



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Pakistan: Internal relocation

Version 2.0

July 2024

Contents

Assessment	3
About the assessment	3
1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals	3
1.1 Credibility.....	3
1.2 Exclusion.....	3
2. Internal relocation	4
Country information	5
About the country information.....	5
3. Freedom of movement.....	5
3.1 Legal rights.....	5
3.2 Restrictions.....	5
3.3 Internal migration.....	6
3.4 Property and housing	6
3.5 Tenant registration	7
4. Humanitarian situation	7
4.1 Overview	7
4.2 Floods.....	8
4.3 Internal displacement due to militant activity	8
5. Returnees	9
5.1 Treatment on return.....	9
Research methodology	11
Terms of Reference	12
Bibliography	13
Sources cited.....	13
Sources consulted but not cited.....	14
Version control and feedback	15
Feedback to the Home Office	15
Independent Advisory Group on Country Information.....	15

Assessment

Section updated: 13 June 2024

About the assessment

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

- can relocate within a country or territory to avoid persecution/serious harm

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

[Back to Contents](#)

1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

1.1 Credibility

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

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

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

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

[Back to Contents](#)

1.2 Exclusion

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

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

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

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

[Back to Contents](#)

2. Internal relocation

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

[Back to Contents](#)

Country information

Section updated: 13 June 2024

About the country information

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

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

This document is intended to be comprehensive but not exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned this does not mean that the event did or did not take place or that the person or organisation does or does not exist.

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

[Back to Contents](#)

3. Freedom of movement

3.1 Legal rights

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

[Back to Contents](#)

3.2 Restrictions

- 3.2.1 The US Department of State human rights report for 2022 (USSD HR Report 2022) indicated that the government limited rights on foreign travel, emigration and repatriation and added, in regard to internal travel, that 'Citing security concerns, government restrictions on access to certain areas of the former FATA and Balochistan hindered freedom of movement. The government required an approved NOC [No Objection Certificate²] for travel to areas of the country designated "sensitive."³ The USSD repeated this information in its HR Report 2023⁴.
- 3.2.2 Freedom House noted in its Freedom in the World 2023 report that 'There are some legal limitations on the freedom of movement. Authorities routinely hinder internal movement in some parts of the country for security reasons. The main tool for restricting foreign travel is the Exit Control List, which blocks named individuals from using official exit points. Though intended to prevent those posing a security threat and those facing court proceedings from fleeing, authorities have used it to control dissent.'⁵ Freedom House made the same assertions in its 2024 report⁶.

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

² a type of legal certificate issued by an organisation, agency or individual

³ USSD, [Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2022](#) (section 2d), 20 March 2023

⁴ USSD, [Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2023](#) (section 2d), 22 April 2024

⁵ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2023 – Pakistan](#) (G1), 2023

⁶ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024 – Pakistan](#) (G1), 2024

3.3 Internal migration

- 3.3.1 According to the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) report on Pakistan, published in January 2022, based on a range of sources, 'Internal migration is widespread and common, but it depends on having both the financial means and family, tribal and/or ethnic networks to establish oneself in a new location. Single women find it especially difficult to relocate... For some groups (such as Hazaras), travel by road is unsafe in certain parts of the country, and those who must travel and can afford to fly do so.'⁷
- 3.3.2 The same source stated that 'Large urban centres such as Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore have ethnically and religiously diverse populations, and offer some anonymity for people fleeing violence by non-state actors. Some groups, such as Pashtuns, occupy enclaves in these cities, while others, such as Ahmadis and Hazaras, avoid living in enclaves to reduce the risk of being targeted. Certain types of threats (such as honour killings) are persistent, and even if people relocate they can be tracked down and killed years later...'⁸

3.4 Property and housing

- 3.4.1 Pakistan's constitution protects property rights. Article 24 of the Constitution states 'No person shall be compulsorily deprived of his property save in accordance with law.'⁹
- 3.4.2 A report published by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), dated December 2018, noted that 'Pakistan has a huge housing deficit of nearly 10 million units and growing. Urban population growth in the country has not been matched by growth in housing units or equitable access to land, resulting in housing shortages and the growth of slums. The number of slums is an indication of rising inequalities. Almost 55 percent of the population in Karachi lives in slums.'¹⁰
- 3.4.3 According to a World Bank blog, published 11 March 2022, 'Half of all urban households are overcrowded or live in informal settlements with inadequate access to basic infrastructure and services. Formal housing is out of reach for most of the population and mainly owned by men.'¹¹
- 3.4.4 The World Bank supported Pakistan to increase access to affordable housing and mortgage finance for low-income households in urban Punjab through the [Pakistan Housing Finance project](#), [Punjab Urban Land Systems Enhancement project](#) and [Punjab Affordable Housing Program](#)¹².

⁷ DFAT, [Country Information Report Pakistan](#) (paragraph 5.23), 25 January 2022

⁸ DFAT, [Country Information Report Pakistan](#) (paragraph 5.24), 25 January 2022

⁹ Pakistan.org, [The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan](#) (Article 24), 1973

¹⁰ UNDP, [Sustainable Urbanization](#) (page 1), December 2018

¹¹ World Bank Blogs, [Managing supply and demand: The key to getting "housing"...](#), 11 March 2022

¹² World Bank, [World Bank Supports Pakistan to Improve Property Rights...](#), 10 March 2022

3.5 Tenant registration

- 3.5.1 The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) Research Directorate cited 3 sources in a response, dated 23 January 2018, that tenant registration systems were in place in the provinces of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Sindh, as well as the Islamabad Capital Territory¹³. According to sources consulted by the Research Directorate, tenant registration was mandatory. While one source stated that this system 'is being strictly implemented' in all 4 provinces, another source argued that it was 'not widely implemented', but that police were becoming increasingly proactive in encouraging citizens to register. Registration took place at the tenant's local police station¹⁴.
- 3.5.2 For further information on Pakistan's tenant registration systems, including implementation, requirements and procedures, enforcement, how the system works in each province and whether the authorities share information, consult the full [IRB response](#)¹⁵.

[Back to Contents](#)

4. Humanitarian situation

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 The European Commission's European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations noted in July 2023 that:

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

'Pakistan experiences frequent disasters such as earthquakes, floods and recurrent droughts.

'Malnutrition and limited access to water, sanitation and medical services have compromised the health care capacities of the most vulnerable communities. In addition, COVID-19 and the 2022 floods worsened the already pressing humanitarian needs.

'A year after the floods, Pakistan is currently facing an imminent nutrition crisis, exacerbated by pre-existing high rates of malnutrition in flood-affected regions. As of June 2023, around 10.5 million people from 43 districts in vulnerable provinces of Pakistan are facing acute food insecurity.'¹⁶

- 4.1.2 For up-to-date information on the humanitarian situation in Pakistan, see:

- [Reliefweb – Pakistan](#)
- [Humanitarian Response – Pakistan](#)

¹³ IRB, [Pakistan: Tenant registration systems, including implementation...](#), 23 January 2018

¹⁴ IRB, [Pakistan: Tenant registration systems, including implementation...](#), 23 January 2018

¹⁵ IRB, [Pakistan: Tenant registration systems, including implementation...](#), 23 January 2018

¹⁶ European Commission, [Pakistan Factsheet](#), 4 July 2023

4.2 Floods

- 4.2.1 In June 2022, unprecedented heavy rains triggered one of the worst floods in decades, causing floods and flash floods in the south and north-west of the country^{17 18}.
- 4.2.2 The World Food Programme (WFP) [Pakistan Floods Situation Report](#), August 2023, noted that ‘In 2023, Pakistan continues to face devastating floods since 2022... 33 million people affected by floods and flash floods in 94 districts during the 2022 monsoon season.’¹⁹ The floods caused the deaths of more than 1,700 people and injuring over 12,000²⁰.
- 4.2.3 The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) profile on Pakistan noted that ‘Floods triggered 8.2 million internal displacements, making it the world’s largest disaster displacement event in the last ten years. At the peak of the monsoon in August [2023], around 85,000 km² of land, the equivalent of ten per cent of the country, was flooded. The water took months to recede and caused direct damage and economic losses put at around USD 30 billion, ushering in the country’s worst humanitarian crisis in decades.’²¹
- 4.2.4 The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported on 31 August 2023 that:

‘In the last year, the Government and humanitarian organizations reached over 6.1 million people with life-saving assistance in 34 prioritized districts across Pakistan.

‘The humanitarian needs still remain high with more than 10.5 million people food insecure (IPC level-3 and Level-4); 4.5 million people without clean drinking water, 3.5 million children under five severely malnourished, and another 23 million children out of schools.’²²
- 4.2.5 For further information and updates, see [Updates | ReliefWeb](#).

4.3 Internal displacement due to militant activity

- 4.3.1 The USSD HR Report 2022 stated that:

‘Large population displacements occurred beginning in 2008 because of militant activity and military operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the former FATA. Returns continued amid improved security conditions. The government and UN agencies such as UNHCR, UNICEF, and the UN World Food Program collaborated to assist and protect those affected by conflict, who generally resided with host families, in rented accommodations, or to a lesser extent, in camps. Several internally displaced persons (IDP) populations settled in informal settlements outside of cities such as Dera

¹⁷ UNHCR, [Pakistan; Protection Analysis Update; October 2022](#) (page 2), 1 November 2022

¹⁸ European Commission, [ECHO Daily Flash](#), 6 July 2022

¹⁹ WFP, [WFP Pakistan Floods Situation Report, August 2023](#), 29 September 2023

²⁰ OCHA, [One Year After Pakistan Monsoon Floods 2022](#), 31 August 2023

²¹ IDMC, [Pakistan Country Profile](#), 24 May 2023

²² OCHA, [One Year After Pakistan Monsoon Floods 2022](#), 31 August 2023

Ismail Khan, Bannu, Peshawar, Lahore, and Karachi.²³

4.3.2 According to the same source:

‘Many IDPs reportedly wanted to return home, despite the strict control that security forces maintained over returnees’ movements through extensive checkpoints and the lack of local infrastructure, housing, and services delivery. Other IDP families delayed their return or chose to stay with family members in the settled areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where regular access to health care, education, and other social services was available. For IDPs who were unwilling or unable to return, the government coordinated support with the United Nations and other international organizations.

‘Despite large-scale recurring displacements of individuals due to natural disasters, terrorist activities, and counterterrorist operations, the government had not adopted specific legislation to tackle internal displacement problems. In addition, the law does not provide any definition of IDPs or their rights.’²⁴

4.3.3 The USSD repeated this information in its HR Report 2023²⁵.

4.3.4 The IDMC reported:

‘Conflict displacement is difficult to record in Pakistan because there is no centralised reporting system and media reporting tends to be politicised. Most displacement has historically tended to occur in the disputed Kashmir region, but a February 2021 agreement between Pakistan and India led to a significant reduction in violence along the line of control and in particular cross-border shelling, which is the primary trigger of displacement in the region. An increase in armed conflict in Pakhtunkhwa province triggered 680 displacements in the Tirah Valley in September 2022, the only recorded figure for the country that year.

‘Beyond new displacement, more than 21,000 people have been living in internal displacement in the country since 2014 as a result of military operations in the former Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA).’²⁶

[Back to Contents](#)

5. Returnees

5.1 Treatment on return

5.1.1 Information on the treatment of returnees was limited amongst the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

5.1.2 The January 2022 DFAT report provided information on treatment of returnees:

‘Returnees tend to leave Pakistan on valid travel documents and therefore do not commit immigration offences under Pakistani law. Those who return voluntarily and with valid travel documentation are typically processed like any other citizen returning to Pakistan. The government issues “genuine” returnees with temporary documents when they arrive. A genuine returnee is

²³ USSD, [Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2022](#) (section 2f), 20 March 2023

²⁴ USSD, [Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2022](#) (section 2f), 20 March 2023

²⁵ USSD, [Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2023](#) (section 2f), 22 April 2024

²⁶ IDMC, [Pakistan Country Profile](#), 24 May 2023

defined as someone who exited Pakistan legally irrespective of how they entered destination countries. Those who are returned involuntarily or who travel on emergency travel documents are likely to attract attention from the authorities upon arrival. Immigration officials will interview failed returnees and release them if their exit was deemed to be legal but may detain those deemed to have departed illegally.

‘People suspected of or charged with criminal offences in Pakistan are likely to face questioning on return, irrespective of whether they departed legally or not. DFAT understands that people returned to Pakistan involuntarily are typically questioned upon arrival to ascertain whether they left the country illegally, are wanted for crimes in Pakistan, or have committed offences while abroad. Those who left Pakistan on valid travel documentation and have not committed any other crimes are typically released within a couple of hours. Those found to have contravened Pakistani immigration laws are typically arrested and detained. These people are usually released within a few days after being bailed out by their families or having paid a fine, although the law provides for prison sentences. Those wanted for a crime in Pakistan or who have committed a serious offence abroad may be arrested and held on remand or required to report regularly to police.

‘... Returnees are typically able to reintegrate into the Pakistani community without repercussions stemming from their migration attempt, although involuntary returnees who took on debt to fund their migration tend to face a higher risk of financial hardship and familial shame.’²⁷

[Back to Contents](#)

²⁷ DFAT, [Country Information Report Pakistan](#) (paragraph 5.28 to 5.30), 25 January 2022

Research methodology

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

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

Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

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

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared and contrasted to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

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

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

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

[Back to Contents](#)

Terms of Reference

The 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) provides a broad outline of the issues relevant to the scope of this note and forms the basis for the [country information](#).

The following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

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

[Back to Contents](#)

Bibliography

Sources cited

Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), [Country Information Report Pakistan](#), 25 January 2022. Last accessed: 13 October 2023

European Commission,

ERCC - Emergency Response Coordination Centre, [ECHO Daily Flash](#), 6 July 2022. Last accessed: 13 October 2023

European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, [Pakistan Factsheet](#), 4 July 2022. Last accessed: 13 October 2023

Express Tribune, [Cabinet amends rules to thin out ECL bulge](#), 23 April 2022. Last accessed: 13 October 2023

Freedom House,

[Freedom in the World 2023](#), 2023. Last accessed: 13 October 2023

[Freedom in the World 2024](#), 2024. Last accessed: 13 June 2024

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB), [Pakistan: Tenant registration systems, including implementation; whether authorities share information on tenant registration \(2015-December 2017\) \[PAK106026.E\]](#), 23 January 2018. Last accessed: 13 October 2023

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), [Pakistan Country Profile](#), 24 May 2023. Last accessed: 13 October 2023

Pakistan.org, [The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan](#), 1973. Last accessed: 13 October 2023

UN Development Programme (UNDP), [Sustainable Urbanization](#), December 2018. Last accessed: 13 October 2023

UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), [Pakistan: Protection Analysis Update: October 2022](#), 1 November 2022. Last accessed: 13 October 2023

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), [One Year After Pakistan Monsoon Floods 2022](#), 31 August 2023. Last accessed: 13 October 2023

US Department of State (USSD),

[Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2022](#), 20 March 2023. Last accessed: 13 June 2024

[Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2023](#), 22 April 2024. Last accessed: 13 June 2024

World Bank, [World Bank Supports Pakistan to Improve Property Rights and Increase Access to Affordable Housing and Mortgage Finance for Low-Income Households](#), 10 March 2022. Last accessed: 13 October 2023

World Bank Blogs, [Managing supply and demand: The key to getting “housing” right in Pakistan](#), 11 March 2022. Last accessed: 13 October 2023

World Food Programme (WFP), [WFP Pakistan Floods Situation Report, August 2023](#), 29 September 2023. Last accessed: 13 October 2023

Sources consulted but not cited

Mignex, [Migration-relevant policies in Pakistan](#), 30 March 2022. Last accessed: 24 January 2023

[Back to Contents](#)

Version control and feedback

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **2.0**
- valid from **8 July 2024**

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

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

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

[Back to Contents](#)

Changes from last version of this note

Updated following the Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI)-commissioned [review](#) of October 2023.

[Back to Contents](#)

Feedback to the Home Office

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

[Back to Contents](#)

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 them in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

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

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

1st Floor

Clive House

70 Petty France

London

SW1H 9EX

Email: chiefinspector@icibi.gov.uk

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](#).

[Back to Contents](#)