

## **ARC and DCR comments on the EASO Country of Origin Information Report Pakistan Country Overview, August 2015**

20 November 2015

Asylum Research Consultancy (ARC) and the Dutch Council for Refugees (DCR) welcome the publication of the Country of Origin Information (COI) report: [Pakistan Country Overview, August 2015](#).

As our previous responses to EASO consultations and comments on EASO Work Plans have indicated, we are particularly interested in the EASO COI methodology and await the formal consultation on its proposed revision early next year.<sup>1</sup> With this in mind, we are pleased to note that the EASO COI report on Pakistan (from now on referred to as the EASO Pakistan report) does not 'draw conclusions' (as provided for in the COI Methodology report), or include distinct 'summary' or 'analysis' sections as for example the previous COI report on Afghanistan 'Insurgent strategies —intimidation and targeted violence against Afghans' (December 2012) did.

As active members of the Consultative Forum, we would have welcomed the opportunity to input into the Terms of Reference of the report or to have been able to provide the following comments in advance of the report's final publication.

The comments are based on an initial reading of the report, first making some general observations and recommendations and further focusing on Chapter 3. 'Human Rights Situation', and more in particular 3.4 'Situation of religious groups'.

### **General observations and recommendations**

#### **1. Title of the report**

The EASO Pakistan report is called a "Country Overview". Until now several types of EASO reports have been published: Country Focus (Eritrea), Country of Origin report (Afghanistan, Somalia, Chechnya, Nigeria) and Country Overview (Pakistan). It would be useful for the understanding of users to learn the differences between these types of reports, if any.

#### **2. Methodology**

Referring to the Terms of Reference, the methodology section states that:

Between 24 February and 6 March 2015, EASO collected input for the terms of reference from EU+ countries (3) and UNHCR. All input was considered and discussed and the terms of reference were

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<sup>1</sup> See [ARC and Dutch Council for Refugees \(DCR\), Comments on the EASO Country of Origin Information report methodology, November 2012](#)

finalised during a meeting in Croydon (UK) on 10 March 2015, to which all drafters and reviewers were invited.

It is welcomed that UNHCR is given the opportunity to provide input for the Terms of Reference. As stated in the introduction, as Consultative Forum members we would have welcomed to be invited to input into the Terms of Reference as well.

### **Observations on use of sources**

1. In the disclaimer section the EASO report states that:

The drafting of this report was finalised in May 2015. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this report. More information on the reference period for this report can be found in the methodology section of the introduction.

When reviewing sections 3.3 Situation of ethnic minorities and 3.4 Situation of religious groups we missed information from several notable reports available at the time, including:

- Minority Rights Group International, [‘Everything has shattered’ – rising levels of violence against Shi’a in Pakistan](#), 11 June 2014
- Minority Rights Group International, [Searching for Security: The Rising Marginalization of Religious Communities in Pakistan](#), 9 December 2014
- UK Home Office, [Country Information and Pakistan: Christians and Christian Converts](#), February 2015
- UK Home Office, [Country Information and Guidance; Pakistan: Shia Muslims](#), February 2015
- UK Home Office, [Country Information and Guidance; Pakistan: Ahmadis](#), 23 February 2015  
*Note that this source is included in the Bibliography section but never referenced in sections 3.3 Situation of ethnic minorities or 3.4 Situation of religious groups*
- UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), [UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Members of Religious Minorities from Pakistan](#), 14 May 2012

We will elaborate on the content of several of these reports in the section “Observations on content of section 3.4 ‘Situation of religious groups’ “ on page 4.

The additional information in the Methodology section further states:

The report presents information collected between 10 March and 4 May 2015. After this, some additional research was done in the review phase on selected topics only. A limited number of specialised paper-based and electronic sources were consulted within the time frame and the scope of the research.

Since the EASO report cites the US Department of State [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014, Pakistan](#), 25 June 2015 as source at references [698], [721], [727], [732], other useful reports published post May 2015 could have been included:

- ARC - Asylum Research Consultancy, [Pakistan Country Report](#), June 2015
- US Department of State, [Country Report on Terrorism 2014 - Chapter 2 - Pakistan](#), June 2015
- Jamestown Foundation, [Growing Islamic State Influence in Pakistan Fuels Sectarian Violence; Terrorism Monitor Volume: 13 Issue: 13](#), 26 June 2015

2. As UK Home Office since 2014 combines COI and policy (Country Information and Guidance), we would recommend that for a COI report such as the EASO Pakistan report only the information from the Country Information sections of the reports are used.

Section 3.4.6 Muslim of the EASO Pakistan report, however, states that:

According to the consulted sources, there are no laws or government policies that discriminate against Shias in Pakistan. Neither are there any legal restrictions on freedom of religion for Shias. There is little societal discrimination that would restrict Shias in their daily life (1063).

The footnote refers to information taken directly from the Guidance section of the UK Home Office report mentioned above. Note our previously published COI Methodology comments on this point: COI is not policy/ policy is not COI.<sup>2</sup>

3. It is suggested that when citing sources the page number of the original report be provided to improve user-friendliness. While the EASO report does indicate the page number of the source it cited on some references, on others it cites the source without indicating the page number. To illustrate, no page number for the reports used as reference is provided in the following section of the report:

### **3.4. Situation of religious minorities**

#### **[...] 3.4.4 Hindus**

[...]Of major concern for the Hindu community are the increasing reports of kidnapping of Hindu girls and women for forceful conversion to Islam and marriage to Muslim men or boys (947), especially in Sindh. While precise numbers are difficult to ascertain (948), some Hindu activists estimate there are 20 such cases every month in Karachi (949), and some estimates refer to 1 000 cases of conversion per year in Sindh (950).

(947) USCIRF, Policy Brief, Prisoners of Belief Individuals Jailed under Blasphemy Laws, March 2014; DFAT, Country Information Report Pakistan, 29 November 2013.

(948) HRCR, State of Human Rights in 2013, March 2014.

(949) The Hindu, Forced conversion of Hindu girls on the rise: Pak Hindu Council, 7 January 2014; USCIRF, 2013 Annual Report, 30 April 2013; Representatives of the National Commission of Justice and Peace, FFM interview conducted by BFA Staatendokumentation, 10 March 2013; Representatives of the Pakistan Interfaith League, FFM interview conducted by BFA Staatendokumentation, 11 March 2013.

(950) World Hindu News, Pakistan works to stop Hindu girls' forced marriages, 13 July 2014; Representatives of the National Commission of Justice and Peace, FFM interview conducted by BFA Staatendokumentation, 10 March 2013; Representatives of the Pakistan Interfaith League, FFM interview conducted by BFA Staatendokumentation, 11 March 2013.

4. Very little information is presented in the EASO report on Pakistan as direct quotes; inverted commas and indented text are hardly used. It is presumed that this is because the report heavily relies on summaries. It is considered better practice to directly cite source material where possible. Furthermore, as the report often summarises several reports in one sentence, whilst it is appreciated that this makes it

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<sup>2</sup> [ARC and Dutch Council for Refugees \(DCR\), Comments on the EASO Country of Origin Information report methodology, November 2012](#)

more user friendly and the report more succinct, it should be made clearer what information is EASO analysis, and what is a summary of COI.

### **Observations on content of section 3.4 'Situation of religious groups'**

1. Section 3.4.1 General Introduction of the EASO Pakistan report states that:

Reuters reported that 100 people were accused of blasphemy in the first seven months of 2014 (781). As of January 2015, HRW confirmed these figures (782).

The cited Human Rights Watch report doesn't confirm the figures advanced by Reuters. Instead it states with regards to victims of blasphemy charges that

Since 1990, at least 60 people have been murdered after being accused of blasphemy. At present, 17 people convicted of blasphemy are on death row; 19 others are serving life sentences.<sup>3</sup>

2. On section 3.4.1 General Introduction the EASO report states that:

In 2013 the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) said that 41 people had been charged under the Pakistan Penal Code's chapter on 'Offences Relating to Religion' - sections 295 to 298-C of the PPC Blasphemy and 'Anti-Ahmadiyya' laws. These included 13 Christians, 17 Ahmadis and nine Muslims, while the religion of two accused was not known. Eight of these - three Muslim, four Christians and one Ahmadi - were charged under Section 295-C for which the threat of capital punishment exists. For one accused under Section 298-C, the charge was extended to blasphemy during the trial (780). Reuters reported that 100 people were accused of blasphemy in the first seven months of 2014 (781). As of January 2015, HRW confirmed these figures (782).

Although the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan's [HRCP] report covering 2014 is referenced as a source on some sections of the EASO report relevant and recent information from it is in some cases left out. With regards to cases of people charged with blasphemy under section 285-C the HRCP report notes that:

A total of 12 cases were registered under section 295-C (blasphemy law) of the Pakistan Penal Code during the year.<sup>4</sup>

3. On section 3.4.1 General Introduction the EASO report states that:

Persons criticising blasphemy laws were reportedly subjected to threats from non-state actors. For example, a Christian lawyer, Pervez Aslam Chaudhry, known for defending and mostly winning blasphemy cases, was repeatedly threatened and attacked, until in 2011 he finally fled Pakistan (788). In 2011 two high-ranking politicians, the influential Governor of Punjab, Salman Taseer, and the Minister for Religious Minorities, Shahbaz Bhatti, were killed because they criticised the blasphemy law which implicated a Christian woman who had been sentenced to death.

No mention is made in the EASO report to more recent high profile cases of targeted attacks against opponents of blasphemy laws. Although this information could have been presented under a different

3 Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2015 - Pakistan](#), 29 January 2015

4 Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, [State of Human Rights in 2014](#), March 2015, p. 133

heading it is not included in the EASO report. The following reports could have been included to give a more complete picture of the situation.

#### Amnesty International in February 2015 reports

Abuse connected with the blasphemy laws occurred regularly during the year as demonstrated in several high-profile cases. Renowned human rights lawyer Rashid Rehman was shot dead in front of colleagues in his office in the city of Multan, Punjab province, on 7 May. Prior to his killing, Rashid Rehman had received regular death threats because of his legal representation of a university teacher, Junaid Hafeez, who had been arrested on charges of blasphemy. On 18 September Professor Muhammad Shakil Auj, a noted religious scholar and dean of Islamic Studies at Karachi University, was gunned down by unidentified assailants while travelling to a meeting. He had faced death threats and charges of blasphemy from rival religious scholars in the months prior to his killing.<sup>5</sup>

#### Human Rights Watch's annual report covering 2014 similarly states that

On May 7, unidentified gunmen killed Rashid Rehman, a renowned human rights lawyer, in apparent retaliation for representing people accused of blasphemy. At the time of his murder, Rehman was representing Junaid Hafeez, a university lecturer accused of blasphemy, and had received death threats. Hafeez's trial was ongoing at time of writing.<sup>6</sup>

#### The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan's [HRCP] report covering 2014 stated that

Be they rich or poor, marginalized or influential, blasphemy accused have little hope of getting a fair hearing. A blasphemy case was registered against Junaid Jamshed, a television personality, for making blasphemous remarks in one of his televised sermons. He released a video in which he apologized for his remarks and asked for forgiveness but in vain. But someone who had committed blasphemy could not be forgiven under Pakistan's blasphemy law. He fled the country and took refuge in London.<sup>7</sup>

4. It is considered that the information on recent attacks targeting Ahmadis presented under section 3.4.2 Ahmadiyya is insufficient. The EASO report states that

In July 2014, after an accusation of blasphemy against one Ahmadi, mob violence broke out in Gujranwala which targeted the whole community. The mob attacked, plundered and burnt Ahmadi houses. Three females including a girl and an infant died in the flames. Ahmadis claimed police did not come to their aid, though the police insisted they tried to stop the mob. It was the worst attack on the community since 2010, when simultaneous attacks on Ahmadi places of worship killed 86 people. Additional policemen were deployed in the area (840) and criminal cases were brought against 420 people (841).

Several sources note targeted attacks against Ahmadis in 2014:

#### The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan's [HRCP] report covering 2014 stated that

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5 Amnesty International, [Amnesty International Report 2014/15 - The State of the World's Human Rights - Pakistan](#), 25 February 2015

6 Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2015 - Pakistan](#), 29 January 2015

7 Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, [State of Human Rights in 2014](#), March 2015, p. 134

A total of 11 Ahmadis were killed in targeted attacks in 2014. On May 16, while Khalil Ahmad was in police custody for allegedly committing blasphemy, a man entered the police station and shot him. He died and the perpetrator was arrested by police. On May 26, Dr Mehdi Ali Qamar, a Canadian-American cardiologist who had come to Pakistan to serve his community, was gunned down by two unidentified motorcyclists while he was walking to a cemetery in Rabwah.<sup>8</sup>

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office similarly states in its annual report covering 2014 that

At least 11 Ahmadiyya were killed in 2014”.<sup>9</sup> A Dawn article dating April 2015 reports that “Eleven Pakistani members of the Ahmadi religious minority were murdered for their faith in 2014 and authorities failed to apprehend any of the killers, a report said Monday, highlighting growing intolerance toward the sect. The figure represents a rise on seven killings the year before, with the report blaming growing hate speech in conferences and the media.”<sup>10</sup>

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom noted in its annual report covering 2014 that

During 2014, individual Ahmadis continued to be murdered in religiously-motivated attacks. In May 2014, a Canadian-American Ahmadi doctor visiting Pakistan to do relief work was murdered in front of his family. In July, three Ahmadis – a grandmother and her two grandchildren – were killed in an arson attack by a mob. In December, a major Pakistani television station aired an interview with religious scholars who referred to Ahmadis as “enemies.” Days later, an Ahmadi was murdered; the community suspects motivation from the television broadcast.<sup>11</sup>

5. It is considered that the information included with regards to marriage registration of Sikhs under section 3.4.5 Sikhs is insufficient. The EASO reports states that

The Sikh community faces the same difficulties over the lack of a registration of marriages as the Hindu community (991).

Excerpts from sources included elsewhere in the EASO report could have been included here. For example under section 3.4.1 General Introduction the EASO report notes that

Marriages are usually performed and registered according to one’s religious group; however, no provision is made for the registration of Hindu and Sikh marriages. Consequently, women of these religious groups face problems with inheritance issues, accessing health services, voting, obtaining a passport and buying or selling property.

6. It is considered that the information on attacks targeting the Hazara ethnic group is insufficient. The EASO reports states that

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8 Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, [State of Human Rights in 2014](#), March 2015, p. 133

9 FCO - UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, [Human Rights and Democracy Report 2014 - Section XII: Human Rights in Countries of Concern - Pakistan](#), 12 March 2015

10 Dawn, [Eleven members of Ahmadi minority killed in 2014: report](#), 13 April 2015

11 US Commission on International Religious Freedom, [USCIRF: Annual Report 2015; 2015 Country Reports: Tier 1 CPCS recommended by USCIRF; Pakistan](#), 30 April 2015, p. 110

However, since they are the only community that are visibly distinguishable and almost exclusively Shia, they have borne the brunt of sectarian terrorist attacks in Pakistan in recent years with a big rise in such attacks in 2013. Sunni extremists killed more than 400 Shiite Hazara since the beginning of 2013 (1067).

Several sources note targeted attacks against Hazaras during 2013-2014:  
In an October 2013 article IRIN reported that

Being a member of an ethnic or religious minority in Pakistan brings with it inherent risks.<sup>12</sup>

Reporting on the situation of ethnic Hazaras the same source notes that:

The ethnic Hazara minority, comprising some 6,000-7,000 people according to its leaders, have also faced attacks. It is targeted both because it is an ethnic minority concentrated in certain parts of Quetta and speaking Farsi, and because nearly all Hazaras are Shia. "The Hazaras are targeted due to both these factors, and we have no protection," Abdul Qayyum Changezi, chairman of the Hazara Jarga representing the community, told IRIN. For months, the community has lived under siege with roads to predominantly Hazara areas blockaded, but this has not prevented bomb attacks such as the one in January this year [2013] that killed 96. Other attacks have taken place since then.<sup>13</sup>

Amnesty International's annual report covering 2014 similarly notes that

Dozens of ethnic Hazaras were killed in attacks in Quetta and other parts of Balochistan; the armed group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi claimed responsibility for many of these, saying they were because the Hazaras were Shi'a Muslims.<sup>14</sup>

The US Department of State International Religious Freedom report covering 2013 noted that:

There were continued attacks and killings of members of the Shia Muslim community that authorities failed to prevent or punish. According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, during the year 504 Shia were killed in sectarian violence across the country, while another 965 were injured. Terrorist attacks on ethnic Hazara Shias killed hundreds in Quetta during the year. On January 10, nearly 100 people were killed and another 121 were injured in twin bombing attacks in Quetta. The Shia community refused to bury the dead victims for four days until the government acceded to their demands for more security by dismissing the provincial government and imposing governor's rule in Balochistan. On February 16, a bomb attack in a Hazara Shia neighborhood in Quetta killed at least 89 people and injured nearly 200. Fifty people were killed and more than 135 were injured in the March 3 bombing of Karachi's Shia-majority neighborhood of Abbas Town.<sup>15</sup>

A December 2014 report by the Minority Rights Group International similarly stated that

A sectarian bomb attack in Quetta on February 2014 that targeted Hazara Shi'a and killed at least 84 people also provoked a peaceful protest.<sup>16</sup>

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12 IRIN, [Minorities under pressure in Pakistan](#), 17 October 2013

13 IRIN, [Minorities under pressure in Pakistan](#), 17 October 2013

14 Amnesty International, [Amnesty International Report 2014/15: Pakistan](#), 25 February 2015

15 US Department of State, [2013 International Religious Freedom Report - Pakistan](#), 28 July 2014

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) stated in an update on Pakistan dating January 2015 that

In October, six Hazaras, including a woman and a child, were killed by a suicide bomber in Hazara Town, Quetta. Jaish-ul-Islam later claimed responsibility for the attack. In the same month, eight Hazara men were killed at a market on the outskirts of Quetta. Lashkar-i-Jhangvi admitted to carrying out the second attack.<sup>17</sup>

The same source also noted in its annual report covering 2014 that

In January and June, suicide bombers killed Shia pilgrims in Balochistan, close to the Iranian border. Hazaras in Quetta continued to be targeted by militants throughout the year, including attacks in January and October, killing 40.<sup>18</sup>

Agence France Presse [AFP] stated in an October 2014 article that

At least 24 Hazara pilgrims were killed in June when their bus was targeted by suicide bombers. Two devastating bombings in Quetta targeting the city's Shiites killed nearly 200 people last year and were claimed by LeJ [Lashkar-e-Jhangvi], which has links to Al-Qaeda.<sup>19</sup>

Human Rights Watch reported that in 2014 that Lashkar-e-Jhangvi [LeJ]

continued attacks on Shia Hazaras in Balochistan. The government failed to successfully prosecute and imprison suspects, in part due to sympathy for the group within the security forces.<sup>20</sup>

Human Rights Watch reports in a June 2014 report on killings of Shia Hazaras in Balochistan that

Balochistan's civilian law enforcement authorities expressed to Human Rights Watch what they said was their helplessness and inability to deal with the issue of extremist attacks and sectarian militancy.<sup>21</sup>

Akbar Durrani, Balochistan's home secretary, told Human Rights Watch:

It is wrong to assume that the government and its law enforcement agencies have done nothing to counter sectarianism in this city and province. They have suffered tremendously in this ideological war. There have been several attacks on both the police and levies in which many personnel have lost their lives. It is also not true that we have not apprehended anyone involved in sectarian attacks. We have

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16 Minority Rights Group International, [Searching for Security: The Rising Marginalization of Religious Communities in Pakistan](#), 9 December 2014, p. 26

17 UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), [Pakistan - Country of Concern: latest update 31 December 2014](#), 21 January 2015

18 UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), [Human Rights and Democracy Report 2014 - Section XII, Human Rights in Countries of Concern - Pakistan](#), 12 March 2015

19 Agence France-Presse, [Pakistan rights body reports exodus from restive province](#), 15 October 2014

20 Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2015 - Pakistan](#), 29 January 2015

21 Human Rights Watch, ["We are the Walking Dead": Killings of Shia Hazaras in Balochistan, Pakistan](#), 30 June 2014, p.47

arrested many but we have been unable to prosecute due to lack of evidence. We cannot proceed simply on the basis of suspicion. We need evidence, and sadly this is very hard to obtain.<sup>22</sup>

7. It is considered that on section 3.4.6 Muslim sects the information presented with regards to the clashes between Sunni and Shia communities in Pakistan is insufficient. The EASO report notes that:

Occasionally violent clashes between Sunni and Shia communities arise. Attacks against the Shia community by sectarian Sunni extremist groups, some with a clear anti-Shia stance, have caused numerous casualties (1064). Anti-Shia groups have held hate campaigns against Shias, branding them as infidels and even calling for their murder (1065).

Several sources document targeted attacks against the Shia community in Pakistan:

A 2014 report by the Minority Rights Group International notes with regards to targeted attacks on Shia that:

Attacks by extremist groups against Pakistan's Shi'a have been on the increase since the 1980s, but targeted killings reached unprecedented levels in 2013, with some 700 Shi'a murdered. Many of those killed were Hazara Shi'a in the province of Baluchistan. The death toll exceeded the previous high of 2012, described by Human Rights Watch as 'the bloodiest year for Shias in living memory.'

The recent attacks have mostly been carried out by three militant groups - Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) and the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). All three follow an extremist Sunni Islamic ideology under which the Shi'a are deemed heretics and apostates, punishable by death. These groups are also engaged in anti-Shi'a propaganda and hate speech at every level of Pakistani society.<sup>23</sup>

In a report dating June 2014 Human Rights Watch noted with regards to targeted attacks against Shia that:

In recent years, Pakistan's Shia community, which constitutes some 20 percent of the country's overwhelmingly Muslim population, has been the target of an alarming and unprecedented escalation in sectarian violence. Armed Sunni militants have conducted numerous shootings and bombings across Pakistan, killing thousands of Shia citizens.

Militants have targeted Shia police officers, bureaucrats, and a judge, Zulfiqar Naqvi, who was killed by motorcycle-riding assassins in Quetta on August 30, 2012. Human Rights Watch recorded at least 450 killings of Shia in 2012, the community's bloodiest year; at least another 400 Shia were killed in 2013. While sporadic sectarian violence between Sunni and Shia militant groups has long persisted in Pakistan, attacks in recent years have been overwhelmingly one-sided and primarily targeted ordinary Shia going about their daily lives.<sup>24</sup>

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom report covering 2014 noted that

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22 Human Rights Watch, ["We are the Walking Dead": Killings of Shia Hazaras in Balochistan, Pakistan](#), 30 June 2014, p.47

23 Minority Rights Group International, ["Everything has shattered" - rising levels of violence against Shi'a in Pakistan](#), 11 June 2014, p. 1

24 Human Rights Watch, ["We are the Walking Dead": Killings of Shia Hazaras in Balochistan, Pakistan](#), 30 June 2014, p. 1

During 2014, militants and terrorist organizations continued to target Shi'a processions and mosques, as well as social gathering places, with impunity. Police, if present, have failed to stop attackers before people are killed, and the government has not cracked down on the groups that repeatedly target Shi'a Muslims.<sup>25</sup>

BBC News and the South Asia Terrorism Portal each provide timelines for Pakistan regarding major violent incidents, which have been combined here:

- January-February: "Taliban attack Shia mosques in Sindh and Peshawar in two incidents, killing nearly 80 people and injuring dozens more".<sup>26</sup>

- 9th January: [...] "Eight persons were killed and another 25 were wounded in a bomb blast inside the Aun Muhammad Rizvi Imambargah in the Chittian Hattian locality of Rawalpindi city in Punjab. The blast occurred when prayers were in progress at the Imambargah [Shia place of commemoration]".<sup>27</sup> According to the same source, "Ehsanullah Ehsan, 'spokesperson' for TTP's Jama'at-ul-Ahrar (JuA) faction, claimed responsibility for the attack and vowed "to continue such attacks".<sup>28</sup>

- 30th January: [...] "At least 61 Shias were killed and more than 50 were injured in a bomb attack on Karbala-e-Moalla Imambargah in the Lakhidar area of Shikarpur District in Sindh [...] Ahmed Marwat of Jundullah, declared, "We claim responsibility for attack on Shias in Shikarpur very happily. Our target was the Shia community... They are our enemies".<sup>29</sup>

- 13th February: [...] "At least 22 Shias were killed and another 50 were injured when a three member suicide squad attacked an Imambargah in the Phase-5 locality of the Hayatabad area in Peshawar, the provincial capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). As the entrance of the Imambargah is heavily guarded, the terrorists, dressed in Police uniforms, entered the Imambargah from another side of the mosque, cutting through barbed wire [...] Claiming responsibility for the attack, TTP [Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan] 'spokesperson' Muhammad Khorasani declared, "It is the revenge of Dr. Usman who was hanged for attack on the Army's headquarters." Mohammed Aqeel aka Dr. Usman was among the two convicted terrorists who were hanged at the Faisalabad District Jail in the night of December 19, 2014".<sup>30</sup>

- 18th February: [...] "At least four Shias were killed and another six were injured in a suicide attack during evening prayers at a mosque inside Qasr-e-Sakina Imambargah (Shia place of worship) located on Kurri Road in the New Shakrial area of Rawalpindi District in Punjab [...] Fahad Marwat, a 'spokesman' of Jundullah, a splinter group of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), claiming responsibility for the attack, declared that the blast was in a reaction to the ongoing operation Zarb-e-Azb [Sword of the Prophet] in the North Waziristan Agency of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)".<sup>31</sup>

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25 US Commission on International Religious Freedom, [USCIRF: Annual Report 2015: 2015 Country Reports: Tier 1 CPCS recommended by USCIRF: Pakistan](#), 30 April 2015, p. 110

26 BBC News, [Pakistan profile – Timeline](#), 13 February 2015

27 South Asia Terrorism Portal, [Pakistan Assessment 2015](#), Undated, Date accessed 8 April 2015

28 South Asia Terrorism Portal, [Pakistan Assessment 2015](#), Undated, Date accessed 8 April 2015

29 South Asia Terrorism Portal, [Pakistan Assessment 2015](#), Undated, Date accessed 8 April 2015

30 South Asia Terrorism Portal, [Pakistan Assessment 2015](#), Undated, Date accessed 8 April 2015

31 South Asia Terrorism Portal, [Pakistan Assessment 2015](#), Undated, Date accessed 8 April 2015