



Pakistan - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Monday 18 June 2018

Treatment of Hazara in Balochistan including available state protection

A publication issued in March 2017 by the *UNHCR* notes that:

“Shi’ites are reported to be the largest Muslim minority group in Pakistan: they comprise between approximately 15 to 25 per cent of Pakistan's population and include a number of different ethnic groups...There are reportedly an estimated 650,000 to 900,000 Hazara Shi’ites in Pakistan, of whom approximately 500,000 are based in Quetta in Balochistan...While Shi’ite individuals are not subject to many of the provisions of the formal legal discriminatory framework which affects the non-Muslim religious groups, such as Ahmadis, they are reportedly the main target of sectarian attacks...The number of blasphemy allegations made against Shi’ites has also reportedly "increased exponentially" during the period from 2012 to 2015 (see also Section III.B, Blasphemy Laws)...Extremist Sunni militant groups...reportedly view the Shi’ites as "heretics", "infidels" and "apostates" who should be punished with death...Shi’ites are reported to be subject to violent sectarian attacks by such militant groups, which are reportedly able to act with impunity...Hazara Shi’ites are reported to be disproportionately vulnerable due to their visibility; this vulnerability is reflected in the percentage of Hazaras among Shi’ite victims of sectarian violence and attacks...As a consequence, Hazara Shi’ites in particular report living in constant fear...threats and risk of attacks reportedly impose severe restrictions on their freedom of movement and consequently their access to livelihoods and education...” (UNHCR (17 March 2017) *Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Members of Religious Minorities from Pakistan*, p.25).

A document issued in September 2017 by the *Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia* notes that:

“The fact that Hazaras in Pakistan tend to live in isolated communities reduces the opportunities for attacks by sectarian militants. The high levels of security maintained by Hazara communities and the improvement in the general security situation in Pakistan means that successful attacks against Hazaras have been rare in recent years. Nonetheless, attacks do occur” (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia (1 September 2017) *DFAT Country Information Report – Pakistan*, p.14).

This document also states that:

“The government provides some security to Hazara enclaves. The Frontier Corps maintains some checkpoints on roads leading into Hazara Town in Quetta. However, the Hazara community rather than the security forces provide much of the security in Hazara-dominated areas, including in Hazara Town and Mariabad in Quetta. Credible sources told DFAT that much of the improvement in the security situation for Hazaras has been due to increased security measures taken by the community to protect itself, rather than an increase in support from security forces or a change in intent from militant groups. Nonetheless, Hazaras across Pakistan, including in large cities such as Karachi, have benefitted from the improved security situation in recent years” (ibid, p.15).

A document published in December 2017 by *Voice of America* states that:

“After several particularly heinous attacks in 2013, the government started providing Hazaras extra protection. A paramilitary force called the Frontier Corps set up check posts at main entrances to Hazara areas. Anyone going inside is now stopped, their identity documents checked. Peripheral entrances are blocked by thick walls. While these measures have helped stem attacks on Hazaras, they have also stifled the community's social and economic life. The designated safe areas for Hazaras mean the rest of the city is inherently unsafe for them” (Voice of America (5 December 2017) *Protected but Stifled, a Pakistani Minority Feels Imprisoned in its Own Community*).

In January 2018 the *Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Study* released a report on events of 2017 including commentary on targeted killings, stating that:

“Shia Hazara community in Balochistan also remained one of the main targets of such attacks” (Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Study (23 January 2018) *Pakistan: Security Assessment 2017 [Excerpt]*, p.10).

A report released in January 2018 by the *Pak Institute for Peace Studies* reviewing events of 2017 states that:

“The highest number of incidents of sectarian violence for any one region of Pakistan was recorded in Balochistan, where 7 such incidents killed 17 people, mostly Hazara Shias, and injured 11 others” (Pak Institute for Peace Studies (7 January 2018) *Security Report 2017*, p.61).

A report released in April 2018 commenting on events of 2017 by the *Human Rights Commission of Pakistan* points out that:

“The ethnic Shia Hazara community in Balochistan remains in the crosshairs of militant religious groups. Approximately 14 members were killed during the year” (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (16 April 2018) *State of Human Rights in 2017 [Chapter III Fundamental freedoms]*, p.7).

This document also states that:

“Hazaras in Balochistan have faced the most horrendous faith-based violence” (ibid, p.9).

It is also noted in this document that:

“The community of Hazaras has been devastated by a series of targeted killings and suicide bombings with security agencies largely unable to protect them. Under relentless assault in Pakistan, the Hazaras have very little choice other than to flee as refugees. They face desperation and danger in doing so but, according to community elders, 70,000 Hazaras have moved out of Quetta” (ibid, p.10).

In April 2018 the *United States Commission on International Religious Freedom* notes that:

“While other ethnic groups in Pakistan are also Shi'a Muslims, the Hazaras have a distinct appearance and have established their own neighborhoods and enclaves

around the country. These two factors make Hazaras prime targets for sectarian extremist groups targeting Shi'a Muslims. Violent sectarian groups have perpetrated massive attacks on Hazara neighborhoods in places like Quetta despite the additional security provided by the government for those neighborhoods since 2013" (United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (25 April 2018) *United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2018: Pakistan*, pp.4-5).

A report issued in May 2018 by the *United States Department of State* points out that:

"Attacks against Shia members of the minority Hazara ethnic group increased during the year" (United States Department of State (29 May 2018) *2017 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan*, p.2).

In February 2018 a document released by the *European Asylum Support Office* notes that:

"...the Hazara population in Balochistan is under attack and there are both sectarian and ethnic types of violence" (European Asylum Support Office (27 February 2018) *EASO COI Meeting Report Pakistan October 2017*, p.15).

This document also points out that the:

"...Hazara Shia community is the most vulnerable community in Pakistan" (ibid, p.45).

Dawn in March 2018 states in a report that:

"A report released by National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) on Monday stated that 509 members of Hazara community were killed and 627 injured in various incidents of terrorism in Quetta during the last five years... Targeted killings, suicide attacks, and bomb blasts have inflicted harm to daily life, education, and business activities of ethnic Hazara community members in Quetta, read the NCHR report... The report, however, mentions that 19 platoons of Frontier Corps were deployed at Marri Abad and Hazara Town for the protection of Hazara community" (Dawn (20 March 2018) *509 Hazaras killed in terror-related incidents during last five years in Quetta: NCHR report*).

In April 2018 the *Human Rights Commission of Pakistan* states in a report that:

"The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has strongly condemned the surge in deadly attacks in Quetta during the current month of April. In yesterday's incident, six policemen were killed in a suicide attack on a police van, which occurred in tandem with another attack outside a Frontier Corps check-post that left eight personnel injured. In a statement issued today, HRCP has taken 'grave notice of the alarming spike in violence that has shot through Quetta since the beginning of April', adding that, 'apart from yesterday's brazen attack on security forces, members of the Christian and Shia Hazara communities have borne the brunt of a spate of suspected targeted killings.' On 1 April, a Shia Hazara was killed and another injured when unidentified gunmen opened fire on their car. On 15 April, four Christians travelling in a rickshaw were killed in a firing incident near a church in the city. Three days later, on 18 April, a Shia Hazara shopkeeper was killed in a drive-by shooting, which police suspect was a targeted killing. On 22 April, another two Shia Hazara men were killed

and a third injured in a firing incident in Quetta's Western Bypass area. HRCP remains 'extremely concerned over the continuing violence in Quetta—much of which systematically targets members of religious minorities—and the lack of an effective and sustained response from the state' (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (25 April 2018) *Spike in violence in Quetta must stop*).

In April 2018 *Reuters* points out that:

“Hazaras are a mainly Shi’ite Muslim community and are frequently targeted by Taliban, Islamic State, and other Sunni Muslim militant groups for their religious beliefs in both Pakistan and neighboring Afghanistan. Hundreds of Hazaras fled to Pakistan during decades of conflict in Afghanistan and nearly half a million now live in and around Quetta” (Reuters (28 April 2018) *Two killed in sectarian attack in southwest Pakistan: police*)

In April 2018 the *Express Tribune* states that:

“A day after two Hazara men were shot dead at Jamaluddin Afghani Road, the community members blocked the western bypass in the Balochistan capital, demanding that the terrorists behind the attacks be brought to book at the earliest...Two Hazara tribesmen, sitting inside their electronic shop, were gunned down by unidentified terrorists on Saturday morning. The incident sparked anger among the community being targeted by the sectarian groups for over a decade” (Express Tribune (29 April 2018) *Hazaras protest against ‘targeted killings’ of community members*).

In April 2018 *Human Rights Watch* states:

“Unidentified assailants killed shopkeepers Jaffar and Muhammad Ali on Saturday in Quetta, Pakistan, apparently because they belonged to the Hazara community. This was the fourth attack this April on the Hazara, a Shia Muslim minority. Past perpetrators have been members of armed militant groups that have waged a bloody onslaught against the Hazara for more than a decade, while Pakistan’s government has failed both to protect the community or hold those responsible to account” (Human Rights Watch (30 April 2018) *Pakistan’s Hazara Community Under Attack*).

This document also states that:

“The roughly half million Hazara living in Balochistan province are particularly vulnerable, because of their distinctive East Asian ethnic features as well as Shia religious affiliation. Hazara participating in religious processions, praying in mosques, or congregating in markets have been targeted by bombers and gunmen. They have been hounded into virtual ghettoization in Quetta’s two Hazara neighborhoods by authorities on the pretext of security. Hazara residents say the unrelenting attacks and security measures have cut them off from the city, forcing them to sell businesses and pull children out of schools” (ibid).

In May 2018 *Deutsche Welle* states in a report that:

“The Hazaras belong to the minority Shiite Islamic sect and live predominantly in central Afghanistan, western and northern Pakistan and parts of Iran. They make up the third largest ethnic community in Afghanistan. For the past few years, Sunni militant extremists in Pakistan and Afghanistan with links to al Qaeda, the so-called "Islamic State" (IS) and the Taliban have intensified their attacks on Hazaras, whom

they do not recognize as Muslims” (Deutsche Welle (2 May 2018) *Pakistan's Hazara standoff: why did the army mediate?*).

A document produced by *Voice of America* in May 2018 notes that:

“Thousands of Hazaras have been killed in bomb blasts or shootings over the last two decades. Sunni militant groups have taken responsibility for most of those incidents. In most of the attacks, the assailants managed to escape. The Hazaras reside primarily in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran. In Pakistan, Shi'ites are a regular target of Sunni militant groups. Hazaras seem to bear the brunt of that violence since their distinctive facial features, a mixture of Mongolian and Central Asian ancestry, make them easily identifiable. In addition, many of them live in two large clusters in Quetta and have limited routes out of their communities, making attacks easier to plan. Over time, the government tried to protect their main communities in Quetta, the capital of the restive Balochistan province, by putting walls around their neighborhoods guarded at the entrance by Frontier Constabulary, a paramilitary force. Hazaras complain that their neighborhoods have turned into large prisons, where they are free to move about as long as they do not step outside. If they do, to conduct business or pursue their education, they risk death” (Voice of America (1 May 2018) *Pakistan's Shi'ite Hazara on Hunger Strike to Protest Targeted Killings*).

Voice of America in May 2018 notes that:

“Hazaras are largely based in and around Quetta, Balochistan's capital. In the 19th century, the ancestors of Quetta's Hazaras sought refuge in the area to escape persecution and poverty in central Afghanistan...Because of insecurity and continued attacks against the minority group, thousands of Hazaras have left Pakistan in recent years” (Voice of America (24 May 2018) *Pakistani Senate Looks Into Concerns of Hazara Minority*).

A document issued in May 2018 by the *South Asia Terrorism Portal* notes that:

“More than 3,000 Hazaras killed since September 11, 2011...” (South Asia Terrorism Portal (28 May 2018) *More than 3,000 Hazaras killed since September 11, 2011, activist Jalila Haider informs Senate Functional Committee on Human Rights*).

In June 2018 *Minorities Rights Group International* notes that:

“At the same time, Shi'a Hazara living in the provincial capital, Quetta, remain the target of repeated attacks by extremist groups” (Minority Rights Group International (13 June 2018) *Peoples under Threat 2018*, p.7).

A document issued in June 2018 by *Minority Rights Group International* states that:

“The situation for Hazaras in Quetta is now particularly serious. Because of their clearly identifiable features, it is dangerous for them to travel out of their neighbourhoods. In addition to the high-profile attacks that reach the headlines, there are frequent incidents of shootings and other attacks against individuals or groups of Hazaras in Quetta” (Minority Rights Group International (14 June 2018) *Pakistan - Shi'a and Hazaras*).

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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