



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Pakistan: Political parties and affiliation

Version 1.0

December 2020

Preface

Purpose

This note provides country of origin information (COI) and analysis of COI for use by Home Office decision makers handling particular types of protection and human rights claims (as set out in the [Introduction](#) section). It is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of a particular subject or theme.

It is split into two main sections: (1) analysis and assessment of COI and other evidence; and (2) COI. These are explained in more detail below.

Assessment

This section analyses the evidence relevant to this note – i.e. the COI section; refugee/human rights laws and policies; and applicable caselaw – by describing this and its inter-relationships, and provides an assessment of, in general, whether one or more of the following applies:

- A person is reasonably likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm
- The general humanitarian situation is so severe as to breach Article 15(b) of European Council Directive 2004/83/EC (the Qualification Directive) / Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights as transposed in paragraph 339C and 339CA(iii) of the Immigration Rules
- The security situation presents a real risk to a civilian's life or person such that it would breach Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive as transposed in paragraph 339C and 339CA(iv) of the Immigration Rules
- 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.

Country of origin information

The country information 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 \(COI\)](#), dated 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.

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

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

All information is publicly accessible or can be made publicly available, and is from generally reliable sources. 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, and
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources.

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

Information is compared and contrasted, whenever possible, to provide a range of views and opinions. The inclusion of a source, however, is not an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a brief footnote; full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve our material. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

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

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

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

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Assessment

Updated: 4 December 2020

1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of claim

1.1.1 Fear of persecution or serious harm from the state and/or non-state actors because of the person's actual or perceived political opinion.

1.2 Points to note

1.2.1 For the purposes of this note, actual or perceived political opinion may include: leaders, activists or supporters of opposition political parties; or members of activist groups who challenge or are perceived to challenge the actions of the government and its state agents.

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2. Consideration of issues

2.1 Credibility

2.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

2.1.2 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](#)).

2.1.3 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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2.2 Exclusion

2.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses applies. If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.

2.2.2 For further guidance on the exclusion clauses and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instructions on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and [Restricted Leave](#).

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2.3 Convention reason(s)

2.3.1 Actual or imputed political opinion.

2.3.2 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.

2.3.3 For further guidance on convention reasons, including political opinion, see the asylum instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

2.4 Risk

a) Overview of political system

- 2.4.1 Pakistan has a federal system of government with a bicameral legislature: the National Assembly and the Senate. All four 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). Each has an elected assembly and government with limited autonomy (see [Political system](#)).
- 2.4.2 For more information about the administrative divisions, see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Pakistan: Background information, including internal relocation](#).
- 2.4.3 Political parties in Pakistan are able to 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, including the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), 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](#)).
- 2.4.4 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 PML-N party from power. The elections generally complied with international standards although there were accusations of pre-poll manipulation and harassment, some restrictions on freedom of expression and unequal campaign opportunities as well as threats and violence targeting political parties, candidates and election officials. The PTI fell short of the 172 seats needed to form a government by itself, so formed a coalition government with 6 smaller parties (see [General elections 2018](#) and [Election irregularities and related violence](#)).

b) Politics in Azad Jammu and Kashmir

- 2.4.5 Political parties operating in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) 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 to Pakistan and it is reported that pro-independence parties are barred from participating in elections and have limited influence. Whilst some dissent may be tolerated, the ability to express a political view other than for accession to Pakistan is limited (see [Pakistani Kashmir parties](#)).
- 2.4.6 Leaders of pro-independence parties, who are seen to be opposing Pakistani rule, have been subject to surveillance, harassment, imprisonment and torture although the scale, extent and currency of such treatment is unclear. Protests and rallies held, for example, by the [United Kashmir People's National Party \(UKPNP\)](#) and the Jammu Kashmir People's National

Alliance (JKPNA), appear to have been tolerated and passed without incident. Conversely, at least 22 activists belonging to the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) were arrested in September 2019 when they held a sit-in protest (see [Pakistani Kashmir parties](#)).

c) PML-N and PPP

- 2.4.7 Following the elections, the central leadership of the PML-N and the PPP were subject to corruption charges, which are ongoing. The PML-N claim the charges are politically motivated. In advance of the July 2018 elections the police opened criminal cases against nearly 17,000 PML–N members in Punjab over allegedly breaking election rules. Hundreds of PML–N workers were also detained in July 2018 by the police in Lahore and Rawalpindi, reportedly to prevent a welcome-home rally for the PML-N leader, Nawaz Sharif, and his daughter Maryam. A High Court judge later ordered the workers' release. In August 2020, a number of PML-N workers were arrested for alleged riotous behaviour outside a court hearing for Maryam Sharif. The workers were released on bail 2 days later. Shehbaz Sharif was detained in September 2020 on corruption charges. In October 2020, Muhammad Safdar, the son-in-law of exiled ex-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, was arrested after leading a protest against the military. He was released on bail a few hours later (see [Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz \(PML-N\)](#), [Pakistan People's Party \(PPP\)](#) and [Corruption charges](#)).

d) PTM

- 2.4.8 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 of Naqeebullah Mehsud, a Pashtun, by Karachi police. 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 \(PTM\)](#)).
- 2.4.9 Some leaders of the PTM, including 2 parliamentarians, as well as ordinary members, have faced arrest, arbitrary detention, surveillance, intimidation, prosecution and threats of violence. In May 2019, security officials killed at least 3 PTM protesters at a security checkpoint in Waziristan, claiming they attacked the post, although videos and eyewitness accounts appeared to verify that the protesters were peaceful (see [Pashtun Tahafuz \(Protection\) Movement \(PTM\)](#)).
- 2.4.10 In general, low-level members and activists of opposition political parties 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. Some senior party members may – depending on the party, their profile, views expressed and previous activities and difficulties with the state – be subject to treatment, including harassment, arrest, arbitrary detention and criminal charges by the security forces, which amounts to persecution.
- 2.4.11 The level of risk will depend on the particular profile of the person, the nature of the threat and how far it would extend. Decision makers must consider whether there are particular factors specific to the person which would place

them at real risk. Each case must be considered 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.

- 2.4.12 For further information on human rights violations by the state, see the [Country Policy and Information Note on Pakistan: Actors of protection](#).
- 2.4.13 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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e) Threats from non-state actors

- 2.4.14 Some political parties and their members have been targeted by terrorist groups, particularly in the lead up to elections. Clashes also occur between rival political parties during elections. However, terrorist attacks decreased by over 80% during the 2018 election campaign compared to the run up to the 2013 elections (see [Election irregularities and related violence](#)).
- 2.4.15 Targeted terrorist attacks against political leaders and party workers further decreased in 2019 compared to 2018. Specific security operations aimed at reducing violence by groups linked to political parties have had significant effect and as at end of June 2020, 3 politicians had been killed in targeted attacks, compared to 30 in the whole of the year 2019 (see [Politically-motivated violence](#)).
- 2.4.16 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.
- 2.4.17 The level of risk will depend on the particular profile of the person, the nature of the threat and how far it would extend. Decision makers must consider whether there are particular factors specific to the person which would place them at real risk. Each case must be considered 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.
- 2.4.18 For further information on militant groups, see the [Country Policy and Information Note on Pakistan: Security and humanitarian situation, including fear of militant groups](#).
- 2.4.19 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.5 Protection

- 2.5.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution from the state, they are unlikely to be able to avail themselves of the protection of the authorities.
- 2.5.2 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution from non-state actors, including 'rogue' state actors, decision makers must assess whether the state can provide effective protection.
- 2.5.3 The reported case of [AW \(sufficiency of protection\) Pakistan \[2011\] UKUT 31 \(IAC\)](#), heard on 11 November 2010, promulgated on 26 January 2011,

held that there was ‘systemic sufficiency of state protection’ in Pakistan (Headnote 2 and Paragraph 34).

- 2.5.4 The country evidence available since [AW](#) was heard indicates that, despite some failings, in general, the state appears both willing and able to offer sufficient protection (see the [Country Policy and Information Note on Pakistan: Actors of protection](#)). 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.
- 2.5.5 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.
- 2.5.6 For further guidance on assessing the availability of state protection, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.6 Internal relocation

- 2.6.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution from the state, they are unlikely to be able to relocate to escape that risk.
- 2.6.2 Decision makers must give careful consideration to the relevance and reasonableness of internal relocation taking full account of the individual circumstances of the particular person.
- 2.6.3 The Court of Appeal in [SC \(Jamaica\) v Home Secretary \[2017\] EWCA Civ 2112](#) held that: ‘the evaluative exercise is intended to be holistic and ... no burden or standard of proof arises in relation to the overall issue of whether it is reasonable to internally relocate’ (para 36).
- 2.6.4 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, although whether this would be reasonable and not unduly harsh will depend on the persecutor, their intent, capability and reach, as well as the person’s individual circumstances (see the [Country Policy and Information Note on Pakistan: Background information, including internal relocation](#)).
- 2.6.5 For further guidance on internal relocation see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.7 Certification

- 2.7.1 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.
- 2.7.2 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

Section 3 updated: 23 October 2020

3. Political system

3.1 Constitution

3.1.1 As noted in Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment:

'Pakistan's constitution is an amended version of the country's third constitution, which was promulgated in 1973. It provides for a federal system of government, with a bicameral legislature consisting of the National Assembly and the Senate. In addition, each province has a unicameral provincial legislature. The head of state is the president, who is also commander-in-chief of the armed forces. Since the 18th amendment in 2010, however, the presidency has been largely ceremonial with executive power concentrated around the prime minister and cabinet. Under the constitution, Islam is the state religion of Pakistan. Constitutional amendments require a two-thirds majority in both the National Assembly and the Senate. The most recent amendment was in 2018, which provided for the administrative merger of the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas into the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.'¹

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3.2 Parliament, President and Prime Minister

3.2.1 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, 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). The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) as an administrative unit is currently merging with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.'²

3.2.2 Jane's noted:

'Parliament consists of two houses: the Senate and the National Assembly. The National Assembly has a five-year term and a total of 342 seats, of which 272 are elected through universal adult suffrage. Seats are allocated to provinces as follows: 141 to Punjab; 61 to Sindh; 51 to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (renamed in 2010 from North-West Frontier Province); and 16 to Balochistan. In addition, the Federal Capital District of Islamabad has two, with 10 additional seats reserved for religious minorities and 60 seats for women. The Senate currently consists of 100 members, elected by the provincial legislatures; senators are elected for a six-year term...

'Each province of Pakistan is directly governed by provincial assemblies. The provincial assemblies consist of both general seats and seats reserved

¹ Jane's, '[Pakistan – Internal Affairs](#)' (Constitution), last updated 26 March 2019

² EOM, '[Final Report General Elections, 25 July 2018](#)' (page 9), October 2018

for non-Muslims as well as for women. In total, Balochistan's provincial assembly has a total of 65 seats (51 general, 11 for women, three for non-Muslims); Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 124 (99 general, 22 for women, and three for non-Muslims); Punjab 371 (297 general, 66 for women, eight for non-Muslims); and Sindh 168 (130 general, 29 for women, and nine for non-Muslims). Elections for provincial assemblies are held directly and every five years unless dissolved earlier. In line with the 18th amendment of the constitution, chief ministers rather than governors exercise executive authority. The provincial assemblies elect the upper chamber (the Senate). Each of the four provinces has 19 senators, eight of which are appointed from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and three from the Federal Capital area. Following the 18th amendment, provincial assemblies have the power to legislate on most issues, including subjects such as land acquisition, law and order, and environmental protection.³

3.2.3 As noted by The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), in its profile for Pakistan, 1 September 2020, 'The president, Arif Alvi, was sworn into office for a five-year term in September 2018. The prime minister and head of government, Imran Khan, presides over a cabinet of ministers chosen from the elected members of parliament.'⁴

3.2.4 For further information on Pakistan's political structure see also the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) [Country of Origin Information Report – Pakistan Country Overview](#)⁵ and the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) [Country Information Report Pakistan](#)⁶, both of which are based on a range of sources.

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3.3 Participation and affiliation

3.3.1 Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2020 covers the period from 1 February 2017 to 31 January 2019. The BTI assesses the transformation toward democracy and a market economy as well as the quality of governance in 137 countries⁷. The report noted, 'Political parties and the party system in Pakistan tend to be weak, internally undemocratic and personalistic, centered on an individual or dynasty, and sometimes splitting along the lines of personal rivalries for leadership...'⁸

3.3.2 The US Department of State's Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2019 (USSD HR Report 2019) noted:

'There were no reports of restrictions on political parties participating in elections, except for those prohibited due to terrorist affiliations. Judges ordered media regulatory agencies to enforce constitutional bans on content critical of the military or judiciary, compelling media to censor politicians' speeches and elections-related coverage deemed "antijudiciary" or "antimilitary." Organizations that monitor press freedom reported direct

³ Jane's, 'Pakistan – Internal Affairs' (Legislature / Regional and local...), updated 26 March 2019

⁴ EIU, '[Pakistan – Political structure](#)', 1 September 2020

⁵ EASO, '[Pakistan Country Overview](#)' (section 1.4), August 2015

⁶ DFAT, '[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)' (pages 9 and 14), 20 February 2019

⁷ BTI, '[2020 Country Report](#)' (page 2), 2019

⁸ BTI, '[2020 Country Report](#)' (page 13), 2019

pressure on media outlets to avoid content regarding possible military influence over judicial proceedings against politicians, and to refrain from reporting on PML-N leaders in a positive way. 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.⁹

3.3.3 Regarding the right to organise political groups, Freedom House observed, in its 2020 annual report on Pakistan, covering 2019 events:

‘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, it has become increasingly apparent that 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.’¹⁰

3.3.4 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. Opposition parties also continue to hold power or significant shares of assembly seats at the provincial level. However, the military is currently considered more powerful than the elected politicians and the judiciary has shown a willingness to engage in politically targeted accountability. Therefore, opposition parties have increasingly concluded that their most plausible route to power is by winning the backing of the unelected establishment rather than through a straight electoral contest.

‘In 2019, the PML-N and PPP, both former governing parties, were profoundly disrupted by a barrage of cases brought against their first- and second-rank leaders, as well as against party activists who tried to support them. Cases brought by the government included corruption, alleged breach of media regulations, and participation in unauthorized demonstrations. Those targeted included former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, his daughter Maryam Nawaz, his younger brother and former Punjab chief minister Shahbaz Sharif, and former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, all political figures within PML-N, as well as former president Asif Ali Zardari of PPP, and his sister, Faryal Talpur, also a PPP politician. They spent much of the year in court, in jail, or in court-authorized medical treatment. The judicial harassment in 2019 was a continuation of the 2017–18 preelection disruption of the PML-N campaign by the military and judicial establishment, which featured the effective removal from political life of Nawaz Sharif through a series of dubious court rulings, and subsequent weakening of his PML-N party.’¹¹

⁹ USSD, ‘[Country Report on Human Rights 2019](#)’ (section 3), 11 March 2020

¹⁰ Freedom House, ‘[Freedom in the World 2020 - Pakistan](#)’ (section B1), 5 March 2020

¹¹ Freedom House, ‘[Freedom in the World 2020 - Pakistan](#)’ (section B2), 5 March 2020

- 3.3.5 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 community level.’¹²

See also [Political 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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Section 4 updated: 15 November 2020

4. Political parties

4.1 Main parties (including leaders, support bases and treatment of)

4.1.1 The EOM report noted:

‘The key contenders for the 2018 general elections were the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), an alliance of religious parties, the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P). The outgoing National Assembly comprised the government coalition led by the PML-N and several opposition parties, the strongest being the PPP, the PTI and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM).’¹³

4.1.2 The BTI 2020 Report noted:

‘The three major political parties with nationwide representation are the PTI [Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (Pakistan Justice Movement)], the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). The Islamic parties have followers mostly in urban areas and in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The PML-N is the exclusive preserve of the Sharif family. The PPP has had a hereditary chairmanship since its inception; it is headed by the Bhutto family from Larkana, with Benazir Bhutto’s son now a member of the national legislature. In addition, there are several regional parties based on ethnicity, such as the Awami National Party (ANP), Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) with a stronghold in Karachi and the Baluchistan Nationalist Party (BNP).’¹⁴

4.1.3 The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) published an undated list, accessed 3 August 2020, of the 126 [registered political parties](#)¹⁵. The same source also named the [symbols](#) allotted to 110 parties¹⁶.

4.1.4 The English language news site, Dawn, reported in June 2020:

¹² DFAT, ‘[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)’ (page 16), 20 February 2019

¹³ EOM, ‘[Final Report General Elections, 25 July 2018](#)’ (page 10), October 2018

¹⁴ BTI, ‘[2020 Country Report](#)’ (page 13), 2019

¹⁵ ECP, ‘[List of Enlisted Political Parties](#)’, no date

¹⁶ ECP, ‘[Symbols allotted to the Political Parties](#)’, no date

‘After withdrawal of the support by the four-member BNP-M, the PTI-led ruling coalition has now been left with 180 members on the treasury benches whereas the opposition parties have 161 members in the 341-member house.

‘The PTI is the single largest party in the NA with 156 seats and it has the support of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (seven seats), Pakistan Muslim League-Q (five), Balochistan Awami Party (five), Grand Democratic Alliance (three), two independents and one member each from Jamhoori Watan Party and Awami Muslim League.

‘On the other hand the opposition with the inclusion of the BNP-M now has 161 seats with Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz having 84 seats, Pakistan Peoples Party 55, Muttahida Males-i-Aimal 15, two independents and Awami National Party one seat.’¹⁷

See also [General elections 2018](#).

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4.2 Awami National Party (ANP)

4.2.1 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 autonomy¹⁸.

4.2.2 The DFAT report noted:

‘ANP is a Pashtun nationalist, secular political party that promotes opposition to the TTP [Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan], with headquarters in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. ANP’s major support bases are in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. ANP formed in 1986 as a successor to the National Awami Party, and served in several national and provincial coalition governments in the 1990s. Between 2008 and 2013, the ANP governed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and was a junior partner in the federal coalition government with the Pakistan People’s Party. ... Like other parties in Pakistan, the ANP can be affected by politically motivated violence. It is also the target of violence from militant groups.’¹⁹

4.2.3 A prominent anti-Taliban party, ANP members have been attacked by the 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^{20 21 22}.

4.2.4 The 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 at least 69, and killed at least 20 people, including prominent local ANP politician Haroon Bilour. Bilour was a Provincial Assembly candidate for

¹⁷ Dawn, [‘Setback for PTI as BNP-M quits ruling alliance’](#), 18 June 2020

¹⁸ Dawn, [‘Awami National Party’](#), no date

¹⁹ DFAT, [‘Country Information Report Pakistan’](#) (paragraphs 3.170-3.171), 20 February 2019

²⁰ RFERL, [‘Anti-Taliban Party Official Gunned Down In Pakistan's Peshawar’](#), 29 June 2019

²¹ DFAT, [‘Country Information Report Pakistan’](#) (paragraph 3.171), 20 February 2019

²² The Diplomat, [‘Pakistan’s Anti-Taliban Party on the Hit List Again’](#), 12 July 2018

the July 25 2018 general elections. His father, Bashir Bilour, a prominent ANP politician, was also killed by a suicide bomber in 2012. The ANP was the target of TTP attacks during lead up to the May 2013 elections. Many of the party's leading candidates restricted their electioneering to their houses or via Skype. On 11 April 2016, militants killed an ANP leader in Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.²³

- 4.2.5 In June 2019, local ANP leader, Sartaj Khan, was shot and killed by unknown assailants in Peshawar²⁴. 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.'²⁵ The ANP claimed 'hundreds' of its leaders and activists had been killed since 2007^{26 27}.

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4.3 Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM)

- 4.3.1 BBC News noted 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.'²⁸

- 4.3.2 As noted in the DFAT report:

'MQM is a Karachi-based secular political party which advocates the rights of "Mohajirs", or Urdu-speaking Muslim migrants (and descendants) from India. MQM also has power bases in Hyderabad and Nawabshah districts, Sindh. Prior to the July 2018 general election, MQM exercised considerable political influence in Sindh holding 50 seats in the 167-seat Provincial Assembly of Sindh. Its influence has diminished in the wake of the general election: it now holds 21 seats in the Provincial Assembly. It remains a political force, but leadership and faction conflicts have affected performance. MQM's representation of Karachi's Urdu-speaking community often brings it into conflict with the Sindh-based Pakistan People's Party and Pashtun parties.'²⁹

- 4.3.3 The DFAT report provided an overview of MQM members targeted by law enforcement agencies and non-state actors in recent years, noting:

'In 2013, the Rangers – a federal, paramilitary force –... commenced operations in Karachi that significantly reduced political violence. MQM leaders claim the Rangers disproportionately targeted MQM, affecting over 500 families since 2013. MQM claims that, since 2013, over 140 of its members were subject to enforced disappearances and over 100 to extra-judicial killings. MQM further claims that government forces detained more than 1000 of its members in the same period. MQM reports a decrease in numbers of new enforced disappearances in the context of an increase in enforced disappearances across Pakistan.

²³ DFAT, '[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)' (paragraph 3.172), 20 February 2019

²⁴ Daily Times, '[ANP leader shot dead](#)', 30 June 2019

²⁵ RFERL, '[Anti-Taliban Party Official Gunned Down In Pakistan's Peshawar](#)', 29 June 2019

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

²⁷ The News, '[ANP lost prominent leaders in attacks in recent years](#)', 2 July 2019

²⁸ BBC News, '[Pakistan MQM founder Altaf Hussain arrested in UK](#)', 11 June 2019

²⁹ DFAT, '[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)' (paragraph 3.163), 20 February 2019

'While numbers are difficult to verify, reports indicate the Rangers killed many MQM members during operations against alleged violence and extortion. In August 2016, the Rangers announced they had apprehended 848 assassins affiliated with MQM "militant wings" since September 2013. The Rangers claimed that 654 of those arrested were responsible for more than 80 per cent of all targeted killings in Karachi and Hyderabad. MQM suspects have reportedly confessed to involvement in 5,863 incidents of targeted killings.

'Militant groups such as the TTP have periodically attacked MQM members because of their secular ideology, but such attacks have been much less frequent in recent years. Anti-MQM sentiment is also connected to allegations that MQM has links with Indian intelligence. The level of anti-MQM rhetoric, discrimination and violence reflects popular perceptions of the Pakistan-India bilateral relationship.'³⁰

- 4.3.4 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^{31 32}. The split followed a speech by Hussain which contained anti-Pakistan rhetoric and reportedly urged supporters to attack news outlets that did not give MQM enough media coverage^{33 34}. Sources indicated that Altaf Hussain still held considerable influence in the party, primarily based in Karachi^{35 36}.
- 4.3.5 The USSD HR Report 2019 noted that political violence in Karachi continued, though added '... violence declined and gang wars were less prevalent than before security operations in the city. In February [2019] the Sindh Rangers, a paramilitary force technically under the army's control and operating under a mandate renewed every 90 days by the provincial government, announced the arrest of eight suspected hitmen involved in attacks on Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) and PSP [Pak Sarzameen Party] workers.'³⁷
- 4.3.6 Altaf Hussain was arrested and bailed in London in June 2019 on charges of encouraging terrorism through hate speech³⁸. On 1 June 2020, Hussain's trial began at the Old Bailey, London, via video-link, due to coronavirus lockdown restrictions³⁹. Meanwhile, 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^{40 41}. Three members of the

³⁰ DFAT, '[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)' (paragraphs 3.164-3.166), 20 February 2019

³¹ BBC News, '[Pakistan MQM founder Altaf Hussain arrested in UK](#)', 11 June 2019

³² DFAT, '[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)' (paragraph 3.168), 20 February 2019

³³ The News, '[Why did MQM split?](#)', 27 September 2016

³⁴ DFAT, '[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)' (paragraph 3.168), 20 February 2019

³⁵ BBC News, '[Pakistan MQM founder Altaf Hussain arrested in UK](#)', 11 June 2019

³⁶ The National, '[Altaf Hussain: UK trial begins for Pakistani MQM founder ...](#)', 1 June 2020

³⁷ USSD, '[Country Report on Human Rights 2019](#)' (section 1g), 11 March 2020

³⁸ Pakistan Today, '[UK court to begin Altaf's trial in hate speech case on June 1](#)', 19 November 2019

³⁹ The National, '[Altaf Hussain: UK trial begins for Pakistani MQM founder ...](#)', 1 June 2020

⁴⁰ Indian Express, '[MQM founder Altaf Hussain ordered the killing of party leader ...](#)', 18 June 2020

⁴¹ Dawn, '[MQM founder Altaf Hussain ordered the killing of Dr Imran Farooq in UK...](#)', 19 June 2020

MQM were sentenced to life imprisonment for Farooq's murder⁴². On 11 November 2020 it was reported that the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) had included Altaf Hussain on its 'Most Wanted Terrorists' list⁴³.

- 4.3.7 Whilst the MQM-L boycotted the 2018 general election, citing repression of the Muhajirs, the MQM-P won 7 National Assembly seats and became a member of Pakistan's governing coalition⁴⁴. The National Assembly website listed the seats held by the MQM-P⁴⁵. In January 2020, MQM-P leader, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, resigned his post of Information Technology minister, citing the government's failure to improve conditions in Sindh⁴⁶. The party said it would, however, continue its allegiance with the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)⁴⁷. The MQM-P, who mostly represent urban voters, is the main opposition to the PPP-led Sindh provincial government⁴⁸.

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4.4 Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N)

- 4.4.1 The PML-N was formed in 1992 and led by Nawaz Sharif⁴⁹. Nawaz was elected Prime Minister in 2013^{50 51} and resigned in 2017 following disqualification by the Supreme Court over corruption charges, which the PML-N claimed were politically motivated^{52 53}. Shahbaz Sharif, Nawaz's brother, replaced Nawaz as head of the PML-N and was also under investigation for corruption⁵⁴. Following the 2018 elections, the PML-N emerged as the second largest party in the National Assembly and, as of September 2020, retains control of the Senate, leading a ruling coalition⁵⁵. It is also the main opposition party in the Punjab provincial assembly⁵⁶.

- 4.4.2 The DFAT report noted:

'In April 2016, leaked documents from a Panama law firm detailing private financial information of its clients (the "Panama Papers") included information on then prime minister Nawaz Sharif and members of his family. The Supreme Court of Pakistan disqualified Sharif from office in 2017 in relation to the Panama Papers revelations, ruling that he was not an "honest and trustworthy" person: a constitutional requirement for holding public office. Nawaz was sentenced to ten years imprisonment in July 2018, along with his daughter Maryum (7-year sentence) and his son in law (one-year

⁴² Reuters, '[Pakistani court convicts three in politician's murder in London](#)', 18 June 2020

⁴³ The News, '[MQM founder Altaf Hussain among others included in FIA's 'Most Wanted Terrorists' list](#)', 12 November 2020

⁴⁴ BBC News, '[Pakistan MQM founder Altaf Hussain arrested in UK](#)', 11 June 2019

⁴⁵ National Assembly, '[MQMP seats distribution](#)', no date

⁴⁶ Pakistan Today, '[MQM-P chief quits cabinet over broken promises](#)', 13 January 2020

⁴⁷ Pakistan Today, '[MQM-P chief quits cabinet over broken promises](#)', 13 January 2020

⁴⁸ HRCP, '[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)', (page 94), April 2020

⁴⁹ Dawn, '[Pakistan Muslim League \(Nawaz\)](#)', no date

⁵⁰ DFAT, '[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)' (paragraph 2.4), 20 February 2019

⁵¹ Dawn, '[Pakistan Muslim League \(Nawaz\)](#)', no date

⁵² DFAT, '[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)' (paragraph 2.4), 20 February 2019

⁵³ New York Times, '[Nawaz Sharif, Ex-Pakistani Leader, Is Sentenced to Prison...](#)', 6 July 2018

⁵⁴ USSD, '[Country Report on Human Rights 2018](#)' (Section 4), 13 March 2019

⁵⁵ Jane's, 'Pakistan – Internal Affairs' (Opposition prospects...), updated 19 June 2020

⁵⁶ Jane's, 'Pakistan – Internal Affairs' (Opposition prospects...), updated 19 June 2020

sentence). Nevertheless, in September 2018, the Islamabad High Court suspended the verdict, stating the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had failed to provide evidence for corruption.⁵⁷

- 4.4.3 Having been sentenced in absentia^{58 59}, Nawaz and Maryam Sharif's return to Pakistan from London on 13 July 2018, where Nawaz had been caring for his ailing wife, sparked a large PML-N campaign event⁶⁰. The EOM report noted, 'The police mobilised up to 10,000 security personnel to maintain law and order. PML-N leaders reported excessive use of force by security personnel; that hundreds of supporters were injured and detained in Lahore, Faisalabad and other cities in Punjab; and that senior party leaders were placed under house arrest.'⁶¹
- 4.4.4 According to Dawn news, at least 198 PML-N workers had cases registered (First Information Reports – FIRs) against them in Punjab province as they took part in the July 2018 rally to welcome Nawaz home, though no arrests were made in respect of the FIRs⁶². However, the same source added that in the days leading up to Nawaz's return '... there were reports of a number of PML-N workers being arrested by the Punjab police. On the day of his return, police admitted to the arrest of at least 378 people in Punjab. However, Punjab's caretaker ministers, accompanied by Home Minister Shaukat Javed, stated that none of the people arrested in Lahore are political leaders or officials.'⁶³ Dunya News reported that the detentions of the workers were challenged and acting chief justice of the Lahore High Court ordered their release⁶⁴. Arrests of party members were also reported in Rawalpindi⁶⁵.
- 4.4.5 Reuters reported that, in the week prior to the 2018 elections, police opened criminal cases against nearly 17,000 members of the PML-N for allegedly 'breaking election rules.'⁶⁶
- 4.4.6 Following the High Court suspension of the July 2018 verdict, Nawaz Sharif was released on bail⁶⁷. However, he was sentenced to 7 years imprisonment in December 2018 on fresh corruption charges^{68 69}. In November 2019, Nawaz was granted permission to travel abroad for a period of 4 weeks to receive medical treatment^{70 71}. 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

⁵⁷ DFAT, '[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)' (paragraph 2.20), 20 February 2019

⁵⁸ The Nation, '[Convicted in absentia](#)', 7 July 2018

⁵⁹ BBC News, '[Pakistan ex-PM Nawaz Sharif given 10-year jail term](#)', 6 July 2020

⁶⁰ EOM, '[Final Report General Elections, 25 July 2018](#)' (page 29), October 2018

⁶¹ EOM, '[Final Report General Elections, 25 July 2018](#)' (pages 29-30), October 2018

⁶² Dawn, '[Punjab police register multiple cases against 198 PML-N workers](#)', 17 July 2018

⁶³ Dawn, '[Punjab police register multiple cases against 198 PML-N workers](#)', 17 July 2018

⁶⁴ Dunya News, '[Lahore court orders release of detained PML-N workers](#)', 13 July 2018

⁶⁵ RFERL, '[Pakistani Ex-PM's Party Alleges 'Huge Crackdown,' Arrest Of Supporters](#)', 12 July 2018

⁶⁶ Reuters, '[Police open criminal cases against 17,000 members of Pakistan's ...](#)', 16 July 2018

⁶⁷ BBC News, '[Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan ex-PM, sent back to jail for corruption](#)', 24 December 2018

⁶⁸ BBC News, '[Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan ex-PM, sent back to jail for corruption](#)', 24 December 2018

⁶⁹ New York Times, '[Nawaz Sharif, Former Pakistani Prime Minister...](#)', 24 December 2018

⁷⁰ BBC News, '[Nawaz Sharif: Ex-PM leaves Pakistan for medical treatment](#)', 19 November 2019

⁷¹ NDTV, '[Cannot Return To Pakistan: Nawaz Sharif Informs Pak Court](#)', 28 July 2020

17 August 2020⁷². Nawaz, who had travelled to London to receive treatment⁷³, remained there as of 30 September 2020⁷⁴.

- 4.4.7 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.'⁷⁵ 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^{76 77}. The 58 workers were later released on bail⁷⁸.
- 4.4.8 On 28 September 2020, Shehbaz Sharif was arrested after the Lahore High Court rejected his bail plea in a money laundering case⁷⁹. Senior leaders said the case was politically motivated⁸⁰. Sharif was jailed in Kot Lakhpat Jail, Lahore⁸¹. 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 violated⁸².

See also [Corruption charges](#)

- 4.4.9 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.'⁸³
- 4.4.10 Safdar was released on bail a few hours later⁸⁴ (see also [Pakistan Democratic Movement \(PDM\)](#)).

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4.5 Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q)

- 4.5.1 The PML-Q was formed in 2002 by dissident PML-N members and became an integral part of General Musharraf's government⁸⁵. PML-Q leader,

⁷² Dhaka Tribune, '[Last chance for Nawaz to appear in court on Aug 17](#)', 7 July 2020

⁷³ Business Recorder, '[AC issues warrants of Nawaz Sharif](#)', 6 August 2020

⁷⁴ Express Tribune, '[Somebody else running parliament: Nawaz Sharif](#)', 30 September 2020

⁷⁵ New Indian Express, '[Maryam Sharif, over 300 PML-N workers booked ...](#)', 12 August 2020

⁷⁶ New Indian Express, '[Maryam Sharif, over 300 PML-N workers booked ...](#)', 12 August 2020

⁷⁷ Daily Times, '[At least 58 PML-N workers arrested over attacking NAB office](#)', 12 August 2020

⁷⁸ Dawn, '[PML-N workers released on bail](#)', 14 August 2020

⁷⁹ Dawn, '[Shehbaz Sharif arrested in money laundering case...](#)', 29 September 2020

⁸⁰ The Nation, '[Shehbaz Sharif's arrest is political revenge: Shahid Khaqan](#)', 30 September 2020

⁸¹ Geo.TV, '[Lahore court orders Shahbaz Sharif be provided ... in jail](#)', 22 October 2020

⁸² Geo.TV, '[Lahore court orders Shahbaz Sharif be provided ... in jail](#)', 22 October 2020

⁸³ RFERL, '[Son-In-Law Of Exiled Former Pakistani PM Arrested](#)', 19 October 2020

⁸⁴ Al Jazeera, '[Pakistani politician released as opposition to continue protests](#)', 19 October 2020

⁸⁵ Dawn, '[Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid](#)', no date

Shujaat Hussain, served briefly as prime minister during Musharraf's presidency⁸⁶. The PML-Q is a coalition partner of the PTI⁸⁷.

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4.6 Pakistan People's Party (PPP)

4.6.1 Profiling the Sindh-based⁸⁸ PPP, Dawn noted 'The 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.'⁸⁹ Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, son of former Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and murdered ex-Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, chairs the PPP⁹⁰, which forms the provincial government in Sindh⁹¹. Party Vice-President, Sherry Rehman, is Parliamentary Leader of the PPP in the Senate⁹². The PPP (albeit under the separate entity Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians – PPPP, formed in 2002 to comply with electoral laws⁹³), holds the majority of seats in the Sindh Provincial Assembly^{94 95}.

4.6.2 The Diplomat, reporting in December 2016, noted:

'... over the last decade, the party has slowly lost its control in a majority of urban areas with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and other smaller parties chipping off the former's vote bank. The PPP's only committed vote bank is based in rural Sindh that by and large has come to define its survival in the face of a multitude of political challenges, ranging from its corruption-littered governance records to the alienation and loss of the organization's ideological voters across the country...

'... the party no longer holds true to its early mission of fighting for the country's poor and its youth who once comprised the core of its support base. By and large, corruption and bad governance have delegitimized the PPP in the eyes of youth and poor who even seem indifferent to Bilawal's repeated appeals and promises of returning the party to its past glory.'⁹⁶

4.6.3 Former president, Asif Ali Zardari of the PPP, and his sister, Faryal Talpur, also a PPP politician, face charges of corruption^{97 98}. The HRCP 2019 report noted '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.'⁹⁹

⁸⁶ Dawn, '[Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid](#)', no date

⁸⁷ Dawn, '[Setback for PTI as BNP-M quits ruling alliance](#)', 18 June 2020

⁸⁸ DFAT, '[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)' (paragraph 3.3), 20 February 2019

⁸⁹ Dawn, '[Pakistan Peoples Party](#)', no date

⁹⁰ BBC News, '[Bilawal Bhutto Zardari: Heir to a political dynasty](#)', 25 July 2018

⁹¹ HRCP, '[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)' (page 93), April 2020

⁹² Sherry Rehman, '[Bio](#)', no date

⁹³ PPPP, '[About us](#)', no date

⁹⁴ Provincial Assembly of Sindh, '[Members Directory: By party affiliation](#)', no date

⁹⁵ HRCP, '[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)' (page 93), April 2020

⁹⁶ The Diplomat, '[Can the Pakistan People's Party Restore Itself ...?](#)', 30 December 2016

⁹⁷ Freedom House, '[Freedom in the World 2020 - Pakistan](#)' (section B2), 5 March 2020

⁹⁸ HRCP, '[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)' (page 39), April 2020

⁹⁹ HRCP, '[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)' (page 74), April 2020

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

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4.7 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)

4.7.1 The 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...'¹⁰⁰

4.7.2 The PTI formed a coalition with other minority parties to get the required number of seats to form a government following the July 2018 elections¹⁰¹ (see [Participation and results](#)). PTI member seats are listed on the National Assembly website¹⁰².

4.7.3 Information on the party's structure, leadership and so forth, can be found on the [PTI website](#).

4.7.4 According to Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, PTI leader, Imran Khan '... has attempted to combine an appeal to urban, middle-class voters with his anti-corruption agenda and metropolitan image, while attracting conservative religious voters. PTI support is particularly strong among Pashtuns in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, while there has been a surge in positive sentiment towards the party in Punjab.'¹⁰³

4.7.5 According to the DFAT report:

'Politically motivated violence against PTI members has occurred, but is rare. In August 2016, gunmen fired at a car carrying two PTI leaders in Karachi. Neither was injured in the attack. In November 2014, three gunmen opened fire on PTI members during a procession in Gharmala village, Punjab, injuring ten PTI members. In 2013, three gunmen on motorcycles fired into a PTI office in the Jalozai refugee camp near Peshawar, killing one PTI member and injuring five others.'¹⁰⁴

4.7.6 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 death¹⁰⁵.

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¹⁰⁰ DFAT, '[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)' (paragraph 3.160), 20 February 2019

¹⁰¹ Dhaka Tribune, '[PTI claims majority to form Pakistan govt after coalition talks](#)', 31 July 2018

¹⁰² National Assembly, '[PTI seats distribution](#)', no date

¹⁰³ Jane's, 'Pakistan – Internal Affairs' (Political parties), updated 10 May 2019

¹⁰⁴ DFAT, '[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)' (paragraph 3.161), 20 February 2019

¹⁰⁵ Dawn, '[Slain PTI worker was receiving threats](#)', 7 October 2019

4.8 Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)

4.8.1 The PDM is an alliance of opposition parties that formed in September 2020^{106 107 108}. Amongst other things, the PDM has demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Imran Khan, alleging his 2018 election victory was rigged by the military^{109 110 111 112}. The PDM is headed by Maulana Fazlur Rehman, leader of the [Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam \(JUI-F\)](#)¹¹³. Alliance partners include the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N)^{114 115}. The PDM held its first of a series of planned rallies on 16 October 2020 in the city of Gujranwala^{116 117}. A second rally took place in Karachi, Sindh Province, on 18 October 2020^{118 119}. 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^{120 121}, but was released on bail a few hours later¹²². 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 PDM¹²³.

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Section 5 updated: 23 October 2020

5. Islamic parties

5.1 Ahi-e-Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ)

5.1.1 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.

¹⁰⁶ Dawn, ‘[After day-long huddle, Pakistan Democratic Movement demands...](#)’, 21 September 2020

¹⁰⁷ Pakistan Today, ‘[Pakistan Democratic Movement](#)’, 21 September 2020

¹⁰⁸ Economic Times, ‘[Opposition parties in Pakistan launch alliance...](#)’, 21 September 2020

¹⁰⁹ Dawn, ‘[After day-long huddle, Pakistan Democratic Movement demands...](#)’, 21 September 2020

¹¹⁰ Pakistan Today, ‘[Pakistan Democratic Movement](#)’, 21 September 2020

¹¹¹ Economic Times, ‘[Opposition parties in Pakistan launch alliance...](#)’, 21 September 2020

¹¹² Al Jazeera, ‘[Pakistani politician released as opposition to continue protests](#)’, 19 October 2020

¹¹³ Economic Times, ‘[Maulana Fazlur Rehman unanimously appointed as head...](#)’, 4 October 2020

¹¹⁴ Economic Times, ‘[Opposition parties in Pakistan launch alliance...](#)’, 21 September 2020

¹¹⁵ Express Tribune, ‘[Is Pakistan Democratic Movement fizzling out?](#)’, 11 October 2020

¹¹⁶ RFERL, ‘[Pakistani Opposition Launches Protest Movement To Topple Khan...](#)’, 16 October 2020

¹¹⁷ Al Jazeera, ‘[Thousands gather for anti-government protest in Pakistan](#)’, 16 October 2020

¹¹⁸ Al Jazeera, ‘[Pakistani politician released as opposition to continue protests](#)’, 19 October 2020

¹¹⁹ Gulf News, ‘[Pakistan Democratic Movement rallies: what will happen next?](#)’, 19 October 2020

¹²⁰ Al Jazeera, ‘[Pakistan opposition leader ‘arrested’ after anti-government rally](#)’, 19 October 2020

¹²¹ RFERL, ‘[Son-In-Law Of Exiled Former Pakistani PM Arrested](#)’, 19 October 2020

¹²² Al Jazeera, ‘[Pakistani politician released as opposition to continue protests](#)’, 19 October 2020

¹²³ Gulf News, ‘[Pakistan Democratic Movement rallies: what will happen next?](#)’, 19 October 2020

- ‘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.’¹²⁴

5.1.2 The Pakistan Rah-e-Haq party failed to win any seats in the 2018 general election¹²⁵.

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5.2 Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Islam Fazl (JUI-F)

5.2.1 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.’¹²⁶ Sources named Maulana Fazlur Rehman as the leader of the JUI-F^{127 128}.

5.2.2 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.’¹²⁹

5.2.3 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 Islamabad¹³⁰. 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.’¹³¹

5.2.4 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.’¹³²

5.2.5 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

¹²⁴ Reuters, ‘[Factbox: Islamist parties running in Pakistan's election](#)’, 22 July 2018

¹²⁵ Pakistan Forward, ‘[Pakistani voters reject extremists in favour of young, ...](#)’, 1 August 2019

¹²⁶ Dawn, ‘[Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Islam Fazl](#)’, no date

¹²⁷ RFERL, ‘[Anti-Government Protesters End Islamabad Sit-In To Block Roads](#)’, 13 November 2019

¹²⁸ BAMF, ‘[Briefing Notes 18 November 2019](#)’ (page 7), 18 November 2019

¹²⁹ HRCP, ‘[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)’ (page 186), April 2020

¹³⁰ RFERL, ‘[Anti-Government Protesters End Islamabad Sit-In To Block Roads](#)’, 13 November 2019

¹³¹ RFERL, ‘[Anti-Government Protesters End Islamabad Sit-In To Block Roads](#)’, 13 November 2019

¹³² HRCP, ‘[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)’ (page 40), April 2020

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.’¹³³

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5.3 Milli Muslim League (MML)

5.3.1 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.’¹³⁴

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5.4 Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA)

5.4.1 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, Bareilvi 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

¹³³ BAMF, ‘[Briefing Notes 18 November 2019](#)’ (page 7), 18 November 2019

¹³⁴ Reuters, ‘[Factbox: Islamist parties running in Pakistan's election](#)’, 22 July 2018

Musharraf. It comprised more than two dozen extremist religious parties 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.¹³⁵

- 5.4.2 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-Pakistan¹³⁶.

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5.5 Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP)

- 5.5.1 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.¹³⁷

- 5.5.2 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 country¹³⁸.

- 5.5.3 The International Crisis Group (ICG) noted, in a report dated 28 January 2019, that, in response to the Supreme Court acquittal of Aasia 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.'¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Reuters, '[Factbox: Islamist parties running in Pakistan's election](#)', 22 July 2018

¹³⁶ Express Tribune, '[Religious parties fail to impress](#)', 26 July 2018

¹³⁷ Reuters, '[Factbox: Islamist parties running in Pakistan's election](#)', 22 July 2018

¹³⁸ Al Jazeera, '[Seven things Pakistan's election results reveal](#)', 28 July 2018

¹³⁹ ICG, '[Pakistan: Challenges of a Weak Democracy](#)', 28 January 2019

- 5.5.4 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 police¹⁴⁰. The convicted included TLP chief Khadim Hussain Rizvi's brother Ameer Hussain Rizvi and nephew Mohammad Ali¹⁴¹.

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Section 6 updated: 23 October 2020

6. Pakistani Kashmir parties

6.1 Political system and participation

- 6.1.1 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 2020: Pakistani Kashmir](#).

- 6.1.2 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 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.’¹⁴²

- 6.1.3 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.’¹⁴³

- 6.1.4 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 (the current ruling party).’¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Dawn, ‘[Rawalpindi ATC sentences TLP chief Khadim Rizvi's nephew, brother...](#)’, 17 January 2020

¹⁴¹ Dawn, ‘[Rawalpindi ATC sentences TLP chief Khadim Rizvi's nephew, brother...](#)’, 17 January 2020

¹⁴² IDSA, Sharma et al, ‘[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)’ (page xvii), 2019

¹⁴³ OHCHR, ‘[Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Kashmir](#)’ (paragraph 148), 14 June 2018

¹⁴⁴ Al Jazeera, ‘[In Pakistan-administered Kashmir, a shrinking pro-freedom space](#)’, 4 March 2019

- 6.1.5 Sources cited by Al Jazeera 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 abroad¹⁴⁵.
- 6.1.6 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.’¹⁴⁶
- 6.1.7 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.’¹⁴⁷ AJK President, Mahmood Khan, told Al Jazeera that there was tolerance for dissent, providing ‘abusive and seditious’ language was not used against Pakistan¹⁴⁸. He added that displaying pro-independence slogans would not result in a jail sentence¹⁴⁹.
- 6.1.8 Freedom House provided an example of pro-independence rallies taking place without incident, ‘The Jammu Kashmir People’s National Alliance (JKPNA), an alliance of pro-independence groups, was formed in August 2019 and uncharacteristically succeeded in holding local events calling for a provisional all-Kashmir assembly in AJK. The JKPNA later held a pro-independence rally in Muzaffarabad in October [2019], which was also tolerated.’¹⁵⁰
- 6.1.9 However, Freedom House also noted that:
 ‘... the authorities arrested at least 22 activists belonging to the independence-oriented Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) when they held a sit-in protest in September. Authorities disrupted their efforts to march to the LoC, in protest against the clampdown in Indian-controlled Jammu and Kashmir. The authorities have also worked to stop protests against the CPEC [China-Pakistan Economic Corridor] initiative, relying on harassment, intimidation and the use of army checkpoints to dissuade protesters.’¹⁵¹
- 6.1.10 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

¹⁴⁵ Al Jazeera, [‘In Pakistan-administered Kashmir, a shrinking pro-freedom space’](#), 4 March 2019

¹⁴⁶ Al Jazeera, [‘In Pakistan-administered Kashmir, a shrinking pro-freedom space’](#), 4 March 2019

¹⁴⁷ Al Jazeera, [‘In Pakistan-administered Kashmir, a shrinking pro-freedom space’](#), 4 March 2019

¹⁴⁸ Al Jazeera, [‘In Pakistan-administered Kashmir, a shrinking pro-freedom space’](#), 4 March 2019

¹⁴⁹ Al Jazeera, [‘In Pakistan-administered Kashmir, a shrinking pro-freedom space’](#), 4 March 2019

¹⁵⁰ Freedom House, [‘Freedom in the World 2020 – Pakistani Kashmir’](#) (section E1), 5 March 2020

¹⁵¹ Freedom House, [‘Freedom in the World 2020 – Pakistani Kashmir’](#) (section E1), 5 March 2020

opposing Pakistani rule have been subject to surveillance, harassment, and even imprisonment.¹⁵²

6.1.11 Freedom House noted in its report on Pakistani Kashmir:

‘Small nationalist parties that are opposed to union with Pakistan are actively marginalized or barred outright from the political process. 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.

‘There were no high-profile cases in which GB political activists were jailed during 2019. However, those previously jailed remained in detention, including Baba Jan, a leader of the left-wing Awami Workers Party who is serving a life sentence for his participation in protests.’¹⁵³

6.1.12 In January 2019 it was reported that details of nationalist political workers and leaders in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir was to be collected by the local authorities¹⁵⁴.

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6.2 Jammu and Kashmir National Awami Party (JKNAP)

6.2.1 The Jammu and Kashmir National Awami Party (JKNAP) was formed by leaders of the Jammu and Kashmir National Students Federation (JKNSF) in 1995/1996^{155 156}. The 2019 publication by Sharma et al described the 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.’¹⁵⁷ 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.’¹⁵⁸

6.2.2 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”.’¹⁵⁹

6.2.3 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’¹⁶⁰. The JKNAP is also affiliated

¹⁵² OHCHR, ‘[Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Kashmir](#)’ (paragraph 151), 14 June 2018

¹⁵³ Freedom House, ‘[Freedom in the World 2020 – Pakistani Kashmir](#)’ (section B1), 5 March 2020

¹⁵⁴ Business Standard, ‘[UKPNP perturbed with profiling ... in PoK](#)’, 4 January 2019

¹⁵⁵ IDSA, Sharma et al, ‘[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)’ (page 65), 2019

¹⁵⁶ IRB, ‘[Pakistan: The Jammu Kashmir National Awami Party \(JKNAP\)...](#)’, 19 June 2017

¹⁵⁷ IDSA, Sharma et al, ‘[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)’ (page 65), 2019

¹⁵⁸ IDSA, Sharma et al, ‘[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)’ (page 65), 2019

¹⁵⁹ IDSA, Sharma et al, ‘[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)’ (page 65), 2019

¹⁶⁰ IDSA, Sharma et al, ‘[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)’ (page 66), 2019

with the All-Party National Alliance (APNA) of AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan, a conglomerate of 14 nationalist political parties¹⁶¹.

- 6.2.4 According to Sharma et al, most of the JKNAP leadership is living in exile in Europe¹⁶². The same source added, 'Those who stay back are often harassed and tortured by Pakistan security agencies.'¹⁶³
- 6.2.5 Further information on the treatment of JKNAP members by authorities could not be found among the sources consulted by CPIT (see [Bibliography](#)), although the OHCHR made a general observation that pro-independence political leaders in AJK and GB who are seen to be opposing Pakistani rule have been subject to surveillance, harassment and imprisonment¹⁶⁴.

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6.3 Jammu Kashmir People's National Party (JKPNP)

- 6.3.1 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).

'An opinion piece published in the newspaper Jammu Kashmir Newpoint (JK Newpoint) mentions that the JKPNP has a student wing called the Jammu Kashmir People[']s National Students Organization (JKPNSO) (JK Newpoint 15 Apr. 2016).'¹⁶⁵

- 6.3.2 Sources identified the JKPNP's chairman as Raja Zulfiqar Ahmed¹⁶⁶ ¹⁶⁷.

- 6.3.3 The IRB response noted:

'Sources report that the JKPNP 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

¹⁶¹ IDSA, Sharma et al, '[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)' (page 66), 2019

¹⁶² IDSA, Sharma et al, '[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)' (page 65), 2019

¹⁶³ IDSA, Sharma et al, '[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)' (page 65), 2019

¹⁶⁴ OHCHR, '[Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Kashmir](#)' (paragraph 151), 14 June 2018

¹⁶⁵ IRB, '[Pakistan: The Jammu Kashmir People's National Party \(JKPNP\)...](#)', 14 November 2018

¹⁶⁶ The Nation, '[JKPNP rejects India's unilateral act of revoking Kashmir's ...](#)', 9 August 2019

¹⁶⁷ Urdu Point, '[JKPNP Expresses Concern Over Fast-deteriorating Health Of Yasin...](#)', 22 April 2019

Movement, Awa Jamhoori Party and Jammu Kashmir Awami Workers Party (Newsclick 3 Jan. 2018; The Nation 30 Dec. 2017).¹⁶⁸

- 6.3.4 Speaking in 2011, a retired professor of sociology at the University of Birmingham, UK, and member of the JKPNP, told the IRB Research Directorate the JKPNP's membership was '... spread across the globe wherever there is a presence of sizeable Kashmiri communities. In addition to its strong organizational power base inside Pakistan Occupied Jammu Kashmir, including Gilgit and Baltistan..., it has a very sizeable zonal organisation in the UK, United States of America, Middle East and with membership/sympathizers in Canada.'¹⁶⁹

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6.4 United Kashmir People's National Party (UKPNP)

- 6.4.1 The United Kashmir People's National Party (UKPNP) was founded as the People's National Party on 10 April 1985 and renamed the UKPNP in 1994¹⁷⁰ ¹⁷¹. The chair of the UKPNP, Sardar Shaukat Ali Kashmiri, has been living in exile in Switzerland since 1999¹⁷². As of 2019, other UKPNP 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)¹⁷³. The UKPNP is also affiliated with the All-Party National Alliance (APNA) of AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan, a conglomerate of 14 nationalist political parties¹⁷⁴.
- 6.4.2 As of September 2020, the UKPNP was listed as a political party (listed as People's National Party, United Kashmir) on the Azad Jammu and Kashmir's official government portal¹⁷⁵ and on the Election Commission of the AJK¹⁷⁶. However, as noted by Sharma et al, like other pro-independence parties, the UKPNP were not allowed to contest in AJK elections¹⁷⁷.
- 6.4.3 According to UKPNP's constitution, the party aims to establish an independent 'United States of Kashmir'¹⁷⁸. 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 UKPNP¹⁷⁹ ¹⁸⁰. Members may leave the party at any time¹⁸¹.

¹⁶⁸ IRB, '[Pakistan: The Jammu Kashmir People's National Party \(JKPNP\)...](#)', 14 November 2018

¹⁶⁹ IRB, '[Pakistan: The Jammu Kashmir People's National Party \(JKPNP\)...](#)', 27 January 2011

¹⁷⁰ UKPNP, '[Our Manifesto \[sic\]](#)', no date

¹⁷¹ IDSA, Sharma et al, '[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)' (page 61), 2019

¹⁷² UKPNP, '[Sardar Shaukat Ali Kashmiri](#)', no date

¹⁷³ IDSA, Sharma et al, '[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)' (page 62), 2019

¹⁷⁴ IDSA, Sharma et al, '[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)' (page 66), 2019

¹⁷⁵ AJ&K Official Portal, '[Political Parties in AJ&K](#)', no date

¹⁷⁶ Election Commission AJK, '[Political Parties of AJ&K](#)', August 2016

¹⁷⁷ IDSA, Sharma et al, '[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)' (page 63), 2019

¹⁷⁸ UKPNP, '[Constitution](#)' (Article 2: 1), no date

¹⁷⁹ UKPNP, '[Constitution](#)' (Article 2: 1), no date

¹⁸⁰ UKPNP, '[Constitution](#)' (Article 3: Membership), no date

¹⁸¹ UKPNP, '[Constitution](#)' (Article 3: Right of Party Member: 7), no date

- 6.4.4 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)¹⁸².
- 6.4.5 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.’¹⁸³
- 6.4.6 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.’¹⁸⁴
- 6.4.7 For example, the UKPNP held a public demonstration in Rawalpindi in November 2017, calling for freedom from Pakistan, which appeared to pass without incident¹⁸⁵. Likewise, public protests by the UKPNP in AJK were permitted to take place in October 2017¹⁸⁶. Similar protests took place across Europe and Canada, including outside the Pakistan High Commission in London, to mark ‘Black Day’ on 22 October, when the state of Kashmir was divided in 1947¹⁸⁷. The official Facebook page of the UKPNP openly advertised its past and forthcoming events¹⁸⁸.
- 6.4.8 Waqar Hussain Kazmi, chief organiser for the UKPNP, said that pro-freedom activists in Pakistan were accused of being Indian intelligence agents¹⁸⁹.
- 6.4.9 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”.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸² UKPNP, ‘[Constitution](#)’ (Article 6: Regional branches), no date

¹⁸³ IDSA, Sharma et al, ‘[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)’ (page 63), 2019

¹⁸⁴ Al Jazeera, ‘[In Pakistan-administered Kashmir, a shrinking pro-freedom space](#)’, 4 March 2019

¹⁸⁵ New Indian Express, ‘[Kashmiris hold anti-Pakistan protests against...](#)’, 13 November 2017

¹⁸⁶ Bolan Times, ‘[UKPNP Marked Black day 22 October in POK ,Across Europe & Canada](#)’, no date

¹⁸⁷ Bolan Times, ‘[UKPNP Marked Black day 22 October in POK ,Across Europe & Canada](#)’, no date

¹⁸⁸ Facebook, ‘[United Kashmir People’s National Party](#)’, (Events), no date

¹⁸⁹ Al Jazeera, ‘[In Pakistan-administered Kashmir, a shrinking pro-freedom space](#)’, 4 March 2019

¹⁹⁰ IDSA, Sharma et al, ‘[Pakistan Occupied Kashmir: Politics, Parties and ...](#)’ (page 64), 2019

7. Pashtun groups

7.1 Pashtun Tahafuz (Protection) Movement (PTM)

7.1.1 The PTM, established in 2018, a non-violent social group¹⁹¹, based in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan¹⁹², campaigns for civil rights for Pashtuns¹⁹³ and against violence by both the state and Islamist militants in ethnic Pashtun areas¹⁹⁴. The PTM is led by Manzoor Pashteen^{195 196}. 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^{197 198}.

7.1.2 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.'¹⁹⁹

7.1.3 Jane's noted:

'Following the ouster of Islamist militant groups in the Tribal Areas in 2014, groups campaigning for Pashtun rights have begun to emerge, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces. The Pashtun Protection Movement (Pashtun Tahafuz Movement: PTM) has been the most prominent, and was triggered by the alleged killing of an innocent Pashtun by a senior Sindh police official in 2018, reflecting the group's broader demands for a reconciliation commission for extrajudicial killings and an end to enforced disappearances. The PTM's demands are a direct challenge to the military, which increasingly perceives the movement as sponsored by foreign state actors.'²⁰⁰

7.1.4 The DFAT report stated:

'In 2018, many Pashtuns were involved in large-scale demonstrations coordinated by Pashtun Nationalist movement, Pashtun Tahafuz [Protection] Movement (PTM), seeking protection against state oppression and human rights abuses against Pashtuns in the tribal regions of Pakistan. In April 2018, over 60,000 Pashtuns gathered at a mass PTM driven demonstration in Peshawar to demand Pashtun rights. PTM gained prominence following the extra-judicial killing of a Pashtun, Naqeeb Ullah Mehsud, in an alleged fake encounter by the Karachi police in January 2018. PTM protests staged in different parts of the country alleged security enforcement involvement in

¹⁹¹ PIPS, '[Security Report 2019](#)' (page 12), 2020

¹⁹² USSD, '[Country Report on Human Rights 2019](#)' (section 1a), 11 March 2020

¹⁹³ RFERL, '[Pashtun Rights Leader In Pakistan Leaves Prison After Granted Bail](#)', 25 February 2020

¹⁹⁴ Freedom House, '[Freedom in the World 2020 - Pakistan](#)' (section B2), 5 March 2020

¹⁹⁵ DW, '[Pashtun movement leader: 'Pakistani army is afraid of our popularity'](#)', 5 June 2019

¹⁹⁶ BBC News, '[Manzoor Pashteen: Activist who dared to challenge Pakistan...](#)', 27 January 2020

¹⁹⁷ The News, '[Two PTM leaders make it to NA](#)', 29 July 2018

¹⁹⁸ Al Jazeera, '[Why is Pakistan's Pashtun movement under attack?](#)', 28 January 2020

¹⁹⁹ HRCP, '[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)', (page 83), April 2020

²⁰⁰ Jane's, '[Pakistan – Internal Affairs](#)' (Major pressure groups), updated 26 March 2019

the enforced disappearances, extra-judicial arrests and killings, and mistreatment of Pashtuns. PTM claims Pashtuns are humiliated at army check posts and are racially profiled.²⁰¹

7.1.5 In March 2019, a former police officer was charged with the murder of Naqeebullah Mehsud²⁰².

7.1.6 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 Pashtuns are regularly harassed at checkpoints and treated with suspicion, and that landmines continue to make their lives insecure.’²⁰³

7.1.7 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.’²⁰⁴

7.1.8 Referring to the clash at the Khar Qamar (Kamar) military checkpoint in Waziristan, Amnesty International noted at least 3 of the 13 killed were PTM supporters²⁰⁵. Human Rights Watch (HRW) cited a statement issued by the army after the incident, which stated 3 persons died and 10 were injured²⁰⁶. 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.’²⁰⁷

²⁰¹ DFAT, ‘[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)’ (paragraph 3.9), 20 February 2019

²⁰² RFERL, ‘[Pakistani Ex-Police Officer Charged In High-Profile Murder Case](#)’, 25 March 2019

²⁰³ Afzal, M., ‘[Why is Pakistan’s military repressing a huge, nonviolent Pashtun...](#)’, 7 February 2020

²⁰⁴ USSD, ‘[Country Report on Human Rights 2019](#)’ (section 1b), 11 March 2020

²⁰⁵ Amnesty International, ‘[Pakistan 2019](#)’ (Freedom of expression...), 30 January 2020

²⁰⁶ HRW, ‘[Pakistan: Investigate North Waziristan deaths](#)’, 30 May 2019

²⁰⁷ HRW, ‘[Pakistan: Investigate North Waziristan deaths](#)’, 30 May 2019

7.1.9 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.’²⁰⁸

7.1.10 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 injury²⁰⁹.

7.1.11 PTM members and parliamentarians, Mohsin Dawar and Ali Wazir, were arrested following a clash between PTM members and the army on 26 May 2019 in North Waziristan^{210 211}. 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.’²¹²

7.1.12 Manzoor Pashteen was arrested in January 2020 on charges including sedition, hate speech, incitement against the state and criminal conspiracy^{213 214 215}. He was released on bail in February 2020²¹⁶.

7.1.13 Further 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 death²¹⁷.

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²⁰⁸ Amnesty International, ‘[Pakistan 2019](#)’ (Freedom of expression...), 30 January 2020

²⁰⁹ HRCP, ‘[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)’, (page 171), April 2020

²¹⁰ Al Jazeera, ‘[Pakistani legislator Dawar surrenders to authorities](#)’, 30 May 2019

²¹¹ Reuters, ‘[Pakistani MP surrenders after deadly clash between protesters...](#)’, 30 May 2019

²¹² USSD, ‘[Country Report on Human Rights 2019](#)’ (section 1g), 11 March 2020

²¹³ Al Jazeera, ‘[Prominent Pakistani rights activist Manzoor Pashteen arrested](#)’, 27 January 2020

²¹⁴ BBC News, ‘[Manzoor Pashteen: Activist who dared to challenge Pakistan...](#)’, 27 January 2020

²¹⁵ RFERL, ‘[Pashtun Rights Leader In Pakistan Leaves Prison After Granted Bail](#)’, 25 February 2020

²¹⁶ Dawn, ‘[PTM’s Manzoor Pashteen released from jail](#)’, 25 February 2020

²¹⁷ RFERL, ‘[Thousands in Pakistan Protest Slaying Of Pashtun Rights Leader](#)’, 6 May 2020

8. Student politics

8.1 Student unions

- 8.1.1 Voice of America (VoA) reported on 29 November 2019 ‘Thousands of Pakistani students marched in demonstrations spanning the country Friday demanding the right to once again form student unions, which was taken away in 1984 by military dictator Zia ul-Haq.’²¹⁸
- 8.1.2 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.’²¹⁹
- 8.1.3 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.’²²⁰
- 8.1.4 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.’²²¹
- 8.1.5 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.’²²²
- 8.1.6 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.’²²³
- 8.1.7 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

²¹⁸ VoA, ‘[Students in Pakistan Demand Right to Form Unions](#)’, 29 November 2019

²¹⁹ HRCP, ‘[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)’, (page 38), April 2020

²²⁰ HRCP, ‘[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)’, (page 134), April 2020

²²¹ VoA, ‘[Students in Pakistan Demand Right to Form Unions](#)’, 29 November 2019

²²² HRCP, ‘[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)’, (page 225), April 2020

²²³ TRT World, ‘[Pakistan’s trouble with accepting campus politics](#)’, 8 January 2020

“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 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.’²²⁴

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Section 9 updated: 23 October 2020

9. General elections 2018

9.1 Participation and results

9.1.1 Freedom House noted:

‘In the run-up to the polls, observers documented concerted efforts by elements of the country’s military and judicial establishment to hamper the PML-N in order to increase the chances that Khan would attain a parliamentary majority. These included corruption, contempt-of-court, and terrorism charges against PML-N leaders and candidates, and their politicized adjudication. Observers also noted pressure on and interference with the media, apparently at the behest of the security services, that resulted in muted coverage of the PML-N’s campaign.’²²⁵

9.1.2 The EOM report cited the results, by party, in the National and Provincial Assemblies:

‘Eleven political parties, one coalition of parties and four independent candidates, shared the 342 National Assembly seats, including the 60 reserved seats for women and the 10 seats for non-Muslims. The PTI won 150 seats; the PML-N 81; the PPP 54; the MMA, a coalition of five religious parties, 15; the MQM-P seven seats; the BAP [Balochistan Awami Party] five; the BNP [Balochistan National Party] four; the PML-Q three; the GDA [Grand Democratic Alliance] three; the ANP, the JWP [Jamhoori Watan Party] and the AML [Awami Muslim League] gained one seat each...

‘The 728 seats of the four provincial assemblies were shared among fifteen political parties, one coalition of parties and eleven independent candidates, while 28 seats remained vacant. The PTI won most of the seats in Punjab (175 of 371) and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (74 of 124), while the PPP won 97 of 168 seats in Sindh. In Balochistan, the BAP, the MMA and the BNP gained, respectively, 24, 10 and nine seats of 65.’²²⁶

9.1.3 A minimum of 172 seats are required to form a majority government. The 6 coalition partners – the MQM-P with 7 National Assembly seats, PML-Q with 5, the BNP with 4, the Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) with 3, the

²²⁴ TRT World, ‘[Pakistan’s trouble with accepting campus politics](#)’, 8 January 2020

²²⁵ Freedom House, ‘[Freedom in the World 2020 - Pakistan](#)’ (section B1), 5 March 2020

²²⁶ EOM, ‘[Final Report General Elections, 25 July 2018](#)’ (page 48), October 2018

Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) with 5, and the Awami Muslim League with 1 – jointly contribute 25 members to the PTI-led coalition government at the Centre²²⁷.

- 9.1.4 See also the [National Assembly of Pakistan](#) for political party seat distribution.

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9.2 Election irregularities and related violence

- 9.2.1 The 2020 Freedom House report noted ‘Election observer missions in 2018 acknowledged that the formal electoral framework and its implementation complied with international standards. However, the ECP [Election Commission of Pakistan] proved unable to counteract efforts by elements of the judicial and military establishment and their allies to manipulate the campaign environment.’²²⁸

- 9.2.2 According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) report on human rights for 2019 ‘[T]he [2018] elections were marred by accusations of pre-poll manipulation through encouraging or pressurising various electable candidates from diverse political backgrounds to join the PTI. Besides, irregularity in polling was reportedly observed in some areas by the authorities administering the process on election day.’²²⁹

- 9.2.3 A report in Al Jazeera noted ‘The EU's observer mission in Pakistan said while there were positive changes to Pakistan's legal framework for elections, the polls were “overshadowed by restrictions on freedom of expression and unequal campaign opportunities”.’²³⁰

- 9.2.4 National and international academics expressed concerns over ‘... the increase in reported incidents of “intimidation”, “harassment”, and “blackmailing” of the PML-N's candidates and workers and said that free and fair elections could not be guaranteed under such circumstances.’²³¹

- 9.2.5 The EOM report noted that:

‘An increase in threats and violent attacks targeting political parties, party leaders, candidates and election officials severely affected the campaign environment in the two weeks before election day. The bomb attack targeting a Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) campaign event in Mastung district, Balochistan, on 13 July [2018] killed 149 people and injured over 200. Among those killed in various attacks were leaders and candidates of the BAP, the Awami National Party (ANP), and the PTI. A candidate from the Jamiat Ulema-e-IslamFazl (JUI-F) survived two attacks. Several other candidates and hundreds of campaigners, party workers and citizens were injured. The ECP underlined the need to increase security across the country after the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) informed it of threats to political leaders and candidates. An attack near a polling station

²²⁷ The News, ‘[Delicate alliances](#)’, 23 February 2020

²²⁸ Freedom House, ‘[Freedom in the World 2020 - Pakistan](#)’ (section A3), 5 March 2020

²²⁹ HRCP, ‘[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)’, (page 3), April 2020

²³⁰ Al Jazeera, ‘[Seven things Pakistan's election results reveal](#)’, 28 July 2018

²³¹ Daily Times, ‘[Academics censure crackdown on PML-N workers](#)’, 13 July 2018

in Quetta on election day killed over 30 people, including children. Another attack in a polling station in Baleeda, Balochistan, killed four poll workers and injured others. ...

'Election day was orderly, despite two attacks on polling stations in Balochistan where over 30 people were killed and others injured.'²³²

- 9.2.6 Reporting on trends of terrorist and political violence during the 2018 general election, the Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) noted 'Although attacks on political leaders and workers have become a regular feature of terrorist violence in Pakistan, frequency of such attacks usually increases before and during election times. Similarly, supporters and workers of different parties are also seen engaged in incidents of political violence in terms of armed clashes as well as attacks during election campaign and on the polling day.'²³³
- 9.2.7 Clashes between supporters of rival political parties occurred on election day in all 4 provinces, resulting in deaths and injuries of activists²³⁴.
- 9.2.8 According to the PIPS report, in the lead up to the 2018 elections (May to July), 18 terrorist attacks took place targeting political leaders, workers and election gatherings, rallies and offices, an 88% decrease compared to the 148 attacks recorded in the 3 month run-up to elections in 2013 (March to May)²³⁵.
- 9.2.9 Also recording a decrease in terrorist attacks during elections in 2018 compared to 2013, the DFAT report added, '[T]he lethality increased, with 215 deaths perpetrated by ISIL [Islamic State] and the TTP [Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan] during the 2018 election campaign, compared to 179 deaths perpetrated by nationalist groups, the Taliban and other groups in 2013. Incidents of election related political violence declined from 80 incidents in 2013 (March to May) to 13 in 2018 (May to July) [a decrease of approximately 83%].'²³⁶

See also [Politically-motivated violence](#).

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Section 10 updated: 23 October 2020

10. Treatment of political opponents

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

10.1 Corruption charges

10.1.1 In its 2020 annual report on Pakistan, Freedom House observed

'While there are numerous formal safeguards against official corruption, it is endemic in practice, and the use of accountability mechanisms is often

²³² EOM, '[Final Report General Elections, 25 July 2018](#)' (pages 6 and 10), October 2018

²³³ PIPS, '[General election 2018: Trends of terrorist and political violence](#)', 27 July 2018

²³⁴ Dawn, '[Clashes, violence mar polling in various constituencies; at least 2 killed](#)', 26 July 2018

²³⁵ PIPS, '[General election 2018: Trends of terrorist and political violence](#)', 27 July 2018

²³⁶ DFAT, '[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)' (paragraph 2.80), 20 February 2019

selective and politically driven. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) focuses on cases against politicians and senior officials. It claims to have doubled the number of investigations undertaken during 2019 and achieved an overall conviction rate of 70 percent since its inception 20 years ago. In 2019, the NAB pursued numerous corruption investigations against senior figures in the opposition PML-N and PPP.²³⁷

See also [Participation and affiliation](#).

- 10.1.2 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’. Higher courts have also accused the NAB of victimising major political figures and of bias towards those affiliated with the ruling PTI²³⁸.
- 10.1.3 The BTI report 2020, covering the period 1 February 2017 to 31 January 2019, noted:
- ‘The PML-N, incumbents for the first part of the period under review, suffered when Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was forced to resign on charges of corruption, and as thousands of other party members faced corruption charges. Although the use of corruption charges has long been a selective political weapon in the country, allowing powerful actors to alter outcomes, the charges and evidence presented do suggest significant corruption at high levels [...].’²³⁹ (see [Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz \(PML-N\)](#)).
- 10.1.4 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 corruption²⁴⁰.

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10.2 Freedom of expression and assembly

10.2.1 The DFAT report noted:

‘While the space for freedom of expression is shrinking in Pakistan [...], people commonly display their political affiliation with posters/bunting on their cars or homes, and political protests are common. Political protests have led to violent clashes between protesters and police. In November 2018, the TLP [[Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan](#)] led violent protests against the acquittal of Asia Bibi [a Christian woman accused of blasphemy²⁴¹]. In February and April 2018, a series of Pashtun protests against extra-judicial killing occurred in Peshawar and Lahore; these protests have since transformed into a broader fight for ethnic minority rights in Pakistan. In November 2017, Islamist groups organised a large-scale sit-in in Islamabad to protest proposed changes to the electoral oath [...]. In October 2016, supporters of Imran Khan’s PTI clashed with police in Rawalpindi, after defying a ban on public gatherings which targeted a large PTI protest that

²³⁷ Freedom House, ‘[Freedom in the World 2020 - Pakistan](#)’ (section C2), 5 March 2020

²³⁸ The Diplomat, ‘[Pakistan: How ‘Accountability’ Became a Tool ...](#)’, 13 February 2020

²³⁹ BTI, ‘[2020 Country Report](#)’ (page 28), 2019

²⁴⁰ Express Tribune, ‘[Pakistan’s prison politics: Who was in and who was out...?](#)’, 30 December 2019

²⁴¹ DFAT, ‘[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)’ (paragraph 3.84), 20 February 2019

was subsequently cancelled. In 2014, the PTI held a prolonged, several month, sit-in in Islamabad, claiming fraud in the 2013 elections. While the protest was largely peaceful, three protesters were killed and several hundred injured in clashes with police on 30 August 2014 as the protesters entered the grounds of the parliament building.²⁴²

10.2.2 The HRCP 2019 report noted:

‘A case was registered against 60 workers of the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) in Gujrat for staging a protest demonstration and blocking a road against the arrest of their party co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari by NAB [National Accountability Bureau] in June.

‘In Faisalabad in July, cases were registered against 3,000 activists of the PML-N on charges of delivering speeches against the government, staging rallies without seeking permission, using loudspeakers, and hurling threats of disrupting peace. Police said the accused had caused problems for motorists by blocking roads and the cases had been registered on the orders of the government.’²⁴³

10.2.3 The 2019 Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) report noted in regard to Pakistan ‘Opposition leaders and other critics of the authorities faced increasing difficulties in expressing their opinions, including through social media.’²⁴⁴

10.2.4 The Freedom House report, Freedom on the Net 2020, covering events between June 2019 and May 2020, reported:

‘Political dissent and secessionist movements in areas including Balochistan and Sindh Provinces have been subject to systematic censorship for years. In August 2016, the government banned websites operated by the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), a political party based in Sindh Province, and said it would take steps to remove affiliated social media accounts after the party’s exiled leader delivered what officials and news reports characterized as an “anti-Pakistan” speech. The party’s official website remained blocked as of July 2020.’²⁴⁵

10.2.5 The USSD HR Report 2019 noted:

‘During the year PTM mobilized its predominantly ethnic Pashtun supporters to participate in sit-ins and demonstrations to demand justice and to protest abuses by government security forces. Following the government’s pledge to take a harder line against PTM, the number of protests and rallies fell across the country. PTM activists continued to operate, although under much greater scrutiny after the arrest of most of the movement’s key leaders...

‘Some ethnic and religious groups claimed authorities detained their members based on political affiliation or beliefs. ... In July [2019], reports indicated 12 more missing persons returned to their homes in various areas of Balochistan, although the practice of disappearing persons for political

²⁴² DFAT, ‘[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)’ (paragraph 3.158), 20 February 2019

²⁴³ HRCP, ‘[State of Human Rights in 2019](#)’, (page 39), April 2020

²⁴⁴ FCO, ‘[Human Rights and Democracy 2019](#)’ (section 6.18 Pakistan), 16 July 2020

²⁴⁵ Freedom House, ‘[Freedom on the Net 2020](#)’ (section B1), 14 October 2020

dissent continued, with some contacts noting it had escalated across the province...

'Several domestic intelligence services monitored politicians, political activists, suspected terrorists, NGOs, employees of foreign entities, and media professionals.'²⁴⁶

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

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10.3 Politically-motivated violence

10.3.1 DFAT noted 'The government's ability to maintain law and order against politically motivated violence is limited.'²⁴⁷

10.3.2 The same source stated that politically-motivated violence occurs across Pakistan, predominantly in Karachi and Balochistan²⁴⁸. The USSD HR Report 2019 noted that in Balochistan, '[T]he practice of disappearing persons for political dissent continued, with some contacts noting it had escalated across the province.'²⁴⁹

10.3.3 In 2016, there were 12 incidents of political violence in all of Pakistan, compared to 63 in 2015²⁵⁰. In 2016, there were 20 terrorist attacks that targeted political leaders and workers (about 4.5% of total terrorist attacks that year)²⁵¹.

10.3.4 The DFAT report added:

'Terrorists sought to attack political leaders and workers on 24 occasions in 2018 (compared to 13 attacks in 2017). 16 of the 24 attacks, which were conducted by the TTP and ISIL, were responsible for the total death toll of political leaders and workers, killing 218 and injuring 394 people. Nevertheless, 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.'²⁵²

10.3.5 In the election year of 2018, PIPS reported 24 targeted terrorist attacks against political leaders / workers, which killed 218²⁵³. In 2019, PIPS recorded a significant decline in targeted terrorist attacks against politicians and workers, noting 9 attacks, including 5 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 4 in Balochistan, which killed 11 and injured 19²⁵⁴. In total, PIPS reported 17 incidents of political violence in 2019 – including terrorist attacks against political leaders/workers as well as incidents of political violence directed

²⁴⁶ USSD, '[Country Report on Human Rights 2019](#)' (section 1e, 1f and 2b), 11 March 2020

²⁴⁷ DFAT, '[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)' (paragraph 2.73), 20 February 2019

²⁴⁸ DFAT, '[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)' (paragraph 3.159), 20 February 2019

²⁴⁹ USSD, '[Country Report on Human Rights 2019](#)' (section 1e), 11 March 2020

²⁵⁰ PIPS, '[Security Report 2016](#)' (page 17), 10 January 2017

²⁵¹ PIPS, '[Security Report 2016](#)' (pages 11 and 13), 10 January 2017

²⁵² DFAT, '[Country Information Report Pakistan](#)' (para 3.159), 20 February 2019

²⁵³ PIPS, '[Security Report 2019](#)' (page 56), 2020

²⁵⁴ PIPS, '[Security Report 2019](#)' (page 56), 2020

against members, supporters and leaders of political parties – which claimed the lives of 17 people (compared to 229 in 2018) and injured 26 others²⁵⁵.

10.3.6 According to the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), a think tank ‘committed to the cause of independent research, non-partisan analysis, and informed advocacy’, 8 politicians were killed in the first quarter of 2019 compared with 14 in the second quarter²⁵⁶, 6 in the third quarter²⁵⁷ and 2 in the fourth quarter²⁵⁸.

10.3.7 In 2020, no politicians were killed in the first quarter of 2020, whilst 3 were killed in the second quarter (April to June), according to the CRSS²⁵⁹.

See also [Election irregularities and related violence](#).

For further information on militant groups, see the [Country Policy and Information Note on Pakistan: Security and humanitarian situation, including fear of militant groups](#).

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²⁵⁵ PIPS, '[Security Report 2019](#)' (page 56), 2020

²⁵⁶ CRSS, '[Q2 Security Report – 2019](#)', 17 July 2019

²⁵⁷ CRSS, '[Q3 Security Report – 2019](#)', 10 October 2019

²⁵⁸ CRSS, '[Q1 Security Report – 2020](#)', 7 April 2020

²⁵⁹ CRSS, '[Quarterly Security Report Q2, April-June, 2020](#)', 16 July 2020

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
- Parliamentary elections 2018
 - Participation and results
 - Election irregularities and violence
- Treatment of political opponents
 - Corruption charges
 - Freedom of expression
 - Political violence

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Version control

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **1.0**
- valid from **4 December 2020**

Changes from last version of this note

First version of CPIN.

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