0**

**May 2023**

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# Executive summary

Updated: 25 April 2023

Political parties in Pakistan participate in the electoral process. Large and small parties as well as independent candidates compete in national and provincial elections and function in parliament. Opposition parties hold power or significant shares of assembly seats at the national and provincial level. Major parties' freedom to operate is related to the strength of their relationships with unelected arms of the state, for example, the military.

Political parties operating in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), particularly pro-independence parties, face tighter restrictions on their freedom of expression than elsewhere in Pakistan.

In general, low-level members and activists of opposition political parties, or their family members, are unlikely to be of interest to the authorities and/or non-state actors and subject to treatment that is sufficiently serious, by its nature or repetition, to amount to persecution.

Some senior party members may – depending on the party, their location, the person's profile, views expressed and previous activities, and difficulties with the state, particularly in relation to corruption charges – be subject to treatment, including harassment, arrest, arbitrary detention and criminal charges by the security forces, which amounts to persecution.

Decision makers must consider each case on its facts with the onus on the person to show that they would be at real risk of serious harm or persecution on account of their actual or perceived political opinion

In the reported case of [AW \(sufficiency of protection\) Pakistan \[2011\]](#), the Upper Tribunal, having regard to the country guidance case of [AH \(Sufficiency of Protection, Sunni Extremists\) Pakistan CG \[2002\] UKIAT 05862](#), found that, there was no 'general insufficiency of state protection.' (paragraph 34).

Federal and provincial human rights legislation is in place to protect the fundamental rights of citizens and the Pakistan Penal Code provides for the punishment of criminal acts. There is a functioning police force and judiciary, which are generally accessible. Therefore, the country information available since [AW](#) was heard indicates that, despite some failings, in general, the state is both willing and able to offer sufficient protection from non-state actors, including 'rogue' state actors (see CPIN Pakistan: Actors of protection)

Pakistan is a diverse society with an estimated total population of nearly 243 million and numerous urban centres and large cities. The law provides for freedom of movement (subject to security restrictions), and internal migration is common (see CPIN Pakistan: Internal relocation).

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.

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# Assessment

## 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 likely to face a real risk of persecution/serious harm by state and/or non-state actors because of their actual or perceived political opinion
- a person is able to obtain protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)
- a person is reasonably able to relocate within a country or territory
- a claim is likely to justify granting asylum, humanitarian protection or other form of leave, and
- if a claim is refused, it is likely or unlikely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

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

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## 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 language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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### Official – sensitive: End of section

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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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## 2. Convention reason(s)

- 2.1.1 Actual or imputed political opinion.
- 2.1.2 Establishing a convention reason is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of their actual or imputed convention reason.
- 2.1.3 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 3. Risk

### a) Risk from the state

- 3.1.1 In general, low-level members and activists of opposition political parties, or their family members, are unlikely to be of interest to the authorities and subject to treatment that is sufficiently serious, by its nature or repetition, to amount to persecution. However, the level of risk will depend on the particular profile of the person, the party they support and the area it operates in, their activities, the nature of the threat and how far it would extend. Some senior party members – depending on the party, their profile, views expressed and previous activities and difficulties with the state, particularly in regard to charges of corruption – may be subject to treatment, including harassment, arrest, arbitrary detention and criminal charges by the security forces, which amounts to persecution.
- 3.1.2 Decision makers must consider each case on its facts with the onus on the person to show that they would be at real risk of serious harm or persecution on account of their actual or perceived political opinion.
- 3.1.3 For further information on human rights violations by the state, see the [Country Policy and Information Note on Pakistan: Actors of protection](#).

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## b) Overview of political system

- 3.1.4 Pakistan has a federal system of government with a dual legislature: the National Assembly and the Senate. All 4 provinces – Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Sindh – have their own elected provincial assemblies and governments. Pakistani Kashmir is administered as 2 territories: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), which have an elected assembly and government with limited autonomy (see [Political system](#)).
- 3.1.5 For more information about the administrative divisions, see the Country Information Note: Pakistan, available on request.
- 3.1.6 Political parties in Pakistan participate in the electoral process. Large and small parties as well as independent candidates compete in national and provincial elections and function in parliament. Opposition parties hold power or significant shares of assembly seats at the national and provincial level. Major parties' freedom to operate is related to the strength of their relationships with unelected arms of the state, for example, the military (see [Main parties](#), [Participation and affiliation](#) and [General elections 2018](#)).
- 3.1.7 The July 2018 general elections were won by the [Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf \(PTI\)](#), led by Imran Khan, with a majority of seats in the National Assembly, removing the incumbent [Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz \(PML-N\)](#) party from power.
- 3.1.8 On 10 April 2022, Imran Khan was ousted as prime minister after a no-confidence vote and PML-N president, Shehbaz Sharif, was elected prime minister after PTI members resigned en masse from the National Assembly, leaving Sharif as the only candidate. Sharif leads a coalition government with multiple parties (see [Parliament, President and Prime Minister](#) and [Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz \(PML-N\)](#)).

## c) Politics in Azad Jammu and Kashmir

- 3.1.9 Political parties operating in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK – a self-governing state in Pakistan) face tighter restrictions on their freedom of expression than elsewhere in Pakistan. Candidates for the legislative assembly of the AJK government must swear an oath to support accession (being part of) to Pakistan and it is reported that pro-independence parties are barred from participating in elections and have limited influence. The ability to express a political view other than for accession to Pakistan is limited (see [Pakistani Kashmir parties](#)).
- 3.1.10 The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported in 2018 that leaders of pro-independence parties, who are seen to be opposing Pakistani rule, have been subject to surveillance, harassment, imprisonment and torture. However, the scale, extent and currency of such treatment is unclear (see [Pakistani Kashmir parties](#)).

## d) PML-N and PPP

- 3.1.11 Following the 2018 elections, the central leadership of the PML-N and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) were subject to corruption charges. Opposition parties claim the charges are politically motivated and selectively target leaders. PML-N leader Shehbaz Sharif was detained in September

2020 on corruption charges and released on bail in April 2021. He was elected prime minister on 11 April 2022 after the ousting of Imran Khan and leads a coalition government, which includes the PPP. He was acquitted of corruption in October 2022 (see [Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz \(PML-N\)](#), [Pakistan People's Party \(PPP\)](#) and [Corruption charges](#)).

e) PTM

- 3.1.12 The [Pashtun Tahafuz \(Protection\) Movement \(PTM\)](#), which campaigns against human rights abuses targeted at Pashtuns, was formed in 2018 following the alleged extra-judicial killing by Karachi police of Naqeebullah Mehsud, a Pashtun. Protests were staged in different parts of the country against alleged security involvement in the enforced disappearances, extra-judicial arrests and killings, and mistreatment of Pashtuns. In March 2019, a former police officer was charged with the murder of Mehsud (see [Pashtun Tahafuz \(Protection\) Movement \(PTM\)](#)).
- 3.1.13 Some leaders of the PTM, as well as some activists, have faced arrest, arbitrary detention, surveillance, intimidation, prosecution and threats of violence. The US Department of State reported in 2022 that the PTM held large protests, albeit under scrutiny of the security forces, and that security agencies continued to arrest, detain, and file charges against PTM leaders in connection with protests and speeches (see [Pashtun Tahafuz \(Protection\) Movement \(PTM\)](#)).

f) MQM-London (MQM-L)

- 3.1.14 The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), founded in 1984, is a Karachi based secular political party which advocates the rights of Urdu speaking Muslims, known as Muhajirs. In 2016, the MQM split into two factions: MQM–L led by Altaf Hussain (AH) living in self-imposed exile in the UK since 1992, and MQM–Pakistan (MQM-P) initially led by Farooq Sattar but succeeded by Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui in February 2018. The split followed a 2016 speech by AH containing anti-Pakistan rhetoric and causing political violence in Karachi. Following the speech, there have been a number of arrests and killings by the authorities of MQM–L members, described by security forces as ‘hitmen’ or ‘target killers’, and of those holding significant positions within the organisation in 2019, 2020 and 2021 (see [Muttahida Qaumi Movement \(MQM\)](#)).
- 3.1.15 In November 2020 the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) included AH on its, ‘most wanted terrorists’ list, although MQM–L is not a proscribed organisation in the UK or Pakistan. AH was arrested in London in June 2019 on charges of encouraging terrorism in Pakistan (from London) through hate speech. Following a trial at the Old Bailey, he was acquitted on 15 February 2022 (see [Muttahida Qaumi Movement \(MQM\)](#)).
- 3.1.16 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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g) Threats from non-state actors

- 3.1.17 In general, the risk to political leaders, supporters and activists by non-state actors is unlikely to be sufficiently serious, by its nature or repetition, to



amount to persecution.

- 3.1.18 The level of risk will depend on the particular profile of the person, the party they support and the area it operates in, their activities, the nature of the threat and how far it would extend. Decision makers must consider each case on its facts with the onus on the person to show that they would be at real risk of serious harm or persecution on account of their actual or perceived political opinion.
- 3.1.19 Some political parties and their members have been targeted by terrorist groups. However, the number of attacks against political leaders or party workers are low compared to the overall number of terrorist attacks. According to the Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), between 2019 and 2022 there were 844 terrorist attacks, of which 28 (3.3%) targeted political leaders or workers (see [Politically-motivated violence](#)).
- 3.1.20 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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#### 4. Protection

- 4.1.1 In general, the state is both willing and able to offer sufficient protection from non-state actors, including 'rogue' state actors. Decision makers must consider each case on its facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate why they would not be able to obtain protection.
- 4.1.2 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution from the state they will not, in general, be able to obtain protection from the authorities.
- 4.1.3 In the country guidance case of [AH \(Sufficiency of Protection, Sunni Extremists\) Pakistan CG \[2002\] UKIAT 05862](#), heard on 4 October 2002 and promulgated on 31 December 2002, the Upper Tribunal (UT) held that the state of Pakistan '... has a functioning system of criminal law and criminal acts are prosecuted albeit that there may be difficulties which will arise in individual cases in successfully doing so. The degree of protection which the state is required to provide to its subjects is clearly illustrated in the approach of the European Court in Strasbourg to the need to have regard to the difficulties involved in policing modern societies and resources' (para 17).
- 4.1.4 In the reported case of [AW \(sufficiency of protection\) Pakistan \[2011\] UKUT 31 \(IAC\)](#), heard on 11 November 2010 and promulgated on 26 January 2011, the UT, having regard to the case of [AH](#), found that there was no 'general insufficiency of state protection' (paragraph 34).
- 4.1.5 The UT in [AW](#) held that 'Notwithstanding systemic sufficiency of state protection, a claimant may still have a well founded fear of persecution if authorities know or ought to know of circumstances particular to his/her case giving rise to the fear, but are unlikely to provide the additional protection the particular circumstances reasonably require...' (Headnote 2).
- 4.1.6 The UT also held that 'In considering whether an appellant's particular circumstances give rise to a need for additional protection, particular account must be taken of past persecution (if any) so as to ensure the question posed is whether there are good reasons to consider that such persecution

(and past lack of sufficient protection) will not be repeated' (Headnote 3).

- 4.1.7 The country evidence available since [AW](#) was heard indicates that, despite some failings, state protection remains generally available. While a person's reluctance to seek protection does not necessarily mean that sufficient protection is not available, it was held in AW that regard must be had to the individual circumstances of a case.
- 4.1.8 Decision makers must therefore consider each case on its facts including any persecution of family members, past persecution and past lack of effective protection which may indicate that sufficient protection would not be available in the future. The onus is on the person to demonstrate why they would not be able to seek and obtain state protection.
- 4.1.9 See also the [Country Policy and Information Note on Pakistan: Actors of protection](#).
- 4.1.10 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 5. Internal relocation

- 5.1.1 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.
- 5.1.2 For information on geography and demography, socio-economic indicators, freedom of movement and factors which may be relevant to an individual's particular circumstances such as access to education, employment and housing see the [Country Policy and Information Note on Pakistan: Internal relocation](#).
- 5.1.3 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.
- 5.1.4 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.
- 5.1.5 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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## 6. Certification

- 6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 6.1.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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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 follow 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: 5 April 2023

## 7. Political system

### 7.1 Legislature

7.1.1 The European Union Election Observation Mission (EOM) report on Pakistan's 2018 general elections noted:

'The Islamic Republic of Pakistan is a federal parliamentary republic and comprises four provinces, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa [KP], Punjab and Sindh, as well as Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) and two autonomous regions, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (Pakistan-administered part of Kashmir [AJK]). The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) as an administrative unit is currently merging with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.'<sup>1</sup>

7.1.2 Freedom House noted, in its Freedom in the World 2022 report for Pakistan, covering 2021 events, that:

'The parliament consists of a 342-member National Assembly and a 104-member Senate. Members of the National Assembly are elected for five years. Of the 342 lower-house seats, 272 are filled through direct elections in single-member districts, 60 are reserved for women, and 10 are reserved for non-Muslim minorities. The reserved seats are filled through a proportional representation system with closed party lists.

'For the Senate, each provincial assembly chooses 23 members. The 8 seats representing the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) chosen by assembly members are being phased out, as the FATA region is being integrated with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The National Assembly chooses 4 senators to represent the Islamabad capital territory. Senators serve six-year terms, with half of the seats up for election every three years.'<sup>2</sup>

7.1.3 Dr. Arif Alvi was sworn in as the 13th President of Islamic Republic of Pakistan on 9th September 2018<sup>3</sup>. According to the Constitution, the President's term is 5 years<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> EOM, '[Final Report General Elections, 25 July 2018](#)' (page 9), October 2018

<sup>2</sup> Freedom House, '[Freedom in the World 2022 - Pakistan](#)' (section A2), 28 February 2022

<sup>3</sup> MoFA, '[President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi](#)', no date

<sup>4</sup> [The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan](#) (Article 44), 1973

- 7.1.4 Pakistan's political regime changed on 11 April 2022, with Shehbaz Sharif of the Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N) taking over as prime minister after Imran Khan lost a vote of no-confidence in his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-led coalition government<sup>5 6</sup>.

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## 7.2 Party system

- 7.2.1 Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2022, which covers the period from 1 February 2019 to 31 January 2021 and assesses the transformation toward democracy and a market economy as well as the quality of governance in 137 countries<sup>7</sup>, noted:

'Mainstream political parties in Pakistan are weak, and lack organizational capacity, internal democracy, clear ideological identities, and programmatic platforms based on the aggregation and articulation of popular demands. Repeated rounds of military rule in Pakistan have been accompanied by the imposition of curbs on political parties, impeding the development of the party system.

'This has fostered an environment in which powerful local leaders are able to position themselves as viable electoral candidates by leveraging their economic and social resources, as well as their connections to the state in order to mobilize vote blocs through the provision of patronage to clients in their constituencies. Particularly in rural Punjab and Sindh, electoral competition often involves little more than competition between these entrenched local elites as they defect from one party to another depending on the broader political environment. Parties lack organic roots in communities and, as a result, dynastic politics remains the main point of entry into electoral politics in mainstream parties.'<sup>8</sup>

- 7.2.2 The same report noted that:

'Over the years, the party system in Pakistan has fragmented along provincial lines. The PPP enjoys a virtual monopoly over politics in Sindh, except for the city of Karachi where it competes for influence with the Muttahida Qaumi Movement Party system (MQM), representing ethnic Mohajirs, and the religious Jamaat-i-Islami (JI). In Balochistan, electoral politics is dominated by ethno-national parties like the Baloch National Party (BNP). Elections are more competitive in KP and Punjab; the PTI has emerged as the dominant party in KP after displacing the Awami National Party (ANP) and JI, and the PTI and PML-N enjoy roughly equal levels of support in Punjab following the collapse of the vote banks previously held by the PPP and the Pakistan Muslim League – Quaid (PML-Q). Voter volatility is often determined by the shifting allegiances of local leaders heading vote blocs built around clientelism and kinship.'<sup>9</sup>

- 7.2.3 The News International published a list of 120 parties and their symbols, which were registered with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for

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<sup>5</sup> Dawn, '[Imran Khan loses no-trust vote, prime ministerial term comes to...](#)', 9 April 2022

<sup>6</sup> BBC News, '[Pakistan: Shehbaz Sharif chosen as PM after week-long uncertainty](#)', 11 April 2022

<sup>7</sup> BTI, '[2022 Country Report](#)' (page 2), 2022

<sup>8</sup> BTI, '[2022 Country Report](#)' (page 15), 2022

<sup>9</sup> BTI, '[2022 Country Report](#)' (pages 15 to 16), 2022

the 2018 elections<sup>10</sup>. In December 2021, Pakistan Today stated there were 135 registered political parties and cited 8 newly registered parties. The article noted, however, that only 16 parties were represented in Parliament<sup>11</sup>. For a full list of parties, see the [List of Political Parties enlisted with ECP](#), containing 165 parties.

7.2.4 For a list of provincial assembly members see the respective members directories for the:

- [Punjab Assembly](#)
- [Sindh Assembly](#)
- [KP Assembly](#)
- [Balochistan Assembly](#)
- [AJK Assembly](#)
- [Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly](#)

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Section updated: 5 April 2023

## 8. Elections

### 8.1 Participation

8.1.1 The US Department of State's Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2022 (USSD HR Report 2022) noted:

'There were no reports of restrictions on political parties participating in elections, except for those prohibited due to terrorist affiliations.

'On May 25, PTI chairman and former Prime Minister Imran Khan led a "Freedom March" from Peshawar to Islamabad to protest his removal from office. Khan stated his march to Islamabad was impeded due to barriers imposed by the federal government, and participants were subjected to tear gas and arrests. Two participants reportedly died, and thousands were arrested by security forces.

'Judges ordered media regulatory agencies to enforce constitutional bans on content critical of the military or judiciary, compelling media to censor politicians' speeches and election-related coverage deemed "antijudiciary" or "antimilitary." Organizations that monitored press freedom reported direct pressure on media outlets to avoid content on possible military influence over judicial proceedings against politicians and positive reporting of opposition leaders. In most areas there was no interference with the right of political parties and candidates to organize campaigns, run for election, or seek votes. In Balochistan, however, there were reports security agencies and separatist groups harassed local political organizations, such as the Balochistan National Party and the Baloch Students Organization.'<sup>12</sup>

8.1.2 Regarding the right to organise political groups, Freedom House observed,

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<sup>10</sup> The News, '[Pakistan Election 2018: List of Political Parties and their Symbols...](#)', 3 July 2018

<sup>11</sup> Pakistan Today, '[ECP registers eight new political parties](#)', 11 December 2021

<sup>12</sup> USSD, '[Country Report on Human Rights 2022](#)' (section 3), 20 March 2023

in its Freedom in the World 2022 report, that:

‘Several major parties and numerous smaller parties and independents compete in elections and are represented in the parliament and provincial legislatures. However, established parties maintain patronage networks and other advantages of incumbency that hamper competition in their respective provincial strongholds. In recent years, major parties’ freedom to operate is related to the strength of their relationships with unelected arms of the state, which have sought to sideline figures not to their liking through a variety of legal and extralegal means.’<sup>13</sup>

### 8.1.3 The same report noted:

‘Opposition parties campaign and contest elections, and each of the last three national elections has resulted in an erstwhile opposition party taking power at the federal level. National opposition parties hold power or significant shares of assembly seats at the provincial level. However, the military is currently considered more powerful than elected politicians and able to influence the outcome of elections.

‘The PPP and PML-N have faced significant impediments to their competitiveness since the 2018 elections, as party leaders and senior figures faced a succession of charges from the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), the government’s anticorruption body. Nawaz Sharif, his daughter Maryam Nawaz, his younger brother and former Punjab chief minister Shahbaz Sharif, Shahbaz Sharif’s son Hamza, and former prime ministers Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and Raja Parvaiz Ashraf, all political figures within PML-N, and former president Asif Ali Zardari and his sister Faryal Talpur, both PPP politicians, have faced multiple court appearances, periodic detentions, and a ban from public office (Nawaz Sharif).

‘However, in 2021, Shahbaz Sharif and Asif Zardari were released on bail, and younger leaders Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari and Maryam Nawaz rose to prominence as political players in their parties. PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif stayed in self-imposed exile in London but was politically active.’<sup>14</sup>

See also [Mainstream parties](#) and [Treatment of political opponents](#).

For information on minority ethnic and religious groups see the [Pakistan Country Policy and Information Notes](#) relating to Ahmadis, Christians, Shia Muslims and Hazaras.

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## 8.2 General elections

8.2.1 The 2019 DFAT report noted that ‘Pakistanis have historically tended to vote more according to ethnic, local or feudal ties rather than ideological, religious or sectarian allegiances. The political system includes representation from a broad range of political, ethnic and religious interests. Local sources observed in early 2018 that religion and conservatism appeared to dominate the election campaign process, fostering religious intolerance at the

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<sup>13</sup> Freedom House, [‘Freedom in the World 2022 - Pakistan’](#) (section B1), 28 February 2022

<sup>14</sup> Freedom House, [‘Freedom in the World 2022 - Pakistan’](#) (section B2), 28 February 2022

community level.<sup>15</sup>

8.2.2 For information on the 2018 general elections, see the archived [Country Policy and Information Note on Pakistan: Political parties and affiliation](#), dated December 2020.

8.2.3 The next general election is expected to be held by 12 October 2023<sup>16</sup>.

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## 9. Ousting of former Prime Minister Imran Khan

9.1.1 In the early hours of 10 April 2022, Imran Khan was ousted as prime minister after a no-confidence vote<sup>17</sup>. Minutes before parliament was due to elect a new prime minister, the PTI resigned from the National Assembly in line with the party's narrative, in which Khan blamed a 'foreign conspiracy' for his removal as prime minister<sup>18</sup>. The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) noted in December 2022 that Khan '... did not go quietly into retirement. He instead led his followers in a series of protest marches on the capital of Islamabad seeking to oust his successor, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. In November, Khan was wounded in a failed assassination attempt. He blamed Sharif and senior military officials for the attack.'<sup>19</sup> (see also [Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf \(PTI\)](#)).

9.1.2 PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif was elected prime minister after 174 MPs voted in his favour<sup>20</sup> and he can remain in office until elections are due in 2023<sup>21</sup>.

9.1.3 The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) noted that, 'Mr Sharif will head a new coalition government comprising multiple political parties and independents, with little common agenda other than Mr Khan's ouster, suggesting that political risk will remain high.'<sup>22</sup>

9.1.4 Shehbaz Sharif was sworn in on 19 April 2022 alongside coalition partners, which included the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) and Jamhuri Watan Party (JWP)<sup>23</sup> (For further details on some of the listed parties, see subsections of [Mainstream parties](#)).

9.1.5 For a full list of National Assembly members see [National Assembly of Pakistan](#).

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<sup>15</sup> DFAT, '[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)' (page 16), 20 February 2019

<sup>16</sup> CFR, '[Five Elections to Watch in 2023](#)', 12 December 2022

<sup>17</sup> BBC News, '[Pakistan: Shehbaz Sharif chosen as PM after week-long uncertainty](#)', 11 April 2022

<sup>18</sup> Dawn, '[PTI announces mass resignations from National Assembly](#)', 11 April 2022

<sup>19</sup> CFR, '[Five Elections to Watch in 2023](#)', 12 December 2022

<sup>20</sup> Dawn, '[Shehbaz Sharif elected prime minister of Pakistan](#)', 11 April 2022

<sup>21</sup> BBC News, '[Pakistan: Shehbaz Sharif chosen as PM after week-long uncertainty](#)', 11 April 2022

<sup>22</sup> EIU, '[New government in Pakistan: political risk to stay elevated](#)', 13 April 2022

<sup>23</sup> The Economic Times, '[Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's Cabinet takes oath](#)', 19 April 2022

## 10. Mainstream parties

### 10.1 Awami National Party (ANP)

10.1.1 An undated article in the English language news site, Dawn, noted that the Awami National Party (ANP) was formed in 1986 and follows the ideology of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, known as Bacha Khan by his supporters, who preached non-violence and believed in maximum provincial autonomy<sup>24</sup>.

10.1.2 The January 2022 DFAT report noted:

'The Awami National Party (ANP) is a secular Pashtun nationalist political party. It was formed in 1986 and enjoys strong support in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Between 2008 and 2013, the ANP governed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and was a junior partner in the federal coalition government. Since 2018, ANP members have participated in large-scale demonstrations led by the PTM against human rights abuses against Pashtuns in the tribal regions of Pakistan.'<sup>25</sup>

10.1.3 A prominent anti-Taliban party, ANP members have been attacked by the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) for its secular ideology, for openly supporting the counter-insurgency operations in the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as well as for its work to improve the Pakistan-Afghanistan relations<sup>26 27 28</sup>.

10.1.4 The January 2022 DFAT report noted some attacks on ANP members in recent years:

'In July 2018, a suicide bomb attack at an election rally in Peshawar wounded 69 and killed at least 20, including prominent ANP politician Haroon Bilour. In June 2019, the Peshawar city district president of ANP, Sartaj Khan, was gunned down in Gulbahar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The ANP was also the target of TTP attacks ahead of the May 2013 elections. While security operations have weakened the TTP in recent years, they retain the capacity and intent to target ANP members and leadership.'<sup>29</sup>

10.1.5 In June 2019, local ANP leader, Sartaj Khan, was shot and killed by unknown assailants in Peshawar<sup>30</sup>. Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty (RFERL) reported on the death of Khan and noted that, although no one had claimed responsibility, 'ANP members have frequently been attacked by the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in recent years.'<sup>31</sup> The ANP claimed 'hundreds' of its leaders and activists had been killed since 2007<sup>32 33</sup>.

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### 10.2 Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM)

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<sup>24</sup> Dawn, '[Awami National Party](#)', no date

<sup>25</sup> DFAT, '[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)' (paragraph 3.73), 25 January 2022

<sup>26</sup> RFERL, '[Anti-Taliban Party Official Gunned Down In Pakistan's Peshawar](#)', 29 June 2019

<sup>27</sup> DFAT, '[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)' (paragraph 3.74), 25 January 2022

<sup>28</sup> The Diplomat, '[Pakistan's Anti-Taliban Party on the Hit List Again](#)', 12 July 2018

<sup>29</sup> DFAT, '[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)' (paragraph 3.74), 25 January 2022

<sup>30</sup> Daily Times, '[ANP leader shot dead](#)', 30 June 2019

<sup>31</sup> RFERL, '[Anti-Taliban Party Official Gunned Down In Pakistan's Peshawar](#)', 29 June 2019

<sup>32</sup> RFERL, '[Anti-Taliban Party Official Gunned Down In Pakistan's Peshawar](#)', 29 June 2019

<sup>33</sup> The News, '[ANP lost prominent leaders in attacks in recent years](#)', 2 July 2019



10.2.1 BBC News noted in 2019 that the MQM was founded in 1984, ‘... as the party of Urdu-speakers who migrated from India at the time of the 1947 partition, known as Muhajirs.’<sup>34</sup>

10.2.2 As noted in the January 2022 DFAT report:

‘The Mutahidda Qaumi Movement (MQM) is a Karachi-based secular political party which advocates for the rights of Muhajirs (Urdu-speaking Muslim migrants from India and their descendants). Formed in 1984, the MQM rose to become a major political force in the 1980s and 1990s. During this period, MQM was involved in widespread political violence in Karachi as its militants fought government forces, breakaway factions and militants from other ethnic political movements.’<sup>35</sup>

10.2.3 In 2016, the MQM split into 2 factions: the [MQM-L \(London\)](#) led by Altaf Hussain, living in self-imposed exile in the UK, and the [MQM-P \(Pakistan\)](#), initially led by Farooq Sattar, who was succeeded by Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui in February 2018<sup>36 37</sup>.

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a. [MQM-Pakistan \(MQM-P\)](#)

10.2.4 The MQM-P won 7 National Assembly seats and became a member of Pakistan's governing coalition<sup>38</sup>. The National Assembly website listed the seats held by the MQM-P<sup>39</sup>. The MQM-P became a coalition partner of the PML-N following the ousting of Imran Khan and the resignation of the PTI in April 2022<sup>40</sup>.

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b. [MQM-London \(MQM-L\)](#)

10.2.5 The MQM party split in 2016 following a speech by Altaf Hussain which contained anti-Pakistan rhetoric and reportedly urged supporters to attack news outlets that did not give MQM enough media coverage<sup>41 42</sup>. Sources indicated that Altaf Hussain still held considerable influence in the party, primarily based in Karachi<sup>43 44</sup>. The MQM-L boycotted the 2018 general election, citing repression of the Muhajirs<sup>45</sup>.

10.2.6 Altaf Hussain was arrested and bailed in London in June 2019 on charges of encouraging terrorism through hate speech<sup>46</sup>. On 1 June 2020, Hussain's trial began at the Old Bailey, London<sup>47</sup>. On 15 February 2022, Altaf Hussain

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<sup>34</sup> BBC News, [‘Pakistan MQM founder Altaf Hussain arrested in UK’](#), 11 June 2019

<sup>35</sup> DFAT, [‘Country Information Report Pakistan’](#) (paragraph 3.76), 25 January 2022

<sup>36</sup> BBC News, [‘Pakistan MQM founder Altaf Hussain arrested in UK’](#), 11 June 2019

<sup>37</sup> DFAT, [‘Country Information Report Pakistan’](#) (paragraph 3.168), 20 February 2019

<sup>38</sup> BBC News, [‘Pakistan MQM founder Altaf Hussain arrested in UK’](#), 11 June 2019

<sup>39</sup> National Assembly, [‘MQMP seats distribution’](#), no date

<sup>40</sup> The Economic Times, [‘Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's Cabinet takes oath’](#), 19 April 2022

<sup>41</sup> The News, [‘Why did MQM split?’](#), 27 September 2016

<sup>42</sup> DFAT, [‘Country Information Report Pakistan’](#) (paragraph 3.168), 20 February 2019

<sup>43</sup> BBC News, [‘Pakistan MQM founder Altaf Hussain arrested in UK’](#), 11 June 2019

<sup>44</sup> The National, [‘Altaf Hussain: UK trial begins for Pakistani MQM founder ...’](#), 1 June 2020

<sup>45</sup> BBC News, [‘Pakistan MQM founder Altaf Hussain arrested in UK’](#), 11 June 2019

<sup>46</sup> Pakistan Today, [‘UK court to begin Altaf's trial in hate speech case on June 1’](#), 19 November 2019

<sup>47</sup> The National, [‘Altaf Hussain: UK trial begins for Pakistani MQM founder ...’](#), 1 June 2020

was acquitted of inciting violence and encouraging terrorism in Karachi<sup>48</sup>. Following his acquittal, dozens of Hussain's supporters rallied in Karachi in celebration and, according to English news site Dawn, there was no resistance from police and paramilitary Rangers<sup>49</sup>.

10.2.7 On 18 June 2020, an anti-terrorism court in Pakistan ruled that Hussain ordered the killing of fellow MQM leader, Dr Imran Farooq, in London in September 2010<sup>50 51</sup>. Three members of the MQM were sentenced to life imprisonment for Farooq's murder<sup>52</sup>. On 11 November 2020 it was reported that the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) had included Altaf Hussain on its 'Most Wanted Terrorists' list<sup>53</sup>.

10.2.8 The USSD HR Report 2020 noted 'The Muttahida Qaumi Movement-London alleged that security forces abducted its members and others expressing support for their founder, Altaf Hussain.'<sup>54</sup> There were no incidents concerning the treatment of MQM-L members in the USSD human rights reports for 2021<sup>55</sup> or 2022<sup>56</sup>.

10.2.9 The January 2022 DFAT report noted that following Altaf Hussain's 2016 speech:

'... , the paramilitary Rangers commenced operations in Karachi that significantly reduced political violence, but which MQM claims involved arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances of its members. These abuses allegedly still occur. In June 2020, an MQM worker and a member of a Sindh nationalist group were found shot dead in Karachi. The MQM worker had gone missing in 2019. In December 2020, an MQM worker who went missing four years earlier was found dead on the outskirts of Karachi. His body was covered in bruises.'<sup>57</sup>

10.2.10 There were numerous media reports of arrests of MQM-L members suspected to be involved in criminal activities and 'target killings':

- ARY News reported on 27 January 2019 on a series of raids in Karachi, one of which resulted in the arrest of a suspected target killer affiliated with the MQM-L<sup>58</sup>.
- ARY News referred to the arrest of a target killer affiliated to MQM-L on 12 February 2019<sup>59</sup>.
- On 19 February 2019 the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) of the Sindh police arrested in Karachi an alleged MQM-L worker 'for his alleged involvement in the kidnapping-cum-killing of a trader', The News

<sup>48</sup> Dawn, '[UK court acquits Altaf Hussain in "encouraging terrorism" case](#)', 15 February 2022

<sup>49</sup> Dawn, '[MQM-L workers stage rally to celebrate Altaf Hussain's acquittal](#)', 20 February 2022

<sup>50</sup> Indian Express, '[MQM founder Altaf Hussain ordered the killing of party leader ...](#)', 18 June 2020

<sup>51</sup> Dawn, '[MQM founder Altaf Hussain ordered the killing of Dr Imran Farooq in UK...](#)', 19 June 2020

<sup>52</sup> Reuters, '[Pakistani court convicts three in politician's murder in London](#)', 18 June 2020

<sup>53</sup> The News, '[MQM founder Altaf Hussain among others included in FIA's...](#)', 12 November 2020

<sup>54</sup> USSD, '[Country Report on Human Rights 2020](#)' (section 3), 30 March 2021

<sup>55</sup> USSD, '[Country Report on Human Rights 2021](#)', 12 April 2022

<sup>56</sup> USSD, '[Country Report on Human Rights 2022](#)', 20 March 2023

<sup>57</sup> DFAT, '[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)' (paragraph 3.77), 25 January 2022

<sup>58</sup> ARY News, '[Rangers arrest five suspects including "MQM-L target killer"...](#)', 27 January 2019

<sup>59</sup> ARY News, '[Suspected target killer belonging to MQM-L arrested](#)', 7 March 2019

International reported<sup>60</sup>.

- On 9 and 23 December 2018 and 11 February 2019 there were 3 attacks in Karachi on Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) and Pak Sarzameen Party's (PSP) workers and leaders, Pakistan newspaper Dawn reported on 25 February 2019<sup>61</sup>.
- Arrests in Karachi on 25 February and 6 March 2019 of suspected MQM-L members allegedly responsible for the attacks against MQM-P and PSP workers were reported<sup>62 63 64 65</sup>.
- On 6 March 2019 a joint operation in Karachi by Sindh Rangers and police arrested a suspected target killer affiliated with MQM-L<sup>66 67</sup>. On 9 April 2019 police arrested in Karachi 'a target killer of MQM-L', Pakistan Today reported<sup>68</sup>.
- On 19 May 2019 Dawn reported that Sindh Rangers arrested in Karachi 2 claimed MQM-L members 'allegedly involved in targeted killings.'<sup>69</sup>
- In October 2019, Karachi police arrested a target killer affiliated with the MQM-L who was reportedly involved in the killings of at least 111 people<sup>70 71</sup>.
- A suspected MQM-London 'target killer' accused of 100 murders was arrested in Karachi on 27 June 2020, SAMAA reported<sup>72</sup>.
- SAMAA reported on the arrest of MQM-L member, Wahid Hussain, on 19 February 2021<sup>73</sup>.
- The News International reported on the arrest of an MQM-L worker on 8 March 2021, for his involvement in target killings<sup>74</sup>.
- On 7 May 2021, Dunya News, a privately owned Pakistani Urdu language news and current affairs television channel, reported on the arrest of an MQM-London target killer following an attack on a police van<sup>75</sup>.
- On 28 May 2021, 3 arrests were made of MQM-L affiliates for alleged terrorist activities by the Sindh Counter Terrorism Department (CTD), reported The Daily Times<sup>76</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> News International, '[MQM-L worker charged with killing abducted trader...](#)', 20 February 2019

<sup>61</sup> Dawn, '["Hitmen" allegedly involved in attacks on MQM-P, PSP arrested...](#)', 25 February 2019

<sup>62</sup> Dawn, '["Hitmen" allegedly involved in attacks on MQM-P, PSP arrested...](#)', 25 February 2019

<sup>63</sup> The Nation, '[Rangers arrest eight target killers of MQM-L in Karachi](#)', 25 February 2019

<sup>64</sup> Express Tribune, '[Rangers arrest eight suspects behind recent terrorist attacks](#)', 26 February 2019

<sup>65</sup> News International, '[Rangers claim MQM-London death squad behind recent...](#)', 26 February 2019

<sup>66</sup> ARY News, '[Suspected target killer belonging to MQM-L arrested](#)', 7 March 2019

<sup>67</sup> News International, '[Rangers arrest another target killer of MQM London](#)', 6 March 2019

<sup>68</sup> Pakistan Today, '[Target killer of MQM-L held with illegal weapons](#)', 9 April 2019

<sup>69</sup> Dawn, '[Rangers arrest two MQM-L "hitmen"](#)', 19 May 2019

<sup>70</sup> Express Tribune, '[MQM-London target killer "wanted for 111 murders" arrested...](#)', 9 October 2019

<sup>71</sup> News International, '[MQM-L worker held for "111 target killings"](#)', 10 October 2019

<sup>72</sup> SAMAA, '[MQM-London "target killer" accused of 100 murders arrested in Karachi](#)', 28 June 2020

<sup>73</sup> SAMAA, '[MQM-L hitmen involved in Karachi political killings: investigators](#)', 28 February 2021

<sup>74</sup> News International, '[Another "cop killer backed by MQM-London" arrested](#)', 9 March 2021

<sup>75</sup> Dunya News, '[Karachi: MQM-London target killer arrested in attack on police van](#)', 7 May 2021

<sup>76</sup> Daily Times, '[CTD exposes newly formed terrorist network, arrests three of MQM-L](#)', 29 May 2021

- 10.2.11 In contrast to all the news reports of arrests, there were few reports of MQM-L members being convicted of crime between 2019 and 2021. It should be noted that courts have a significant backlog of cases in general. The USSD HR Report 2022 noted 'Extensive case backlogs in the lower and superior courts undermined the right to effective remedy and to a fair and public hearing... According to the National Judicial Policy Making Committee, more than two million cases were pending in the court system...'<sup>77</sup>
- 10.2.12 On 2 August 2019 a Karachi Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) sentenced 2 MQM-L workers to 11 years' imprisonment for possessing illegal weapons and engaging in police encounters<sup>78</sup>. On 19 March 2020 a former MQM worker was sentenced to life imprisonment by an ATC after being convicted of murder<sup>79</sup>. In July 2020 an MQM-L worker was sentenced by an ATC to 5 years for money laundering<sup>80</sup>.
- 10.2.13 Reporting on 3 February 2021, 24 News stated that the security forces shut down MQM-L's election office in Gulistan-e-Jauhar, Karachi, after it was reported that MQM-L's anthem song was played during a soundcheck<sup>81</sup>.
- 10.2.14 In a March 2021 media briefing, Sindh's Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) chief and a Sindh Rangers colonel claimed that new target killing teams had been formed, on the instruction of Altaf Hussain, to create a law and order situation in Karachi<sup>82</sup>.
- 10.2.15 On 24 May 2021 it was reported by SAMAA that Interpol had asked for information on MQM-L members for being involved in terrorism and anti-Pakistan activities<sup>83</sup>.
- 10.2.16 On 4 April 2022, Dawn reported that the MQM-L '... resumed its organisational activities in Karachi after a lapse of over five years and named two senior leaders as members of its coordination committee, party's top decision-making forum.' The report added:
- 'According to a statement sent to Dawn by London-based MQM leader Mustafa Azizabadi, former MNA Kunwar Khalid Yunus and veteran leftist leader Momin Khan Momin, both based in Pakistan, have been made senior deputy convener and deputy convener of the coordination committee, respectively.
- 'The statement said the two would pursue cases of interned MQM workers and also work for the recovery of "missing" activists.'<sup>84</sup>
- 10.2.17 Less than a week later, Dawn reported that the MQM-L's 2 leaders, Kunwar Khalid Yunus and Momin Khan Momin, were put under house arrest for at least 3 months under the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) Ordinance after they were declared by Sindh security forces as a 'threat to peace' and accused of 'engaging in illegal activities'. Following their arrest, the London-

<sup>77</sup> USSD, '[Country Report on Human Rights 2022](#)' (section 1e), 20 March 2023

<sup>78</sup> INP (The Nation), '[Two MQM-London workers sentenced to 11 years in prison](#)', 3 August 2019

<sup>79</sup> Express Tribune, '[Target killer given life sentence](#)', 21 March 2020

<sup>80</sup> Dawn, '["MQM-L hitman" jailed for five years in money laundering case](#)', 26 July 2020

<sup>81</sup> 24 News, '[MQM-London's office shut down in Karachi](#)', 3 February 2021

<sup>82</sup> News International, '[New MQM-London target killers' teams active in Karachi...](#)', 12 March 2021

<sup>83</sup> SAMAA, '[Interpol seeks details of MQM-L members involved in financial terrorism](#)', 24 May 2021

<sup>84</sup> Dawn, '[MQM-Altaf resumes activities in Karachi after over 5 years](#)', 4 April 2022

based coordination committee of MQM-L said the pair were 'relieved of their responsibilities on account of their poor health.'<sup>85</sup>

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### 10.3 Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N)

- 10.3.1 The PML-N was formed in 1992 and led by Nawaz Sharif<sup>86</sup>. Nawaz was elected Prime Minister in 2013<sup>87 88</sup>, but resigned in 2017 following disqualification by the Supreme Court over corruption charges, which the PML-N claimed were politically motivated<sup>89</sup>. Shahbaz Sharif, Nawaz's brother, replaced Nawaz as head of the PML-N and was also under investigation for corruption<sup>90</sup>.
- 10.3.2 For background information on the corruption charges and events between 2016 and 2018, see the archived [Country Policy and Information Note on Pakistan: Political parties and affiliation](#).
- 10.3.3 Nawaz Sharif was sentenced to 7 years imprisonment in December 2018 on fresh corruption charges<sup>91</sup>. In November 2019, Nawaz was granted permission to travel abroad for a period of 4 weeks to receive medical treatment<sup>92 93</sup>. In July 2020, the Islamabad Accountability Court declared Nawaz a 'proclaimed offender' due to his continued absence and issued a warrant for his arrest, ordering him to appear before court on 17 August 2020<sup>94</sup>. Nawaz, who had travelled to London to receive treatment<sup>95</sup>, remained there as of 30 September 2020<sup>96</sup>.
- 10.3.4 According to the New Indian Express, on 12 August 2020 'About 58 workers of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) were arrested and sent to jail for 14 days by a sessions court of Lahore.'<sup>97</sup> Maryam Sharif, her husband Captain (Retired) Mohammad Safdar, and 35 lawmakers and senators of the PLM-N, were among over 300 leaders and workers booked for hooliganism and attacking law enforcement officers after clashes occurred with police outside the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) office in Lahore when Maryam arrived to give a statement in a corruption case<sup>98 99</sup>. The 58 workers were later released on bail<sup>100</sup>.
- 10.3.5 On 28 September 2020, Shehbaz Sharif was arrested after the Lahore High Court rejected his bail plea in a money laundering case<sup>101</sup>. Senior leaders

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<sup>85</sup> Dawn, '[Two senior MQM-Altaf leaders detained under MPO](#)', 9 April 2022

<sup>86</sup> Dawn, '[Pakistan Muslim League \(Nawaz\)](#)', no date

<sup>87</sup> DFAT, '[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)' (paragraph 2.4), 20 February 2019

<sup>88</sup> Dawn, '[Pakistan Muslim League \(Nawaz\)](#)', no date

<sup>89</sup> DFAT, '[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)' (paragraph 2.4), 20 February 2019

<sup>90</sup> USSD, '[Country Report on Human Rights 2018](#)' (Section 4), 13 March 2019

<sup>91</sup> BBC News, '[Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan ex-PM, sent back to jail for corruption](#)', 24 December 2018

<sup>92</sup> BBC News, '[Nawaz Sharif: Ex-PM leaves Pakistan for medical treatment](#)', 19 November 2019

<sup>93</sup> NDTV, '[Cannot Return To Pakistan: Nawaz Sharif Informs Pak Court](#)', 28 July 2020

<sup>94</sup> Dhaka Tribune, '[Last chance for Nawaz to appear in court on Aug 17](#)', 7 July 2020

<sup>95</sup> Business Recorder, '[AC issues warrants of Nawaz Sharif](#)', 6 August 2020

<sup>96</sup> Express Tribune, '[Somebody else running parliament: Nawaz Sharif](#)', 30 September 2020

<sup>97</sup> New Indian Express, '[Maryam Sharif, over 300 PML-N workers booked ...](#)', 12 August 2020

<sup>98</sup> New Indian Express, '[Maryam Sharif, over 300 PML-N workers booked ...](#)', 12 August 2020

<sup>99</sup> Daily Times, '[At least 58 PML-N workers arrested over attacking NAB office](#)', 12 August 2020

<sup>100</sup> Dawn, '[PML-N workers released on bail](#)', 14 August 2020

<sup>101</sup> Dawn, '[Shehbaz Sharif arrested in money laundering case...](#)', 29 September 2020

said the case was politically motivated<sup>102</sup>. Sharif was jailed in Kot Lakhpat Jail, Lahore<sup>103</sup>. An accountability court ordered that he be provided with a mattress, chair, home-cooked meals, and other facilities after the PML-N alleged his basic human rights were being violated<sup>104</sup>.

See also [Corruption charges](#)

- 10.3.6 On 19 October 2020, Muhammad Safdar, the son-in-law of exiled ex-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was detained ‘... after he led a crowd in chanting against the military at the tomb of the country's founder. ... Demonstrators say Khan's two-year tenure has seen mounting censorship and a crackdown on dissent, critics, and opposition leaders. Safdar's arrest drew condemnation from the opposition, which accused the authorities of targeting Sharif's family. ... Chanting political slogans at Jinnah's tomb is widely considered taboo. Police say they arrested Safdar, himself a member of the Pakistan Muslim League, after receiving a complaint from a private citizen.’<sup>105</sup> Safdar was released on bail a few hours later<sup>106</sup> (see also [Pakistan Democratic Movement \(PDM\)](#)).
- 10.3.7 Shehbaz Sharif was released on bail in April 2021<sup>107</sup> and a court adjourned his hearing, and that of his son, Hamaz Shehbaz (also on bail for money laundering), until 27 April 2022<sup>108</sup>. On 11 April 2022, Shehbaz Sharif was elected prime minister after Imran Khan was ousted following a no-confidence vote<sup>109</sup>. In October 2022, Sharif and his son Hamza were acquitted of corruption charges<sup>110</sup>.

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#### 10.4 Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q)

- 10.4.1 The PML-Q was formed in 2002 by dissident PML-N members and became an integral part of General Musharraf's government, in power from 2002 to 2008<sup>111</sup> <sup>112</sup>. PML-Q leader, Shujaat Hussain, served briefly as prime minister during Musharraf's presidency<sup>113</sup>. The PML-Q is a coalition partner of the PTI<sup>114</sup>. The PML-Q became a coalition partner of the PML-N following the ousting of Imran Khan and the resignation of the PTI in April 2022<sup>115</sup>.

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#### 10.5 Pakistan People's Party (PPP)

- 10.5.1 Profiling the Sindh-based<sup>116</sup> PPP, Dawn noted in its undated report that ‘The

<sup>102</sup> The Nation, ‘[Shehbaz Sharif's arrest is political revenge: Shahid Khagan](#)’, 30 September 2020

<sup>103</sup> Geo News, ‘[Lahore court orders Shahbaz Sharif be provided ... in jail](#)’, 22 October 2020

<sup>104</sup> Geo News, ‘[Lahore court orders Shahbaz Sharif be provided ... in jail](#)’, 22 October 2020

<sup>105</sup> RFERL, ‘[Son-In-Law Of Exiled Former Pakistani PM Arrested](#)’, 19 October 2020

<sup>106</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘[Pakistani politician released as opposition to continue protests](#)’, 19 October 2020

<sup>107</sup> The News, ‘[PML-N president Shahbaz Sharif released on bail](#)’, 23 April 2021

<sup>108</sup> Daily Times, ‘[Court extends Shahbaz, Hamza bails in money laundering case](#)’, 11 April 2022

<sup>109</sup> BBC News, ‘[Pakistan: Shehbaz Sharif chosen as PM after week-long uncertainty](#)’, 11 April 2022

<sup>110</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘[Pakistani court acquits PM, son in money laundering case](#)’, 17 October 2022

<sup>111</sup> Dawn, ‘[Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid](#)’, no date

<sup>112</sup> Reuters, ‘[Factbox: Facts about Pakistan's late former President Pervez...](#)’, 5 February 2023

<sup>113</sup> Dawn, ‘[Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid](#)’, no date

<sup>114</sup> Dawn, ‘[Setback for PTI as BNP-M quits ruling alliance](#)’, 18 June 2020

<sup>115</sup> The Economic Times, ‘[Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's Cabinet takes oath](#)’, 19 April 2022

<sup>116</sup> DFAT, ‘[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)’ (paragraph 3.3), 20 February 2019

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) was founded by the late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1967, with an aim to implement the ideology of what he called Islamic socialism.<sup>117</sup> Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, son of former Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and murdered ex-Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, chairs the PPP<sup>118</sup>, which forms the provincial government in Sindh<sup>119</sup>. Party Vice-President, Sherry Rehman, is Parliamentary Leader of the PPP in the Senate<sup>120</sup>. The PPP (albeit under the separate entity Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians – PPPP, formed in 2002 to comply with electoral laws<sup>121</sup>), holds the majority of seats in the Sindh Provincial Assembly<sup>122 123</sup>.

10.5.2 Former president, Asif Ali Zardari of the PPP, and his sister, Faryal Talpur, also a PPP politician, faced charges of corruption<sup>124 125</sup>. The independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) noted in its 2019 report that, 'Several members of the central leadership of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), from the chairman of the party to the Chief Minister as well as scores of party leaders are facing corruption charges and money laundering cases initiated by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in Sindh.'<sup>126</sup> As of 19 January 2023, the case continued<sup>127</sup>.

10.5.3 The PPP became a coalition partner of the PML-N following the ousting of Imran Khan and the resignation of the PTI in April 2022<sup>128</sup>.

See also [Participation and affiliation](#) and [Corruption charges](#).

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## 10.6 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)

10.6.1 The 2019 DFAT report noted:

'PTI is a centrist political party led by former cricketer Imran Khan. Formed in 1996, PTI is Pakistan's third-largest party and currently leads a coalition government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. PTI has frequently criticised what it describes as the systemic exploitation, corruption and prejudice in Pakistan's politics. Unlike most other major parties in Pakistan, PTI has not engaged in political violence outside of minor altercations with security forces during otherwise peaceful protests. PTI won the largest number of seats in the 2018 national elections...'<sup>129</sup>

10.6.2 The PTI formed a coalition with other minority parties to get the required number of seats to form a government following the July 2018 elections<sup>130</sup>.

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<sup>117</sup> Dawn, '[Pakistan Peoples Party](#)', no date

<sup>118</sup> BBC News, '[Bilawal Bhutto Zardari: Heir to a political dynasty](#)', 25 July 2018

<sup>119</sup> HRCP, '[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)' (page 93), April 2020

<sup>120</sup> Sherry Rehman, '[Bio](#)', no date

<sup>121</sup> PPPP, '[About us](#)', 5 August 2002

<sup>122</sup> Provincial Assembly of Sindh, '[Members Directory: By party affiliation](#)', no date

<sup>123</sup> HRCP, '[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)' (page 93), April 2020

<sup>124</sup> Freedom House, '[Freedom in the World 2020 - Pakistan](#)' (section B2), 5 March 2020

<sup>125</sup> HRCP, '[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)' (page 39), April 2020

<sup>126</sup> HRCP, '[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)' (page 74), April 2020

<sup>127</sup> ARY News, '[AC reserves verdict on Asif Ali Zardari money laundering case](#)', 19 January 2023

<sup>128</sup> The Economic Times, '[Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's Cabinet takes oath](#)', 19 April 2022

<sup>129</sup> DFAT, '[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)' (paragraph 3.160), 20 February 2019

<sup>130</sup> Dhaka Tribune, '[PTI claims majority to form Pakistan govt after coalition talks](#)', 31 July 2018

PTI member seats are listed on the website of the [National Assembly](#)<sup>131</sup>.

- 10.6.3 Information on the party's structure, leadership and so forth, can be found on the [PTI website](#).
- 10.6.4 In October 2019, an official from the PTI was killed in Karachi by unknown assailants. According to the victim's family, the PTI activist had been receiving threats to his life in the days prior to his death<sup>132</sup>.
- 10.6.5 In the early hours of 10 April 2022, Imran Khan was ousted as prime minister after a no-confidence vote<sup>133</sup>. Minutes before parliament was due to elect a new prime minister, the PTI resigned from the National Assembly in line with the party's narrative, in which Khan blamed a 'foreign conspiracy' for his removal as prime minister<sup>134</sup>. On 8 May 2022, the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly accepted the resignations of 123 PTI National Assembly members after they chose to disassociate themselves from the National Assembly following the ousting of Khan<sup>135</sup>. In October 2022, Khan was disqualified from his parliamentary seat, by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), for non-declaration of assets<sup>136</sup>.
- 10.6.6 An assassination attempt against Imran Khan occurred on 3 November 2022 at a protest rally in Wazirabad in the east of Punjab province. Khan was leading a march to Islamabad to demand snap elections when he was shot in the shin. The gunman was arrested<sup>137</sup>.
- 10.6.7 Khan has continued to hold protest rallies across the country, as reported by Reuters on 20 March 2023, which added that 'Police in Pakistan have arrested dozens of supporters and aides of Khan in raids in two cities [Lahore and Islamabad] as part of a crackdown on those involved in recent clashes with the security forces, Khan's party and police said...'<sup>138</sup>

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## 10.7 Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)

- 10.7.1 The PDM is an alliance of opposition parties that formed in September 2020<sup>139</sup> <sup>140</sup>. Amongst other things, the PDM demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Imran Khan, alleging his 2018 election victory was rigged by the military<sup>141</sup> <sup>142</sup> <sup>143</sup>. The PDM is headed by Maulana Fazlur Rehman, leader of the [Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam \(JUI-F\)](#)<sup>144</sup>. Alliance partners include the Pakistan

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<sup>131</sup> National Assembly, '[PTI seats distribution](#)', no date

<sup>132</sup> Dawn, '[Slain PTI worker was receiving threats](#)', 7 October 2019

<sup>133</sup> BBC News, '[Pakistan: Shehbaz Sharif chosen as PM after week-long uncertainty](#)', 11 April 2022

<sup>134</sup> Dawn, '[PTI announces mass resignations from National Assembly](#)', 11 April 2022

<sup>135</sup> National Herald, '[Pakistan Assembly accepts resignations of 123 PTI MNAs](#)', 8 May 2022

<sup>136</sup> Dawn, '[Imran disqualified](#)', 22 October 2022

<sup>137</sup> Al Jazeera, '[Pakistan's ex-PM Imran Khan was shot: What, where and why?](#)', 3 November 2022

<sup>138</sup> Reuters, '[Pakistan police arrest dozens of Imran Khan supporters](#)', 20 March 2023

<sup>139</sup> Dawn, '[After day-long huddle, Pakistan Democratic Movement demands...](#)', 21 September 2020

<sup>140</sup> Economic Times, '[Opposition parties in Pakistan launch alliance...](#)', 21 September 2020

<sup>141</sup> Dawn, '[After day-long huddle, Pakistan Democratic Movement demands...](#)', 21 September 2020

<sup>142</sup> Economic Times, '[Opposition parties in Pakistan launch alliance...](#)', 21 September 2020

<sup>143</sup> Al Jazeera, '[Pakistani politician released as opposition to continue protests](#)', 19 October 2020

<sup>144</sup> Economic Times, '[Maulana Fazlur Rehman unanimously appointed as head...](#)', 4 October 2020



Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N)<sup>145 146</sup>. The PDM held its first of a series of planned rallies on 16 October 2020 in the city of Gujranwala<sup>147 148</sup>. A second rally took place in Karachi, Sindh Province, on 18 October 2020<sup>149 150</sup>. After the rally in Karachi, Muhammad Safdar, leading PML-N official and son-in-law of Nawaz Sharif, was arrested by police for raising political slogans against the government<sup>151 152</sup>, but was released on bail a few hours later<sup>153</sup>. An opinion piece on the Karachi rally, published in Gulf News, drew attention to the fact that the Sindh Police is under the Sindh PPP provincial government, an ally in the PDM<sup>154</sup>.

10.7.2 Parties in the PDM coalition became part of the government after Shebaz Sharif became prime minister in April 2022<sup>155 156</sup>.

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Section updated: 5 April 2023

## 11. Islamic parties

### 11.1 Ahl-e-Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ)

11.1.1 Reuters provided the following details on the ASWJ in July 2018:

- ‘Party leader: Maulana Mohammad Ahmad Ludhianvi
- ‘Legal status: Banned for being the political wing of sectarian militant group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), which has been allied with al-Qaeda and Islamic State and responsible for the killing of hundreds of minority Shi’ite Muslims. The party denies links with LeJ.
- ‘Election status: Candidates are running under the name of Pakistan Rah-e-Haq party, or as independents.
- ‘Candidates [2018 elections]: More than 150.
- ‘Religious sect: Hardline Deobandi Sunni branch of Islam.
- ‘Background: The banned ASWJ is another name for the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), founded in 1985, which belongs to Deobandi school of Islam, which in turn was carved out of pro-Taliban Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam (JUI) party. It considers minority Shi’ite Muslims heretics.’<sup>157</sup>

11.1.2 The Pakistan Rah-e-Haq party failed to win any seats in the 2018 general election<sup>158</sup>. As of 3 April 2023, Pakistan Rah-e-Haq held one seat in the

<sup>145</sup> Economic Times, ‘[Opposition parties in Pakistan launch alliance...](#)’, 21 September 2020

<sup>146</sup> Express Tribune, ‘[Is Pakistan Democratic Movement fizzling out?](#)’, 11 October 2020

<sup>147</sup> RFERL, ‘[Pakistani Opposition Launches Protest Movement To Topple Khan...](#)’, 16 October 2020

<sup>148</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘[Thousands gather for anti-government protest in Pakistan](#)’, 16 October 2020

<sup>149</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘[Pakistani politician released as opposition to continue protests](#)’, 19 October 2020

<sup>150</sup> Gulf News, ‘[Pakistan Democratic Movement rallies: what will happen next?](#)’, 19 October 2020

<sup>151</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘[Pakistan opposition leader ‘arrested’ after anti-government rally](#)’, 19 October 2020

<sup>152</sup> RFERL, ‘[Son-In-Law Of Exiled Former Pakistani PM Arrested](#)’, 19 October 2020

<sup>153</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘[Pakistani politician released as opposition to continue protests](#)’, 19 October 2020

<sup>154</sup> Gulf News, ‘[Pakistan Democratic Movement rallies: what will happen next?](#)’, 19 October 2020

<sup>155</sup> Geo News, ‘[PDM huddle to discuss future course of action today](#)’, 20 March 2023

<sup>156</sup> Geo News, ‘[PDM calls for action against “PTI attack on judicial complex”](#)’, 21 March 2023

<sup>157</sup> Reuters, ‘[Factbox: Islamist parties running in Pakistan's election](#)’, 22 July 2018

<sup>158</sup> Pakistan Forward, ‘[Pakistani voters reject extremists in favour of young, ...](#)’, 1 August 2019

Punjab Assembly<sup>159</sup>.

- 11.1.3 For information on anti-Shia rhetoric by the ASWJ, see the [Country Policy and Information Note on Pakistan: Shia Muslims](#).

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## 11.2 Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Islam Fazl (JUI-F)

- 11.2.1 Dawn noted in an undated profile on the JUI-F that it was formed in 1988. The same source noted 'JUI-F has been a consistent PML-N ally since 2013. However, it has also formed coalitions with religio-political parties. In the 2018 election, the party again became part of the broader MMA alliance of religious parties.'<sup>160</sup> Sources named Maulana Fazlur Rehman as the leader of the JUI-F<sup>161 162</sup>.
- 11.2.2 The HRCP report for 2019 noted 'The Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) is the leading opposition party in the Balochistan assembly, their strength coming mainly from the Pashtun majority districts of Northern Balochistan where they have historical strongholds.'<sup>163</sup>
- 11.2.3 Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty (RFERL) reported on protests led by Fazlur Rehman, which began in October 2019 with an Azadi (Freedom) March from the southern city of Karachi to Islamabad<sup>164</sup>. The report noted 'Tens of thousands of supporters reached the capital late on October 31 [2019], where they have been holding a sit-in demanding Prime Minister Imran Khan's resignation and new general elections.'<sup>165</sup>
- 11.2.4 The HRCP reported on protest marches 'The Azadi march called by the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI-F) in October passed peacefully through the main cities on its way to Islamabad, without any untoward incidents or much disruption to traffic.'<sup>166</sup>
- 11.2.5 In a Briefing Note, dated 18 November 2019, the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) stated:  
'The demonstrations led by the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam party under the leadership of Fazal-ur-Rehman (JUI-F) against the government have continued for two weeks at a protest camp in the Pakistani capital, Islamabad. On [13 November 2019], supporters began blocking sections of road as part of a previously announced second phase of the protest. They are calling for the resignation of prime minister Imran Khan from the Tehreek-e-Insaf party (PTI) and fresh elections.'<sup>167</sup>
- 11.2.6 The JUI-F became a coalition partner of the PML-N following the ousting of Imran Khan and the resignation of the PTI in April 2022<sup>168</sup>.

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<sup>159</sup> Punjab Assembly, '[Members' list for: Pakistan Rah-e-Haq](#)', no date

<sup>160</sup> Dawn, '[Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Islam Fazl](#)', no date

<sup>161</sup> RFERL, '[Anti-Government Protesters End Islamabad Sit-In To Block Roads](#)', 13 November 2019

<sup>162</sup> BAMF, '[Briefing Notes 18 November 2019](#)' (page 7), 22 November 2019

<sup>163</sup> HRCP, '[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)' (page 186), April 2020

<sup>164</sup> RFERL, '[Anti-Government Protesters End Islamabad Sit-In To Block Roads](#)', 13 November 2019

<sup>165</sup> RFERL, '[Anti-Government Protesters End Islamabad Sit-In To Block Roads](#)', 13 November 2019

<sup>166</sup> HRCP, '[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)' (page 40), April 2020

<sup>167</sup> BAMF, '[Briefing Notes 18 November 2019](#)' (page 7), 22 November 2019

<sup>168</sup> The Economic Times, '[Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's Cabinet takes oath](#)', 19 April 2022

### 11.3 Milli Muslim League (MML)

#### 11.3.1 Reuters provided the following details on the MML:

- 'Party leader: Saifullah Khalid, supported by spiritual leader Hafiz Saeed
- 'Legal status: Banned in Pakistan for its association with spiritual leader Hafiz Saeed, who is on a U.N. terrorism list in connection with 2008 Mumbai attacks that killed 166 people. Saeed denied involvement in the attacks.
- 'Election status: Candidates registered under the name Allah-o-Akbar Tehreek are campaigning with Saeed's image on their posters and election materials.
- 'Candidates [2018 elections]: 260. 73 for National Assembly and the rest for provincial assemblies.
- 'Religious sect: Ahl-e-Hadith, also known as Salafi branch of Sunni Islam.
- 'Background: Hafiz Saeed's charity Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) formed the MML party in August 2017. The United Nations says the JuD is a front for Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), or Army of the Pure, which the United States and India blame for the 2008 Mumbai attacks. Saeed has a \$10 million U.S. bounty on his head.<sup>169</sup>

#### 11.3.2 The USSD's 2021 country report on terrorism listed the MML as one of the LeT's aliases<sup>170</sup>.

### 11.4 Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA)

#### 11.4.1 Reuters provided the following details on the MMA:

- 'Party leaders: Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman, Sirajul Haq and Allama Sajid Naqvi.
- 'Legal status: Most of the parties in the religious alliance are long-established and legally registered with the Election Commission, except for the Shi'ite Tehreek-e-Islami, which is a new name for the banned Tehreek-e-Jafria Pakistan (TJP).
- 'Election status: Candidates from two major parties and more than a dozen small religious groups are contesting under the MMA alliance.
- 'Candidates [2018 elections]: 595. 191 for the National Assembly, the rest for provincial assemblies.
- 'Religious sect: Deobandi, Ahl-e-Hadith, Barelvi of Sunni Islam and one Shi'ite group.
- 'Background: The MMA was founded prior to the general election in 2002, which was conducted under military ruler General Pervez Musharraf. It comprised more than two dozen extremist religious parties

<sup>169</sup> Reuters, '[Factbox: Islamist parties running in Pakistan's election](#)', 22 July 2018

<sup>170</sup> USSD, '[Country Reports on Terrorism 2021](#)' (Chapter 5 – LeT), 27 February 2023

from various sects. The alliance won enough seats to form the government in Pakistan's northwestern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and promoted a harsh brand of sharia, or Islamic law.<sup>171</sup>

11.4.2 The Express Tribune noted on 26 July 2018 that the MMA, with a traditional stronghold in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan, was an alliance of five Islamic parties: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F); Jamaat-e-Islami; Markazi Jamiat Ahle Hadith; Islami Tehreek; and Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan<sup>172</sup>. According to English language news site, Dawn, in an article dated 21 December 2021, the MMA was 'defunct.'<sup>173</sup>

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## 11.5 Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP)

11.5.1 Reuters provided the following details on the TLP:

- 'Party leader: Khadim Hussain Rizvi
- 'Legal status: Registered with Election Commission.
- 'Election status: Candidates contesting under the TLP banner.
- 'Candidates [2018 elections]: 566, 178 of for National Assembly, the rest for provincial assemblies.
- 'Religious sect: Barelvi school of Sunni Islam.
- 'Background: The party emerged out of a protest movement in 2016 against the state's execution of Mumtaz Qadri, a bodyguard of the governor of Punjab province who gunned down his boss in 2011 over his call to reform Pakistan's blasphemy laws. Khadim Hussain Rizvi, an Islamic preacher paralyzed from the waist following a road accident, heads the party. In its first ever election in September, 2017, the party surprised Pakistani political elite with a strong showing by securing nearly 8 percent of total votes cast in a by-election.<sup>174</sup>

11.5.2 In the 2018 general elections, the TLP won 2 provincial assembly seats in Sindh province and emerged as the third-placed party in a number of constituencies in the general elections across the country<sup>175</sup>.

11.5.3 The International Crisis Group (ICG) noted, in a report dated 28 January 2019, that, in response to the Supreme Court acquittal of Asia Bibi, a Christian woman sentenced to death on blasphemy charges in November 2010, '... religious groups, spearheaded by Tehreek-i-Labaik Pakistan, the political front of the Sunni Barelvi Tehreek-i-Labaik Ya Rasool Allah, launched violent protests countrywide, attacking police officers and citizens and destroying public and private property. By invoking highly-provocative claims of blasphemy, the several thousand Labaik protesters gained the support of many conservative Muslims.'<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Reuters, '[Factbox: Islamist parties running in Pakistan's election](#)', 22 July 2018

<sup>172</sup> Express Tribune, '[Religious parties fail to impress](#)', 26 July 2018

<sup>173</sup> Dawn, '[JUI-F's surprise win likely to reshape KP's political landscape](#)', 21 December 2021

<sup>174</sup> Reuters, '[Factbox: Islamist parties running in Pakistan's election](#)', 22 July 2018

<sup>175</sup> Al Jazeera, '[Seven things Pakistan's election results reveal](#)', 28 July 2018

<sup>176</sup> ICG, '[Pakistan: Challenges of a Weak Democracy](#)', 28 January 2019

11.5.4 In January 2020, Dawn reported that 86 workers and supporters of the Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) were sentenced to 55 years each by an Anti-Terrorism Court, in a case relating to rioting and resisting against the police<sup>177</sup>. The convicted included TLP chief Khadim Hussain Rizvi's brother Ameer Hussain Rizvi and nephew Mohammad Ali<sup>178</sup>.

11.5.5 The HRCP noted in its annual report for 2021 that:

'TLP activists disrupted life in Punjab and the rest of the country at regular intervals after the arrest of their leader Saad Hussain Rizvi in April 2021 for leading protests that called for the expulsion of the French ambassador to Pakistan over comments made by French President Emmanuel Macron in October 2020.

'In Lahore, for instance, on 18 April, three people were killed and hundreds injured in a clash between TLP activists and the police. The mob, carrying arms and petrol bombs, attacked a police station and kidnapped five police officers. Despite such unwarranted acts, the TLP managed to strike a deal with the government.'<sup>179</sup>

11.5.6 The same source added:

'The deal was viewed as a surrender by the government to a group that has often challenged the writ of the state and preached violence in the name of faith. It was feared that the deal would embolden other proscribed organisations and hurt democracy and political culture in the country.

'The PTI government had banned the TLP in April 2021 under Section 11-B (1) of the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997. Still, the group participated in political activities in the country, for instance, in the by-elections of PP-38 Sialkot in July 2021.'<sup>180</sup>

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Section updated: 5 April 2023

## 12. Pakistani Kashmir parties

### 12.1 Political system and participation

12.1.1 For an overview of the political system and electoral process in the 2 territories of Pakistani Kashmir – Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) – see the Freedom House report, [Freedom in the World 2022: Pakistani Kashmir](#). For a list of political parties in AJK see [List of political parties - Election Commission of AJK](#).

12.1.2 A 2019 publication, based upon research by academics Sharma, ul Hassan and Behuria, of the New Delhi-based Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), noted:

'Political parties pledging their loyalty to Pakistan, i.e., favouring accession of PoK [Pakistan occupied Kashmir] to Pakistan, are allowed to operate in both "AJK" and Gilgit-Baltistan. Those advocating autonomy are tolerated, while

<sup>177</sup> Dawn, '[Rawalpindi ATC sentences TLP chief Khadim Rizvi's nephew, brother...](#)', 17 January 2020

<sup>178</sup> Dawn, '[Rawalpindi ATC sentences TLP chief Khadim Rizvi's nephew, brother...](#)', 17 January 2020

<sup>179</sup> HRCP, '[State of Human Rights in 2021](#)' (pages 35 to 36), 2022

<sup>180</sup> HRCP, '[State of Human Rights in 2021](#)' (page 37), 2022

those demanding independence or genuine autonomy are barred from contesting elections. More often, they are not allowed to engage in any kind of political activism in the region. Given these limitations, local units of major Pakistan-based political parties that promote Pakistan's objectives on Kashmir (rather than representing the aspirations of the people of the area) have usually fared well in the local elections. In Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan-based parties have done well, while in "AJK", both local and Pakistan-based political parties compete with one another for power.<sup>181</sup>

- 12.1.3 The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) 'Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Kashmir' (June 2016 to April 2018) noted 'According to international NGOs, the ban on political parties that do not support the eventual accession of Jammu and Kashmir to Pakistan has in effect silenced all kinds of dissent, including demands for greater transparency and accountability. Moreover, they allege that those who protest Pakistan's position face threats and travel bans, and are subject to imprisonment and torture.'<sup>182</sup>
- 12.1.4 Ejaz Haider, a political analyst from Pakistan-administered Kashmir, told Al Jazeera, in an article dated March 2019, 'Politics in AJK has now become dominated [...] by national Pakistani political parties, including the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, the Pakistan People's Party and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf...'<sup>183</sup>
- 12.1.5 Sources cited by Al Jazeera in March 2019 indicated 'pro-freedom parties' had limited political influence or support, and were 'not politically relevant', 'very marginalised', mostly urban-based, and that many now lived abroad<sup>184</sup>.
- 12.1.6 The Al Jazeera article continued:  
'In Pakistan-administered Kashmir, however, the room to express a political stance other than for accession to Pakistan is limited.  
'An electoral law, for example, requires all candidates for the legislative assembly of the autonomous AJK government to swear an oath to support accession to Pakistan.  
"I solemnly declare that I believe in the ideology of Pakistan, the ideology of state's accession to Pakistan and the integrity and sovereignty of Pakistan," reads the relevant portion of the electoral oath.'<sup>185</sup>
- 12.1.7 The same source added 'Representatives of the Pakistan-administered Kashmir government denied that there are any restrictions on political groups operating on its soil, but said that criticism of Pakistan or its military would not be tolerated.'<sup>186</sup> AJK President, Mahmood Khan, told Al Jazeera that there was tolerance for dissent, providing 'abusive and seditious' language was not used against Pakistan<sup>187</sup>. He added that displaying pro-

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<sup>181</sup> IDSA, Sharma et al, '[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)' (page xvii), 2019

<sup>182</sup> OHCHR, '[Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Kashmir](#)' (paragraph 148), 14 June 2018

<sup>183</sup> Al Jazeera, '[In Pakistan-administered Kashmir, a shrinking pro-freedom space](#)', 4 March 2019

<sup>184</sup> Al Jazeera, '[In Pakistan-administered Kashmir, a shrinking pro-freedom space](#)', 4 March 2019

<sup>185</sup> Al Jazeera, '[In Pakistan-administered Kashmir, a shrinking pro-freedom space](#)', 4 March 2019

<sup>186</sup> Al Jazeera, '[In Pakistan-administered Kashmir, a shrinking pro-freedom space](#)', 4 March 2019

<sup>187</sup> Al Jazeera, '[In Pakistan-administered Kashmir, a shrinking pro-freedom space](#)', 4 March 2019

independence slogans would not result in a jail sentence<sup>188</sup>.

12.1.8 Freedom House noted in its 2022 report on Pakistani Kashmir, covering 2021 events, that:

‘The authorities’ observance of freedom of assembly is highly discretionary. The Pakistani state traditionally uses AJK as a platform to protest against Indian control of Jammu and Kashmir and the treatment of the population on the Indian side of the LoC. Protests that do not directly challenge Pakistani control or the territories’ constitutional status are more likely to be tolerated. The authorities rely on harassment, intimidation, and the use of security checkpoints to deter protests in opposition to government policies...

‘The main political parties were all able to campaign and hold large public meetings ahead of the 2021 AJK elections.’<sup>189</sup>

12.1.9 The OHCHR report noted ‘According to international NGOs, in both AJK and G-B, pro-independence political parties and activists are not allowed to participate in the political process, while political leaders who are seen to be opposing Pakistani rule have been subject to surveillance, harassment, and even imprisonment.’<sup>190</sup>

12.1.10 Freedom House stated:

‘Small nationalist parties that are opposed to union with Pakistan are actively marginalized or barred outright from the political process, and they played no significant role in the 2020 GB elections, though one nationalist retained a seat. Activists accused of opposition to Pakistani rule have been subject to surveillance, harassment, and sometimes imprisonment. The interim constitution of AJK bans political parties that do not endorse the territory’s eventual accession to Pakistan, and similar rules prevail in GB.’<sup>191</sup>

12.1.11 On 5 February 2023, Anadolu (news) Agency reported on the observance of Kashmir Solidarity Day, noting that ‘In Muzaffarabad, Bagh, Rawlakot, Kohlu, Mirpur, and other districts of Islamabad-administered Kashmir, also known as Azad Kashmir, human chains were formed to express solidarity with the pro-freedom struggle.’<sup>192</sup> Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed support for Kashmiris, referring to the ‘oppressive Indian occupation’<sup>193</sup> The day is a public holiday in Pakistan<sup>194</sup>.

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## 12.2 Jammu and Kashmir National Awami Party (JKNAP)

12.2.1 The Jammu and Kashmir National Awami Party (JKNAP) was formed by leaders of the Jammu and Kashmir National Students Federation (JKNSF) in 1995/1996<sup>195</sup> <sup>196</sup>. The 2019 publication by Sharma et al described the

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<sup>188</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘[In Pakistan-administered Kashmir, a shrinking pro-freedom space](#)’, 4 March 2019

<sup>189</sup> Freedom House, ‘[Freedom in the World 2022 – Pakistani Kashmir](#)’ (section E1), 28 February 2022

<sup>190</sup> OHCHR, ‘[Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Kashmir](#)’ (paragraph 151), 14 June 2018

<sup>191</sup> Freedom House, ‘[Freedom in the World 2022 – Pakistani Kashmir](#)’ (section B1), 28 February 2022

<sup>192</sup> Anadolu Agency, ‘[Pakistanis observe Kashmir Solidarity Day](#)’, 5 February 2023

<sup>193</sup> Dawn, ‘[“Relentless struggle”: Pakistan expresses unflinching support for...](#)’, 5 February 2023

<sup>194</sup> Modern Diplomacy, ‘[Kashmir Solidarity Day and Pakistan’s Support towards...](#)’, 4 February 2023

<sup>195</sup> IDSA, Sharma et al, ‘[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)’ (page 65), 2019

<sup>196</sup> IRB, ‘[Pakistan: The Jammu Kashmir National Awami Party \(JKNAP\)...](#)’, 19 June 2017

JKNAP as ‘a left-wing party advocating a secular and united Kashmir’, which ‘believes in peaceful methods to achieve political objectives’ and ‘rejects violence in any form in the political struggle.’<sup>197</sup> The same source noted ‘Its prominent leaders are Sadiq Subhani, Liaquat Hayat Khan; Prof. Mark Khaliq, and Mehmood Baig. The party has also opened its branches in UK and Canada. The UK branch is headed by Sajad Raza, and Azad Raza, who is its chief organiser.’<sup>198</sup>

- 12.2.2 According to Sharma et al, ‘Since its inception, party has strengthened its base in “AJK”. Rawalakot, Kotli, Bagh and Muzaffarabad are its strongholds. It has its headquarters in Muzaffarabad. Its student wing JKNSF is a largest progressive student organisation in “AJK”.’<sup>199</sup>
- 12.2.3 JKNAP is a member party of the Jammu and Kashmir National Independence Alliance (JKNIA), a group of 7 nationalist parties working for a peaceful resolution of the ‘Kashmir issue’<sup>200</sup>. The JKNAP is also affiliated with the All-Party National Alliance (APNA) of AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan, a conglomerate of 14 nationalist political parties<sup>201</sup>.
- 12.2.4 According to Sharma et al, most of the JKNAP leadership is living in exile in Europe<sup>202</sup>. The same source added, ‘Those who stay back are often harassed and tortured by Pakistan security agencies.’<sup>203</sup>
- 12.2.5 Further information on the treatment of JKNAP members by authorities could not be found among the sources consulted by CPIT (see [Bibliography](#)), although in 2018 the OHCHR, citing international NGOs, said that pro-independence political leaders in AJK and GB who are seen to be opposing Pakistani rule have been subject to surveillance, harassment and imprisonment<sup>204</sup>.

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### 12.3 Jammu Kashmir People's National Party (JKPNP)

- 12.3.1 The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) Research Directorate provided a response on the Jammu Kashmir People's National Party (JKPNP), dated 14 November 2018, which cited a range of sources and stated:

‘The daily newspaper Pakistan Today describes the JKPNP as “the first Marxist-Leninist party” in Pakistan, adding that it was the first party that “not only raised the status of Kashmiris as a nation [,] but also linked the ... national liberation movement with the issue of class conflict” [...]. The same source states that the party was founded in 1985 “with the objective [of bringing] a national democratic revolution in Azad Kashmir by ending the jagirdari [land tenancy] system and evicting the non-Kashmiris [who] had “usurped” political power” (Pakistan Today 30 July 2017).

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<sup>197</sup> IDSA, Sharma et al, ‘[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)’ (page 65), 2019

<sup>198</sup> IDSA, Sharma et al, ‘[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)’ (page 65), 2019

<sup>199</sup> IDSA, Sharma et al, ‘[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)’ (page 65), 2019

<sup>200</sup> IDSA, Sharma et al, ‘[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)’ (page 66), 2019

<sup>201</sup> IDSA, Sharma et al, ‘[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)’ (page 66), 2019

<sup>202</sup> IDSA, Sharma et al, ‘[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)’ (page 65), 2019

<sup>203</sup> IDSA, Sharma et al, ‘[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)’ (page 65), 2019

<sup>204</sup> OHCHR, ‘[Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Kashmir](#)’ (paragraph 151), 14 June 2018



‘An opinion piece published in the newspaper Jammu Kashmir Newspoint (JK Newspoint) mentions that the JKPNNP has a student wing called the Jammu Kashmir People[’s] National Students Organization (JKPNSO) (JK Newspoint 15 Apr. 2016).’<sup>205</sup>

12.3.2 Sources identified the JKPNNP’s chairman as Raja Zulfiqar Ahmed<sup>206 207</sup>.

12.3.3 The IRB response noted:

‘Sources report that the JKPNNP is part of ten left-wing and progressive parties that have formed a “united front” (The Nation 30 Dec. 2017; Newsclick 3 Jan. 2018), whose objective is “to take forward the working class struggle” (Newsclick 3 Jan. 2018). According to sources, the other parties are the Pakistan Mazdoor Kissan Party, Awami Workers Party, Communist Party of Pakistan, Jeay Sindh Mahaz, Pakistan Trade Unions Defence Campaign, Mazdoor Mahaz of Pakistan, Balochistan National Movement, Awa Jamhoori Party and Jammu Kashmir Awami Workers Party (Newsclick 3 Jan. 2018; The Nation 30 Dec. 2017).’<sup>208</sup>

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## 12.4 United Kashmir People’s National Party (UKPNNP)

12.4.1 The United Kashmir People’s National Party (UKPNNP) was founded as the People’s National Party on 10 April 1985 and renamed the UKPNNP in 1994<sup>209 210</sup>. The chair of the UKPNNP, Sardar Shaukat Ali Kashmiri, has been living in exile in Switzerland since 1999<sup>211</sup>. As of 2019, other UKPNNP leaders were named as: Naila Khaneen (Senior Chairperson); Sayed Tahir Shah Gardezi (Secretary General); Sardar Altaf (Deputy Secretary General); Professor Rafiqul Bhatti (Chief organizer); and Nasir Aziz Khan (Central Spokesman of the party)<sup>212</sup>. The UKPNNP is also affiliated with the All-Party National Alliance (APNA) of AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan, a conglomerate of 14 nationalist political parties<sup>213</sup>.

12.4.2 As noted by Sharma et al, like other pro-independence parties, the UKPNNP were not allowed to contest in AJK elections<sup>214</sup>.

12.4.3 According to UKPNNP’s constitution, the party aims to establish an independent ‘United States of Kashmir’<sup>215</sup>. Any citizen of the ‘United States of Kashmir’, that is the states of Gilgit, Jammu, Ladakh, Baltistan, Poonch, Brushal and Kishtawar, aged 16 or over and who is committed to the principles of the party, may become a member of the UKPNNP<sup>216 217</sup>.

<sup>205</sup> IRB, ‘[Pakistan: The Jammu Kashmir People’s National Party \(JKPNNP\)...](#)’, 14 November 2018

<sup>206</sup> The Nation, ‘[JKPNNP rejects India’s unilateral act of revoking Kashmir’s ...](#)’, 9 August 2019

<sup>207</sup> Urdu Point, ‘[JKPNNP Expresses Concern Over Fast-deteriorating Health Of Yasin...](#)’, 22 April 2019

<sup>208</sup> IRB, ‘[Pakistan: The Jammu Kashmir People’s National Party \(JKPNNP\)...](#)’, 14 November 2018

<sup>209</sup> UKPNNP, ‘[Our Manifesto \[sic\]](#)’, no date

<sup>210</sup> IDSA, Sharma et al, ‘[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)’ (page 61), 2019

<sup>211</sup> UKPNNP, ‘[Sardar Shaukat Ali Kashmiri](#)’, no date

<sup>212</sup> IDSA, Sharma et al, ‘[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)’ (page 62), 2019

<sup>213</sup> IDSA, Sharma et al, ‘[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)’ (page 66), 2019

<sup>214</sup> IDSA, Sharma et al, ‘[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)’ (page 63), 2019

<sup>215</sup> UKPNNP, ‘[Constitution](#)’ (Article 2: 1), no date

<sup>216</sup> UKPNNP, ‘[Constitution](#)’ (Article 2: 1), no date

<sup>217</sup> UKPNNP, ‘[Constitution](#)’ (Article 3: Membership), no date

Members may leave the party at any time<sup>218</sup>.

- 12.4.4 Regional branches of the party are divided into 3 zones: Jammu Kashmir Zone (Indian held Kashmir); Gilgit Baltistan Zone and Azad Kashmir Zone (both in Pakistan controlled Kashmir)<sup>219</sup>.
- 12.4.5 Despite being barred from partaking in elections, Sharma et al noted, 'Not letting the UKPNP to take part in the political process of the region has not stopped it from mobilising the public opinion. It regularly holds conferences, issues press releases and hold demonstrations against Pakistan.'<sup>220</sup>
- 12.4.6 According to a report by Al Jazeera, dated March 2019 representatives from Kashmir parties, including the UKPNP, '... said they were free to hold political rallies, but that their members were pressured through surveillance and court cases if any slogans targeting the Pakistani state are raised.'<sup>221</sup>
- 12.4.7 Waqar Hussain Kazmi, chief organiser for the UKPNP, said that pro-freedom activists in Pakistan were accused of being Indian intelligence agents<sup>222</sup>.
- 12.4.8 The 2019 publication by Sharma et al reported on international UKPNP branches, noting:

'UKPNP has spread its network both in Europe and North America. It has an overseas committee to look after the interests of the party headed by Sardar Zahid Khan in Canada, Aftab Hasan Khan in UK, Akhlaq Baslar in USA, Mohammad Zee Mustafa in Switzerland, Sajid Abbasi in Belgium and Iftiqar Ahmad in Italy. Amjad Yousaf is the president of its network in Europe. Its branch in Canada was earlier headed by Mumtaz Khan who is living in exile since 1998. The other branch is in Switzerland where it regularly attends the biannual session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva. A resolution adopted by the party held under the chairmanship of Shaukat Kashmiri demanded that, "elements that propagate violence as a solution to the Kashmir problem be banned wherever they exist". While talking to media, the UKPNP Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Khalid Perwaize stated that UKPNP is "fighting for a completely independent Kashmir". Khalid Perwaize, who lives in Scotland, further said that the "New State will be secular rather than a Muslim State".<sup>223</sup>

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## 13. Pashtun groups

### 13.1 Pashtun Tahafuz (Protection) Movement (PTM)

- 13.1.1 The PTM, established in 2018, a non-violent social group<sup>224</sup>, based in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan<sup>225</sup>, campaigns for civil rights for

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<sup>218</sup> UKPNP, '[Constitution](#)' (Article 3: Right of Party Member: 7), no date

<sup>219</sup> UKPNP, '[Constitution](#)' (Article 6: Regional branches), no date

<sup>220</sup> IDSA, Sharma et al, '[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)' (page 63), 2019

<sup>221</sup> Al Jazeera, '[In Pakistan-administered Kashmir, a shrinking pro-freedom space](#)', 4 March 2019

<sup>222</sup> Al Jazeera, '[In Pakistan-administered Kashmir, a shrinking pro-freedom space](#)', 4 March 2019

<sup>223</sup> IDSA, Sharma et al, '[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)' (page 64), 2019

<sup>224</sup> PIPS, '[Security Report 2019](#)' (page 12), 2020

<sup>225</sup> USSD, '[Country Report on Human Rights 2019](#)' (section 1a), 11 March 2020

Pashtuns<sup>226</sup> and against violence by both the state and Islamist militants in ethnic Pashtun areas<sup>227</sup>. The HRCP report 2019 noted ‘The activities of the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) are mostly concentrated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but their leaders often visit and hold meetings in Karachi, which has a large Pashtun population, larger than any other city.’<sup>228</sup>

- 13.1.2 The PTM is led by Manzoor Pashteen<sup>229 230</sup>. He was arrested in January 2020 on charges including sedition, hate speech, incitement against the state and criminal conspiracy<sup>231 232 233</sup>. He was released on bail in February 2020<sup>234</sup>.
- 13.1.3 Two other main leaders and founders of the PTM, Mohsin Dawar and Ali Wazir, ran in the general elections in 2018 as independent candidates and each won a seat in the National Assembly<sup>235 236</sup>.
- 13.1.4 Mohsin Dawar and Ali Wazir were arrested following a clash between PTM members and the army on 26 May 2019 in North Waziristan<sup>237</sup>. The USSD HR Report 2019 noted ‘Authorities released the two parliamentarians on bail after nearly four months in jail; however, they still face capital charges in relation to the military’s claim that PTM protesters assaulted security officers.’<sup>238</sup> The USSD HR Report 2022 noted ‘Ali Wazir... remained in police custody in Karachi. He was arrested in Peshawar in 2020 and extradited by Sindh police on charges of criminal conspiracy and defamation of state institutions and the army. As of October, he had not been released on bail.’<sup>239</sup>
- 13.1.5 In March 2019, a former police officer was charged with the murder of ethnic Pashtun, Naqeebullah Mehsud, whose death prompted nationwide protests by the PTM<sup>240</sup>.
- 13.1.6 Madiha Afzal, a David M. Rubenstein Fellow in the Foreign Policy programme at the Brookings Institute, wrote in February 2020, in regard to the PTM:

‘The movement alleges grave human rights violations by Pakistan’s military against Pashtuns in the country’s northwest. It says that Pashtuns have been the target of violence at the hands of both the Taliban and the Pakistani military for two decades. The movement claims that the military has killed innocent civilians in its operations against the Pakistani Taliban, and that it needs to answer for “missing persons.” It also contends that

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<sup>226</sup> RFERL, ‘[Pashtun Rights Leader In Pakistan Leaves Prison After Granted Bail](#)’, 25 February 2020

<sup>227</sup> Freedom House, ‘[Freedom in the World 2020 - Pakistan](#)’ (section B2), 5 March 2020

<sup>228</sup> HRCP, ‘[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)’, (page 83), April 2020

<sup>229</sup> DW, ‘[Pashtun movement leader: ‘Pakistani army is afraid of our popularity’](#)’, 5 June 2019

<sup>230</sup> BBC News, ‘[Manzoor Pashteen: Activist who dared to challenge Pakistan...](#)’, 27 January 2020

<sup>231</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘[Prominent Pakistani rights activist Manzoor Pashteen arrested](#)’, 27 January 2020

<sup>232</sup> BBC News, ‘[Manzoor Pashteen: Activist who dared to challenge Pakistan...](#)’, 27 January 2020

<sup>233</sup> RFERL, ‘[Pashtun Rights Leader In Pakistan Leaves Prison After Granted Bail](#)’, 25 February 2020

<sup>234</sup> Dawn, ‘[PTM’s Manzoor Pashteen released from jail](#)’, 25 February 2020

<sup>235</sup> The News, ‘[Two PTM leaders make it to NA](#)’, 29 July 2018

<sup>236</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘[Why is Pakistan’s Pashtun movement under attack?](#)’, 28 January 2020

<sup>237</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘[Pakistani legislator Dawar surrenders to authorities](#)’, 30 May 2019

<sup>238</sup> USSD, ‘[Country Report on Human Rights 2019](#)’ (section 1g), 11 March 2020

<sup>239</sup> USSD, ‘[Country Report on Human Rights 2022](#)’ (section 1d), 20 March 2023

<sup>240</sup> RFERL, ‘[Pakistani Ex-Police Officer Charged In High-Profile Murder Case](#)’, 25 March 2019

Pashtuns are regularly harassed at checkpoints and treated with suspicion...'<sup>241</sup>

13.1.7 According to the USSD HR Report 2019:

'Authorities continued their efforts against members of PTM. Beginning in May, the director general of the Inter-Services Public Relations, Major General Asif Ghafoor, announced that PTM's "time is up." In the following months, security officials killed 13 PTM protesters during a clash at a military checkpoint in the Khar Qamar area of Waziristan. The military alleged the protesters attacked the checkpoint, but video on social media and eyewitness accounts appeared to corroborate PTM's assertion the protesters were peaceful. Following the events at Khar Qamar, the government cracked down on PTM, arresting or detaining many of the group's senior leadership as well as rank-and-file supporters. PTM activists successfully challenged dozens of arrests in court, only to have some of those arrested go missing following their release from jail. While the government agreed PTM had legitimate grievances, it contended external forces used PTM as a tool to feed ethnic divisions in the country.'<sup>242</sup>

13.1.8 Referring to the clash at the Khar Qamar (Kamar) military checkpoint in Waziristan in May 2019, Amnesty International noted at least 3 of the 13 killed were PTM supporters<sup>243</sup>. Human Rights Watch (HRW) cited a statement issued by the army after the incident, which stated 3 persons died and 10 were injured<sup>244</sup>. The same source explained that 'The PTM has organized protests against the government to demand accountability for extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and casualties due to landmines. The government has cracked down on PTM members and supporters, using arbitrary arrests, intimidation, and surveillance as instruments of coercion.'<sup>245</sup>

13.1.9 Reporting on events in Pakistan in 2019, Amnesty International noted:

'The authorities intensified a crackdown on the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM), which campaigns against human rights abuses – arresting and arbitrarily detaining dozens of its supporters, subjecting them to surveillance, intimidation, prosecution and threats of violence.

'In January, PTM activist Alamzaib Khan was detained by the police at gunpoint in Karachi and charged with "rioting" and "inciting hatred" for his peaceful participation in a demonstration. In September, he was released after the Supreme Court granted him bail. In February, Arman Luni, a PTM activist from Balochistan, died after being beaten by police officers following his participation in a peaceful protest in the Lorelai district.'<sup>246</sup>

13.1.10 Police claimed that Loni (Luni) died of a heart attack and the police surgeon's post mortem report indicated there were no signs of torture or

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<sup>241</sup> Afzal, M., '[Why is Pakistan's military repressing a huge, nonviolent Pashtun...](#)', 7 February 2020

<sup>242</sup> USSD, '[Country Report on Human Rights 2019](#)' (section 1b), 11 March 2020

<sup>243</sup> Amnesty International, '[Pakistan 2019](#)' (Freedom of expression...), 30 January 2020

<sup>244</sup> HRW, '[Pakistan: Investigate North Waziristan deaths](#)', 30 May 2019

<sup>245</sup> HRW, '[Pakistan: Investigate North Waziristan deaths](#)', 30 May 2019

<sup>246</sup> Amnesty International, '[Pakistan 2019](#)' (Freedom of expression...), 30 January 2020

injury<sup>247</sup>.

13.1.11 PTM protests took place in May 2020 following the death of one of its leaders, Sardar Arif Wazir, who was killed by unidentified gunmen in South Waziristan. Some claimed Wazir was killed by 'state-backed' militants although the government denied allegations that security forces cooperated with militants, also referred to as the 'good Taliban'. Wazir was arrested by police in April 2020 and accused of delivering an 'anti-Pakistan' speech. He was freed on bail prior to his death<sup>248</sup>.

13.1.12 Amnesty International reported in its report covering 2021 that, 'Law enforcement agencies cracked down on demonstrations by the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement, which campaigns against the racial profiling, discrimination and extrajudicial executions of Pashtuns. In April, scores of protesters were injured and at least one killed in the town of Janikhel.'<sup>249</sup>

13.1.13 The USSD HR Report 2022 stated that:

'The PTM mobilized its predominantly ethnic-Pashtun supporters to participate in sit-ins and demonstrations to demand justice and protest abuses by government security forces. The PTM operated and held massive rallies, although under much greater scrutiny after the 2020 arrest of PTM's national leader in Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Security agencies continued to arrest, detain, and file charges against PTM leaders in connection with protests and speeches.'<sup>250</sup>

13.1.14 According to the same report:

'The PTM and secular Pashtun political leaders claimed Pashtuns were targeted and killed by both antistate militants and security forces because of their political affiliation or beliefs, antimilitancy stance, or criticism of the government. PTM leaders and activists claim they had been threatened, illegally detained, imprisoned without trial, banned from domestic and international travel, and censored. Anti-Taliban Pashtun activists and political leaders were targeted and killed, allegedly by militants, in Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Pashtuns from the former FATA complained they were frequently profiled as militants, based on their tribe, dress, appearance, or ancestral district of origin. Pashtun activists claimed they were subject to military censorship and sedition laws were used to stifle PTM and other Pashtun critics of the government.'<sup>251</sup>

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## 14. Student politics

### 14.1 Student unions

14.1.1 Voice of America (VoA) reported on 29 November 2019 'Thousands of Pakistani students marched in demonstrations spanning the country Friday

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<sup>247</sup> HRCP, '[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)', (page 171), April 2020

<sup>248</sup> RFERL, '[Thousands in Pakistan Protest Slaying Of Pashtun Rights Leader](#)', 6 May 2020

<sup>249</sup> Amnesty International, '[Pakistan 2021](#)' (Excessive use of force), 29 March 2022

<sup>250</sup> USSD, '[Country Report on Human Rights 2022](#)' (section 2b), 20 March 2023

<sup>251</sup> USSD, '[Country Report on Human Rights 2022](#)' (section 6), 20 March 2023

demanding the right to once again form student unions, which was taken away in 1984 by military dictator Zia ul-Haq.<sup>252</sup>

- 14.1.2 The HRCP report for 2019 observed ‘At the beginning of November, progressive student organisations from all over the country formed a Student Action Committee to coordinate demands for the revival of student unions and action against cuts in the educational budget, harassment cases in universities, interference of security forces in educational institutions, student torture cases, lack of educational infrastructure, and the ban on freedom of expression.’<sup>253</sup>
- 14.1.3 Referring to events in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the HRCP report for 2019 noted, ‘In December, the Jamiat Tulaba-e Islam (JTI), the student wing of JUI-F, staged a protest in Mingora demanding restoration of student unions, a uniform education system, replacement of English with Urdu as the medium of instruction in educational institutions, and free education.’<sup>254</sup>
- 14.1.4 According to the VoA article ‘Students who want admission in Pakistani colleges and universities have to sign an affidavit, along with their parents that says the student cannot participate in any mobilization or political activity on campus.’<sup>255</sup>
- 14.1.5 The HRCP report for 2019 noted that ‘In December both sides of the National Assembly united in support of an opposition private member’s bill for the lifting of the ban [of student unions]. The bill was sent to the relevant committee for further consideration.’<sup>256</sup>
- 14.1.6 According to a report on Pakistan campus politics, TRT World, a Turkish state international English-language news channel, stated in January 2020, ‘[V]iolent clashes between student groups have become a regular characteristic of Pakistan’s state-run academic institutions. Most recently, a student, who was a member Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba, was killed and dozens were injured in a violent clash on December 12 [2019] between two student groups at a government university in Islamabad.’<sup>257</sup>
- 14.1.7 The same report added:

‘The present-day government’s reluctance to normalise campus politics is not only based on the fears of previous governments but also on the fresh memories of campus violence that have been witnessed in recent years. A mob of students stripped, beat up and shot Mashal Khan, a 23-year-old student, at Wali Khan University in Mardan in April 2017 for committing “blasphemy”. In another case, a student killed his college principal in the district of Charsadda in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in January after the former was reprimanded for skipping classes and attending the anti-blasphemy sit-in of a religious party.

‘Although many religious schools (known as madrassas) in Pakistan have been accused of promoting radical ideologies and having links with terrorist

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<sup>252</sup> VoA, ‘[Students in Pakistan Demand Right to Form Unions](#)’, 29 November 2019

<sup>253</sup> HRCP, ‘[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)’, (page 38), April 2020

<sup>254</sup> HRCP, ‘[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)’, (page 134), April 2020

<sup>255</sup> VoA, ‘[Students in Pakistan Demand Right to Form Unions](#)’, 29 November 2019

<sup>256</sup> HRCP, ‘[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)’, (page 225), April 2020

<sup>257</sup> TRT World, ‘[Pakistan’s trouble with accepting campus politics](#)’, 8 January 2020

networks, law enforcement agencies in recent years have arrested just two students, Saad Aziz and Naureen Leghari, in separate raids for their alleged role in terrorist activities.<sup>258</sup>

14.1.8 An opinion piece in Pakistan Today, dated October 2022, noted:

‘There are several successful politicians in the country in all mainstream parties who started their political careers from student politics. Unfortunately we deliberately curbed political activities in the universities of Pakistan... Political activities for the political upbringing of educated youth have been prohibited for decades now. Some cosmetic measures have been taken to establish youth assemblies but that [sic] haven’t served the purpose.’<sup>259</sup>

14.1.9 Despite a ban of its student union<sup>260</sup>, clashes between different factions of the student union at Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU), Islamabad, were reported in February 2023<sup>261</sup>. Rangers, anti-terrorist squads and police forces were deployed on the campus and many students were arrested<sup>262</sup>, and 79 students were expelled<sup>263</sup>.

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## 15. Treatment of political opponents

For information on the treatment of members of particular political parties or groups, see the relevant sections under [Mainstream parties](#), [Islamic parties](#), [Pakistani Kashmir parties](#), [Pashtun groups](#) and [Student politics](#).

### 15.1 Corruption charges

15.1.1 In its 2022 Freedom in the World report on Pakistan, covering 2021, Freedom House observed:

‘Despite numerous formal safeguards, official corruption is endemic in practice. The use of accountability mechanisms is often selective and politically driven, as demonstrated by the charges which continued to be brought against PML-N and PPP leaders and former politicians, such as former prime minister Sharif and former president Zardari, in 2021. The [National Accountability Bureau] NAB focuses on cases against politicians and senior officials, which tend to be protracted. The military and judiciary have their own disciplinary systems for corruption.’<sup>264</sup>

15.1.2 An article in The Diplomat, dated 13 February 2020, noted that the NAB has been accused by political figures of ‘political victimisation’ and ‘there is a general consensus that the opposition is being targeted’<sup>265</sup>. Higher courts have also accused the NAB of victimising major political figures and of bias towards those affiliated with the ruling PTI<sup>266</sup>.

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<sup>258</sup> TRT World, [‘Pakistan’s trouble with accepting campus politics’](#), 8 January 2020

<sup>259</sup> Pakistan Today, [‘Universities and National Politics’](#), 17 October 2022

<sup>260</sup> Modern Diplomacy, [‘Quaid-i-Azam University Wants Peace’](#), 4 March 2023

<sup>261</sup> Daily Pakistan, [‘Quaid-i-Azam University closed for indefinite period after...’](#), 28 February 2023

<sup>262</sup> Dawn, [‘Students, civil society protest police crackdown on QAU’](#), 3 March 2023

<sup>263</sup> Dunya News, [‘Quaid-e-Azam University expels 79 students involved in dispute’](#), 8 March 2023

<sup>264</sup> Freedom House, [‘Freedom in the World 2022 - Pakistan’](#) (section C2), 28 February 2022

<sup>265</sup> The Diplomat, [‘Pakistan: How ‘Accountability’ Became a Tool ...’](#), 13 February 2020

<sup>266</sup> The Diplomat, [‘Pakistan: How ‘Accountability’ Became a Tool ...’](#), 13 February 2020

- 15.1.3 On 30 December 2019, the Express Tribune profiled a number of senior leaders from the PPP, PML-N and PTI who had been arrested and investigated for corruption<sup>267</sup>.
- 15.1.4 The USSD HR Report 2022 noted that ‘Trials of corruption cases filed by the NAB and FIA during the previous government continued, including against Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in alleged money laundering. The government continued its corruption investigations and prosecutions of opposition leaders. Opposition parties alleged these prosecutions selectively targeted their leaders.’<sup>268</sup>
- 15.1.5 In October 2022, Sharif and his son Hamza were acquitted of corruption charges<sup>269</sup>.
- 15.1.6 For corruption charges against politicians, see the relevant political party in the section on [Mainstream parties](#).

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## 15.2 Freedom of expression and assembly

- 15.2.1 The law allowed for freedom of expression and allowed citizens to criticise the government, publicly or privately, noted the USSD HR Report 2022, though added that ‘Journalists experienced physical threats, economic coercion, harassment, and violence when reporting on sensitive topics critical of the government, ruling political party, and military establishment.’<sup>270</sup> The same source stated that ‘The constitution provides for freedom of peaceful assembly and association, but the government restricted these rights.’<sup>271</sup>
- 15.2.2 The Freedom House report, Freedom on the Net 2022, covering events between June 2021 and May 2022, reported:
 

‘Political dissent and secessionist movements in areas including Balochistan and Sindh Provinces have been subject to systematic censorship for several years. The official websites of Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), a political party based in Sindh, remained blocked as of June 2021. The government banned websites operated by the MQM in 2016 after the party’s exiled leader delivered what officials characterized as an “anti-Pakistan speech.”’<sup>272</sup>

See also [Muttahida Qaumi Movement \(MQM\)](#)
- 15.2.3 The USSD HR Report 2022 stated:
 

‘The PTM mobilized its predominantly ethnic-Pashtun supporters to participate in sit-ins and demonstrations to demand justice and protest abuses by government security forces. The PTM operated and held massive rallies, although under much greater scrutiny after the 2020 arrest of PTM’s national leader in Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Security agencies continued to arrest, detain, and file charges against PTM

<sup>267</sup> Express Tribune, ‘[Pakistan’s prison politics: Who was in and who was out...?](#)’, 30 December 2019

<sup>268</sup> USSD, ‘[Country Report on Human Rights 2022](#)’ (section 4), 20 March 2023

<sup>269</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘[Pakistani court acquits PM, son in money laundering case](#)’, 17 October 2022

<sup>270</sup> USSD, ‘[Country Report on Human Rights 2022](#)’ (section 2a), 20 March 2023

<sup>271</sup> USSD, ‘[Country Report on Human Rights 2022](#)’ (section 2b), 20 March 2023

<sup>272</sup> Freedom House, ‘[Freedom on the Net 2022](#)’ (section B1), 18 October 2022



leaders in connection with protests and speeches.<sup>273</sup>

15.2.4 The January 2022 DFAT report stated that, ‘The media faces intimidation and violence and comes under intense pressure to avoid sensitive topics, including criticism of the military, sensitive religious issues, and the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM). Criticism of the government, once considered a legitimate topic for reporting, is increasingly restricted.’<sup>274</sup>

See also [Pashtun Tahafuz \(Protection\) Movement \(PTM\)](#).

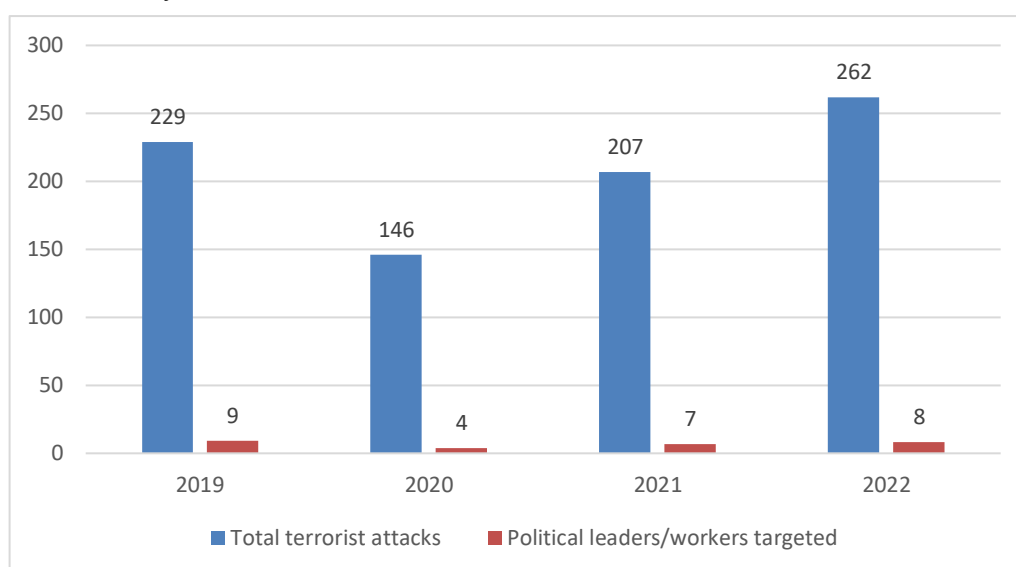
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### 15.3 Politically motivated violence

15.3.1 DFAT noted in its 2019 report, ‘The government’s ability to maintain law and order against politically motivated violence is limited.’<sup>275</sup> The same report stated ‘...while there was a spike in deaths around the 2018 election, since Operation Zarb-e-Azb, add-ul-Fasaad and the NAP [National Action Plan], violence by groups linked to political parties has generally reduced.’<sup>276</sup>

15.3.2 The January 2022 DFAT report stated that politically-motivated violence occurred across Pakistan, predominantly in Karachi and Balochistan, though had reduced considerably in recent years<sup>277</sup>.

15.3.3 The chart below shows the number of targeted terrorist attacks against political leaders/workers compared to the total number of terrorist attacks (most of which targeted the security forces/law enforcement agencies), as recorded by PIPS, in 2019<sup>278</sup>, 2020<sup>279</sup>, 2021<sup>280</sup> and 2022<sup>281</sup>:



15.3.4 The USSD HR Reports for 2021 and 2022 both noted that, ‘Militants carried

<sup>273</sup> USSD, [‘Country Report on Human Rights 2022’](#) (section 2b), 20 March 2023

<sup>274</sup> DFAT, [‘Country Information Report Pakistan’](#) (paragraph 3.114), 25 January 2022

<sup>275</sup> DFAT, [‘Country Information Report Pakistan’](#) (paragraph 2.73), 20 February 2019

<sup>276</sup> DFAT, [‘Country Information Report Pakistan’](#) (para 3.159), 20 February 2019

<sup>277</sup> DFAT, [‘Country Information Report Pakistan’](#) (paragraph 3.72), 25 January 2022

<sup>278</sup> PIPS, [‘Security Report 2019’](#) (page 20), 2020

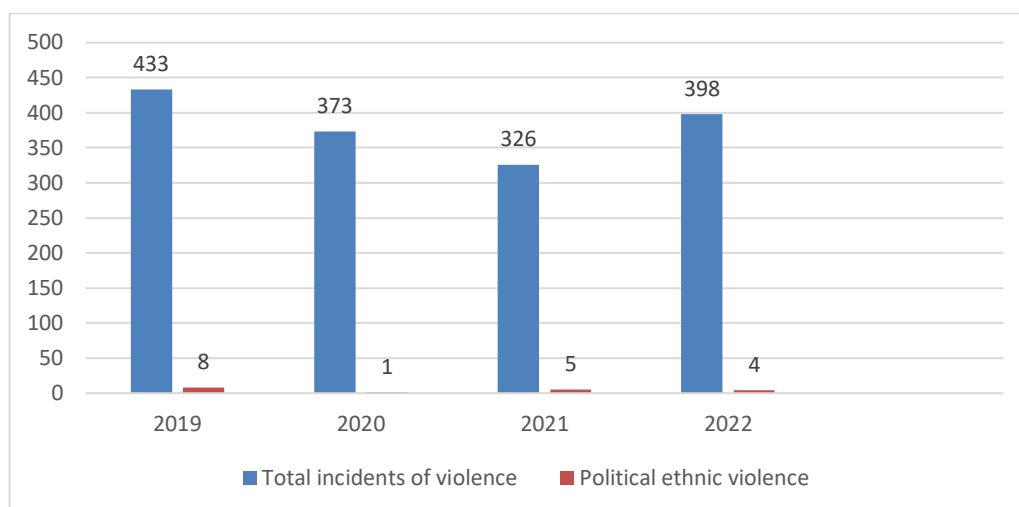
<sup>279</sup> PIPS, [‘Security Report 2020’](#) (page 18), 6 January 2021

<sup>280</sup> PIPS, [‘Security Report 2021’](#) (pages 16 to 17), 7 January 2022

<sup>281</sup> PIPS, [‘Security Report 2022’](#) (page 12), 24 February 2023

out numerous attacks on political party offices and candidates.<sup>282 283</sup>

15.3.5 The chart below, drawn from PIPS data, shows the number of incidents of political/ethnic violence compared to the overall incidents of violence, in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022:



See also [Irregularities and related violence](#).

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#### 15.4 Political parties' ability to track someone

15.4.1 The IRB noted in a query response on Pakistan: Political situation (2019 - January 2022) that, according to information provided by a representative of the European Foundation for South Asian Studies (EFSAS) in an interview with the Research Directorate in December 2021:

'Political parties and their members who wish to operate in Pakistan are expected to have, at the very least, a "cordial" relationship with the military establishment. The military's structures are "very efficien[t]" in tracking someone across the country, and leaders or members of political parties in any region may leverage the resources of other parties with which they are allied, or those of the police, military, or local government to track someone. This is done most frequently in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, as well as in Kashmir territories, but "less" common in Punjab because it is "more urbanized and aligned with the ruling government [PTI at the time of IRB response]." For instance, an EFSAS contact who was publicly critical of the Kashmir government and who fled abroad for political asylum several years ago, had returned to Pakistan since his family faced "harass[ment]" and his brother was subjected to "tortur[e]" in his absence due his political activism, and since December 2021, the contact's whereabouts have been unknown... Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.'<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> USSD, '[Country Report on Human Rights 2021](#)' (section 1g), 12 April 2022

<sup>283</sup> USSD, '[Country Report on Human Rights 2022](#)' (section 1g), 20 March 2023

<sup>284</sup> IRB, "[Pakistan: Political situation, including political parties and alliances...](#)", 12 January 2022

## 15.5 Family members

15.5.1 Freedom House noted in its 2022 Freedom in the World report, covering 2021 events, that politically active family members of high profile politicians faced court appearances and periodic detentions:

‘Nawaz Sharif, his daughter Maryam Nawaz, his younger brother and former Punjab chief minister Shahbaz Sharif, Shahbaz Sharif’s son Hamza, and former prime ministers Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and Raja Parvaiz Ashraf, all political figures within PML-N, and former president Asif Ali Zardari and his sister Faryal Talpur, both PPP politicians, have faced multiple court appearances, periodic detentions, and a ban from public office (Nawaz Sharif).’<sup>285</sup>

See also [Mainstream parties](#) and [Corruption charges](#).

15.5.2 While not necessarily directly linked to political parties, the USSD HR Report 2022 reported that ‘Human rights organizations reported authorities arrested and caused the disappearance of Pashtun, Sindhi, and Baloch human rights activists, as well as Sindhi and Baloch nationalists, without cause or warrant. They also alleged children were detained to pressure their parents.’<sup>286</sup>

15.5.3 According to the same report, ‘Police at times detained family members to induce a suspect to surrender.’<sup>287</sup>

15.5.4 No further information on the treatment of family members of persons affiliated to political parties could be found amongst the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

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<sup>285</sup> Freedom House, ‘[Freedom in the World 2022 - Pakistan](#)’ (section C2), 28 February 2022

<sup>286</sup> USSD, ‘[Country Report on Human Rights 2022](#)’ (section 1f), 20 March 2023

<sup>287</sup> USSD, ‘[Country Report on Human Rights 2022](#)’ (section 1f), 20 March 2023

# Research methodology

The country of origin information (COI) in this note 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.

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

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared and contrasted to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and it provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture 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](#).

# 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 section](#). The Home Office's Country Policy and Information Team 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:

- Political system
  - Constitution, Parliament, President and Prime Minister
  - Participation and affiliation
- Main political parties – leaders, support base, position in government, treatment, including, but not limited to
  - Awami National Party
  - Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM)
  - Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PLM-N)
  - Pakistan People's Party (PPP)
  - Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)
- Islamic parties
- Kashmir parties
  - UKPNP
  - JKPNP
  - JKNAP
- Pashtun groups (PTM) – activities, treatment
- Student politics
- Elections
- Treatment of political opponents
  - Corruption charges
  - Freedom of expression
  - Political violence

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# Version control and feedback

## Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **2.0**
- valid from **2 May 2023**

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### Official – sensitive: Start of section

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

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### Official – sensitive: End of section

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## Changes from last version of this note

Updated country information and assessment, and inclusion of [AH \(Sufficiency of Protection, Sunni Extremists\) Pakistan CG \[2002\] UKIAT 05862](#),

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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:

### **Independent Advisory Group on Country Information**

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London

SW1H 9EX

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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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