

# Briefing Notes Summary

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Pakistan – July to December 2024

31 December 2024

**01 July 2024**

**Pakistani government launches second phase of repatriation of Afghan nationals**

According to media reports, the Pakistani government launched the second phase of the "Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan" on 30.06.24. This phase is said to affect around 800,000 Afghans who held Afghan Citizenship Cards (ACC) issued by Pakistan. Already at the beginning of April 2024, the local interior minister of Sindh province had announced that all ACCs had been cancelled and 67,000 Afghan nationals would be deported. On 30.06.24, also the so-called Proof of Registration Cards (PoR) expired nationwide for approx. 1.3 million Afghan nationals. This group is to be repatriated in the plan's third phase. So far, around 500,000 Afghan nationals have left the country during the first phase.<sup>1</sup>

**08 July 2024**

**Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Former senator killed in bomb attack**

According to media reports of 03.07.24, former senator Hidayatullah Khan was killed by a remotely detonated bomb during an election campaign tour in the Bajaur district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (around 45 kilometres from the Afghan border). A government official confirmed the use of an improvised explosive device, which also killed two of Khan's companions and two policemen.<sup>2</sup>

**15 July 2024**

**Partial temporary halt to the repatriation of Afghan nationals**

On 10.07.24, following a three-day visit by the UNHCR to Islamabad, the Pakistani government said that it was prepared to extend the Proof of Registration (PoR) cards which had expired on 30.06.24 for another year for more than 1.3 million Afghan nationals. It was clarified that the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan remains in force (cf. BN of 01.07.24). Specifically, persons residing in Pakistan with an (expired) Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) and those without residence papers are still at risk of being forcibly returned to their home country. In addition, according to media reports from 11.07.24, at least 44,000 Afghans in Pakistan are waiting to be resettled in Western countries.<sup>3</sup>

**Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Protest against planned military offensive; security situation**

On 05.07.24, peace protests took place in the Swat Valley and in the tribal district of Orakzai. They were triggered by the plans for the military operation "Resolve For Stability" to contain the extremist threat in the region presented by the Pakistani federal government on 22.06.24. The operation has not yet started. Previous military operations

along the Afghan border in the 2010s already led to the displacement of millions of people and significantly impacted the lives of the ethnic Pashtuns who predominantly live there.

On 05.07.24, at least three people were killed and eight others, including two police officers, were injured in an attack by unknown perpetrators in the district of Mardan.<sup>4</sup>

## 22 July 2024

### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Security situation**

On 15.07.24, at least four soldiers were killed and 50 others injured in an explosion and subsequent firefight at a military barracks in the city of Bannu, according to media reports. Initially, a suicide bomber detonated an explosives-laden vehicle on the outer wall of the barracks; armed fighters then opened fire. A group called Jaish-e Fursan-e Muhammad claimed responsibility for the attack in a message to the media. The authenticity and existence of this group could not be independently confirmed. All five attackers were killed.

On 19.07.24 shots were fired at a protest in the district of Bannu and triggered mass panic. According to the local hospital, one person was killed and 27 were injured. According to further media reports, up to three people were killed. It remains unclear whether the shots were fired by the military. In view of the unrest, the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has cut mobile phone and internet connections in the district of Bannu.

On 22.07.24, two civilians were killed and four others, including a policeman, were injured in South Waziristan by a remotely detonated explosive device.

On 22.07.24, a police officer was killed and two others seriously injured in a grenade attack on a checkpoint at the archaeological site of Takht-i-Bahi.<sup>5</sup>

## 29 July 2024

### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Feud between Sunni and Shiite tribes in Kurram district**

At least 35 people were killed and more than 160 injured in a feud between Sunni and Shiite tribes triggered over land disputes on 24.07.24 and lasting several days in Kurram district, the authorities announced on 28.07.24. The clashes began in the Boshera region and spread to neighbouring towns and villages. Public facilities remained closed and mobile internet in the region was switched off.<sup>6</sup>

## 05 August 2024

### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Tribal feud in Kurram district claims more victims**

The death toll in tribal clashes in the Kurram district has risen to 49 people (cf. BN of 29.07.24). More than 200 people were injured in the armed conflict that continued for several days. The provincial government and the local security authorities, which have been criticised ever since, were incapable of ending the conflict and restoring public order until 30.07.24. The clashes between Sunni and Shiite tribes from Boshera and Mali Khel broke out on 24.07.24 over an old land dispute.<sup>7</sup>

### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Honour killings; KPCSW demands closure of legal loopholes**

In view of the rising number of honour killings in the region, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women (KPCSW) pointed out on 01.08.24 that such killings remained virtually unpunished due to legal loopholes, as the perpetrators could not be convicted in most cases.

On 30.07.24, a minor boy and a woman were killed and her daughter was injured in a remote village in the Khanpur region. According to media reports, three people opened fire on the group. It is assumed that the double murder was caused by marital disputes.

On 30.07.24, a woman was shot dead in the district of Lakki Marwat. Nothing is known about the background to the crime.<sup>8</sup>

### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Security situation**

The authorities announced on 30.07.24 that a man was killed in Dera Ismail Khan following an argument in the Mandharan Kalan area, and that thereafter his brother was abducted by gunmen. A minor girl died when unidentified men shot at the vehicle she was travelling in with her injured mother on the Daraban Road near Kulachi Mor.

On 31.07.24, two policemen and a civilian were killed in a night attack on a check post in the Landi Kotal area of Khyber district. Other people were injured. According to officials, an unknown number of armed militants opened fire on a security check post on the Torkham Highway near a military barracks.<sup>9</sup>

### **Balochistan: Attacks on security forces in Pishin district**

On the night of 31.07.24, unknown perpetrators attacked a security check point with automatic weapons in the Milizai region of Pishin district. Two security personnel were killed. A few hours later, armed men on motorbikes attacked a traffic policeman on duty in the Jan Adha area of the busy Pishin Bazaar. He escaped with injuries.<sup>10</sup>

### **Anti-terrorism authority NACTA categorises Hafiz Gul Bahadur Group and Majid Brigade as terrorists**

On 31.07.24, the Pakistani counter-terrorism authority NACTA added the Hafiz Gul Bahadur Group and the Majid Brigade to its list of terrorist organisations. The Hafiz Gul Bahadur group is active in the tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Following an agreement in 2006, the group ceased its attacks on the Pakistani government, but resumed its attacks from Afghanistan, where the group is said to have thousands of allies, according to the Pakistani Foreign Ministry. The Majid Brigade is the special forces unit of the Baloch Liberation Army, an ethnic Baloch militant group that has recently stepped up its attacks on Pakistani military bases and Chinese nationals in Balochistan.<sup>11</sup>

## **12 August 2024**

### **Demonstration for the rights of the Baloch ethnic group in Karachi**

On 02.08.24, members of the Baloch ethnic group demanded information about missing relatives at a protest in Karachi (Sindh province) which ended with violent clashes between protesters and security forces. According to human rights groups, the disappearance of people from the Baloch ethnic group is due to Pakistani secret services, which are leaving the families in the dark about the whereabouts of their relatives. Also, state discrimination against the ethnic group, particularly by the security forces, was stressed.<sup>12</sup>

### **Demonstration by transgender people in Peshawar**

On 09.08.24, transgender people called for more protection against attacks at a protest in Peshawar (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province). With the slogan "Arrest the blackmailers!" they referred to gangs that kidnap transgender people to extort ransom money. Transgender identity is legally recognised in Pakistan; however, acts of violence against transgender people often go unpunished.<sup>13</sup>

### **Attacks on army posts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa**

On 09.08.24, gunmen attacked three army posts in the Tirah Valley on the border with Afghanistan. According to the military, three soldiers and four of the attackers were killed in fierce firefights. No further details were released. The Gul Bahadur group, a faction of the Pakistani Taliban, claimed responsibility for the attacks.<sup>14</sup>

## **19 August 2024**

### **Punjab: Member of the Ahmadiyya community shot dead**

On 27.07.24, according to media reports, a member of the Ahmadiyya community in Lala Musa in the district of Gujrat in Punjab province was shot dead by unknown perpetrators in his doctor's surgery. Ever since the Supreme Court released an Ahmadi on bail in a blasphemy trial in February 2024, hostile campaigns against the religious minority have been on the rise. Representatives of the community complain that the government is doing little to combat the hostile climate created against them.<sup>15</sup>

### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Security situation**

According to a spokesperson for the Afghan Taliban government, three Afghan civilians, a woman and two children, were killed by shots fired by Pakistani security forces near the Torkham border crossing on 12.08.24. The Pakistani forces had opened fire on Afghan security forces. The Pakistani government did not comment on the incident.

On 16.08.24, five people, including two soldiers, were injured in an explosion near Peshawar and a police vehicle was damaged. No one claimed responsibility for the attack. Six people were arrested in connection with the incident. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, recently experienced a spate of deadly attacks, some of which have been claimed by the Pakistani Taliban and their affiliated groups.<sup>16</sup>

## **26 August 2024**

### **Punjab/Sindh: Members of criminal gang attack security forces**

On 22.08.24, members of a criminal gang armed with bazookas and rifles attacked two police vehicles in the border area between the provinces of Punjab and Sindh. Eleven law enforcement officers were killed and ten others injured. The region is considered a restricted area for civilians and is hardly controlled by the law enforcement authorities. In a report for 2022, the independent NGO Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, identified at least 300 cases of kidnappings for ransom. Influential local politicians and landowners are suspected to be behind the gangs.<sup>17</sup>

### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Security situation**

According to the military, five armed fighters were killed and four others injured in a firefight in the tribal district of Bajaur on 19.08.24. Three soldiers involved were also killed.<sup>18</sup>

### **Nationwide slowdown of internet connections**

Millions of internet users have been complaining about slow internet connections and problems accessing social media for weeks. They have also been unable to send emails or use mobile messaging services. The Pakistani government has rejected accusations that it is building a Chinese-style national internet firewall to better control online activities and delete dissenting opinions. Faulty submarine cables are blamed for the nationwide internet slowdown. Internet speed has dropped by 30-40%, which not only negatively impacts private users, but also has adverse economic consequences.<sup>19</sup>

### **Floods in southern and northern parts of the country**

As a result of heavy rainfall, especially in southern and northern parts of the country, more than 200 people lost their lives since July 2024 as of 19.08.24.<sup>20</sup>

## **02 September 2024**

### **Ban on passport issuance after applying for asylum abroad lifted**

The government's decision of 05.06.24, announced by circular notification, that no passports may be issued to Pakistani nationals after they applied for asylum abroad was revoked with immediate effect at a high-level ministerial meeting at the end of July 2024, according to various media reports. "It was decided to revoke this decision with immediate effect and withdraw the circular dated 05.06.24," reads an official statement.<sup>21</sup>

### **Several armed attacks in Balochistan; strengthening of the BLA**

On 26.08.24, more than 70 people were killed in several coordinated attacks, according to repeatedly updated media reports. Suspected Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) militants damaged a railway bridge, attacked police and military posts and vehicles on a major highway. In the most serious incident, a group of armed militants killed 23 bus passengers in Musakhail district by blocking the road, forcing the passengers to leave the bus and shooting the victims after checking their identity documents. Before leaving the scene, they set fire to several vehicles. In a statement to AFP news agency, the BLA claimed that it had launched an operation "on major highways across Balochistan" and emphasised that it was exclusively targeting security forces. The Pakistani army's public relations

department announced on 26.08.24 that ten soldiers, four policemen and a total of 21 militants had been killed; there has been no independent confirmation of these figures to date.

According to recent estimates, the BLA has developed into a well-organised and powerful fighting unit in recent years. It is suspected that the BLA has provided itself with weapons and military equipment following the withdrawal of US and international troops from Afghanistan in 2021. Tactically, the non-religiously motivated BLA has adopted attack techniques from jihadist groups, including suicide attacks, attacks with homemade explosive devices and coordinated attacks with multiple attackers. The Majeed Brigade, which also carries out suicide attacks, is suspected of being behind complex attacks. In 2022, a woman executed a suicide attack for the BLA for the first time.

The province of Balochistan has long been a centre of unrest. Ethnic Baloch separatist groups stage attacks, primarily on security forces. They demand independence from the central government in Islamabad and accuse it of exploiting natural resources. In response, security forces sometimes take harsh action against members of the Baloch ethnic group.<sup>22</sup>

## 09 September 2024

### **Protests for the release of former Prime Minister Imran Khan in Islamabad**

On 08.09.24, thousands of supporters of the opposition party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf rallied in Islamabad for the release of former Prime Minister Imran Khan, who has been imprisoned since August 2023. The main rival of incumbent Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif remains a popular figure despite a series of criminal proceedings pending against him. Khan's first brief arrest on 09.05.23 triggered mass protests and attacks on military installations.

On 02.09.24, the government introduced a bill to regulate assemblies. The Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Bill 2024 is intended to authorise the authorities in the capital Islamabad to regulate and, if necessary, ban public gatherings and rallies.<sup>23</sup>

### **Chairman of the Balochistan Nationalist Party resigns from parliament**

On 03.09.24, the chairman of the Balochistan Nationalist Party announced his resignation as a member of the National Assembly on social media. At a subsequent press conference in Islamabad, he explained that he could not serve his ethnic group as a member of parliament and thus there was no longer any reason for him to remain in parliament. The province of Balochistan, which borders Afghanistan and Iran, is home to the ethnic minority of the same name in Pakistan. The region has been the scene of uprisings and repression by the army for years. The militant Balochistan Liberation Army has been fighting the Pakistani state for decades and stages attacks mainly against government troops.<sup>24</sup>

### **Military publishes data on counter-terrorism operations in 2024**

On 05.09.24, the Pakistani army in Rawalpindi announced that it had carried out 32,173 counter-terrorism operations so far in 2024, in which 193 military personnel had been killed. In August 2024, a total of 4,021 operations were completed in which 90 suspected militants were killed. On average, there were 130 operations per day, the army said. Terrorist groups were not specifically named but it was said that "foreign elements" were responsible for training the fighters involved in the attacks.<sup>25</sup>

## 16 September 2024

### **Arrests after protests for the release of former Prime Minister Imran Khan**

On 10.09.24, more than two dozen people were arrested as a response to the protests for the release of imprisoned former Prime Minister Imran Khan (cf. BN of 09.09.24). Nine members of parliament and high-ranking members of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party founded by Khan, were among those arrested.<sup>26</sup>

### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Security situation; strengthening of the TTP**

On 09.09.24, Afghan Taliban and Pakistani security forces exchanged fire in the border areas of the districts of Kurram and Khost in response to violent clashes there, which, according to media reports, had claimed numerous victims. This was triggered by an attempt to set up a security post on the Afghan side, which Pakistani troops tried

to prevent. The Pakistani government insists on compliance with mutual agreements that rule out the erection of new security posts on either side of the border.

The Taliban-led Afghan government has repeatedly denied accusations by the Pakistani government that it is harbouring armed fighters linked to the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP) which carry out cross-border attacks in Pakistan.

According to media reports, the TTP has gained a foothold in some areas on the Afghan border and exercises de facto control in the districts of South Waziristan and Lakki Marwat, for example. Freedom and women's rights are said to have been restricted in the areas concerned; murders, kidnappings, extortion and harassment are reported as well. The TTP is said to mainly exercise its parallel rule at night, when the state security forces retreat to their positions and bases.

On 09.09.24, six Pakistani police officers guarding a polio vaccination team and three other people were injured when their vehicle hit a landmine.<sup>27</sup>

## 23 September 2024

### **IS attack in Balochistan**

According to media reports of 16.09.24, the jihadist Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for a bomb attack in which two police officers were killed. IS claimed to have detonated an explosive device targeting a Pakistani police vehicle in the city of Kuchlak near Quetta, the capital of Balochistan. According to the Pakistani authorities, two security personnel were killed and two others injured in the attack on a main road. The incident is a sign of the increasing co-operation between militant Islamist and separatist groups, which have been attacking security forces for years. The separatist Balochistan Liberation Army has already claimed responsibility for similar attacks in the past.<sup>28</sup>

### **Security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa**

On the night of 20.09.24, heavily armed fighters attacked an army checkpoint in the tribal district of South Waziristan. According to media reports, at least six Pakistani soldiers were killed and ten others injured. No one initially claimed responsibility for the attack. The South Waziristan district near the Afghan border is one of the most unstable regions in Pakistan. The area was controlled by militant Islamist groups with links to al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban until a large-scale military offensive began in 2024. The Pakistani Taliban and groups close to them are said to once again exercise de facto control over some parts of the region (cf. BN of 16.09.24).

On 22.09.24, a police vehicle belonging to a convoy of diplomats from eleven countries hit a landmine in the Swat district, killing one policeman and injuring three others. The convoy was on its way back from an event organised by local business people to promote tourism in the region. It is unclear whether the convoy was the intended target. Also the Swat Valley once was a Taliban stronghold.<sup>29</sup>

## 30 September 2024

### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Escalation of violence between Sunni and Shia tribes; security situation**

At least 25 people were killed during several days of armed clashes between Shia and Sunni tribes over an ongoing land dispute in the tribal district of Kurram in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province between 21.09. and 25.09.24. Dozens of people on both sides were injured. Although Sunnis and Shiites mostly live together peacefully in the country, tensions between Sunnis and Shiites have prevailed in some areas for decades, particularly in Kurram, where Shiite Muslims predominate. In July 2024, dozens of people on both sides were killed in connection with this conflict (cf. BN of 29.07.24).

On 26.09.24, at least 15 police officers were injured in an explosion at a police station in the Swabi district, two of them seriously. No one claimed responsibility for the offence.<sup>30</sup>

### **Balochistan: Attack on labourers from Punjab**

According to media reports, seven labourers from Punjab province were killed in Balochistan province on 28.09.24. No one has claimed responsibility for the attack. Ethnic Baloch separatist groups in the region have been rebelling

against the Pakistani state for decades and mostly engage in small-scale attacks on security forces, Chinese nationals and other people from outside the province.<sup>31</sup>

## 07 October 2024

### Security situation

According to the latest reports on the security situation, 722 people were killed and 615 injured in attacks in the 3rd quarter of 2024 (incl. civilians, members of the security forces and insurgents). Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces, which border on Afghanistan, account for 97 % of casualties. At 1,534, the total number of deaths in the first three quarters of this year exceeds the total death toll for the entire year in 2023 (1,523).

Three people, including two Chinese nationals, were killed and eleven were injured in a bomb explosion near Karachi Airport on 06.10.24. The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) has claimed responsibility for the attack.

It was reported in the media on 06.10.24 that the capital, Islamabad, had been cordoned off due to continuing protests by supporters of the imprisoned former prime minister, Imran Khan. The protesters are calling for Khan's release. Thousands of security personnel are said to be in operation in the city, blocking access routes with containers, for example. One police officer has died in clashes with protesters.

On 06.10.24 the Pakistani government declared the non-violent Pashtun Protection Movement (PTM) illegal in accordance with section 11B of the 1997 Anti-Terrorism Act, on the grounds that it constitutes a threat to public order. PTM had announced a major gathering of its members which was planned for 11.10.24. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has condemned the banning of PTM.

20 people were abducted by unknown assailants in Balochistan province on 29.09.24. They are believed to be workers from Punjab province.<sup>32</sup>

## 14 October 2024

### Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Escalation of violence between Sunni and Shiite tribes

The conflict over land between Sunni and Shiite tribes which has been ongoing for several weeks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province has once again claimed at least 15 lives and left twelve people injured. In response, government agencies and schools have been closed, roads blocked and the mobile internet shut down. The most recent escalation of violence occurred after a nine-day ceasefire to which the tribes had agreed on 28.09.24. According to information from the health authorities, the police and local leaders, 44 people have been killed in the region and more than 130 people have been injured in the conflict since 20.09.24 (see BN of 30.09.24).<sup>33</sup>

### Attacks and hostilities

According to information from the authorities, armed fighters opened fire on a police vehicle in the city of Tank (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) on 10.10.24, killing two members of the security forces. Only hours later, the military reported the killing of four fighters in the tribal district of North Waziristan.

On 11.10.24 unknown attackers killed 20 miners at a coal mine in the Duki district of Balochistan province. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.<sup>34</sup>

### Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Major PTM gathering despite government ban

Following the murder of three of its members by security forces, it has been reported in the media that on 11.10.24 the Pashtun civil rights movement Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) stated its intention to hold its previously announced gathering to discuss the security situation in the north-west of Pakistan (cf. BN of 07.10.24). On 10.10.24 thousands of people attended a funeral service for the three killed activists. On 11.10.24 tens of thousands of members of the Pashtun ethnic group gathered for the large-scale three-day event in the vicinity of Peshawar.

On 06.10.24 the authorities declared a ban on the civil rights movement, which by its own account champions the rights of the approx. 35 to 40 million people who make up the Pashtun minority in Pakistan (cf. BN of 07.10.24). On 10.10.24 the PTM rejected the interior ministry's accusation that the movement was seeking to establish a parallel justice system and to divide society. The PTM has reported a series of raids and arrests in recent days, targeting its leaders and members ahead of the mass rally.

The majority of Pashtuns in Pakistan live in areas close to the border with Afghanistan, where the military carried out large-scale offensives against Islamist fighters in the 2010s which also claimed civilian lives and displaced people from their native regions. Militant violence has recently flared up again in the region on a substantial scale, however. The Pakistani Taliban have claimed responsibility for the majority of this violence.<sup>35</sup>

## 28 October 2024

### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Lethal attack on two transgender people**

It was reported in the press on 22.10.24 that two transgender individuals had been killed in Mardan, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. According to the authorities, investigations are continuing. According to information from Mahi Gula, an NGO which champions the rights of LGBTIQ people, 122 transgender people have been killed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province since 2009, without a single conviction in any of these cases. In Pakistan, transgender people are commonly subjected to harassment, abuse and so-called honour killings by relatives on account of perceived sexual misdemeanours.<sup>36</sup>

### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Attacks and hostilities**

Ten members of the paramilitary Frontier Corps were killed and three injured in an ambush in D. I. Khan, close to the Afghan border, on 25.10.24. The Pakistani Taliban have claimed responsibility for the attack.

On 14.10.24 Pakistani Taliban fighters stormed a police station in Bannu. In the ensuing exchanges of fire, four police officers and five fighters were killed.<sup>37</sup>

## 04 November 2024

### **PTI demands release of ex-prime minister Khan; nationwide protests announced**

Pakistan's largest opposition party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), has threatened nationwide protests to force the release of its imprisoned leader and ex-prime minister, Imran Khan. Ali Amin Gandapur, a high-ranking PTI member and chief minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, warned prime minister Shehbaz Sharif's government publicly, accusing the authorities of refusing Khan basic provisions and visiting rights, including access to his family, lawyers and medical care. Khan's sisters have corroborated these accusations. Khan himself is said to have posted a message in the social media in which he speaks of "psychological torture" and restricted access to his doctors and his family. As the first step in a nationwide mobilisation campaign, the PTI is planning a major demonstration in Peshawar.<sup>38</sup>

### **Security situation in Balochistan; nationwide spread of polio**

At least nine people, including five pupils, were killed and 23 injured in a bomb attack near to a girls' school in Mastung, Balochistan province on 01.11.24. The attack was aimed at security forces who were escorting a polio vaccination team. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack. On 01.11.24 the authorities reported two new cases of polio in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, one from the Lakki Marwat district and one from D.I. Khan. This takes the total number of cases this year to 45. To date, 22 cases have been reported from Balochistan, twelve from Sindh, nine from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and one case each from Punjab and Islamabad. In all, 76 districts are affected. Along with Afghanistan, Pakistan is one of the remaining countries in which polio is still endemic.

The attacks by separatist groups continue in Balochistan. On 29.10.24 five construction workers were killed in an attack for which the Balochistan Liberation Army has claimed responsibility. Prior to this, four people were injured in an explosion in Kala Saifullah on 24.10.24 and 20 miners were killed in an attack in Duki on 11.10.24.<sup>39</sup>

## 11 November 2024

### **BLA carries out bomb attack at railway station in Quetta**

At least two dozen people, including a dozen security personnel, were killed and more than 60 people were injured in a suicide attack on a railway platform in Quetta, Balochistan province on 09.11.24. The separatist Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) issued a statement claiming responsibility for the attack, which it says targeted the security personnel waiting on the platform.

The incident took place one week after a bomb exploded near a girls' school in the Mastung district of Balochistan, killing nine people, including five children (cf. BN of 04.11.24).<sup>40</sup>

## 18 November 2024

### **Balochistan: BLA attacks checkpoint**

Armed fighters attacked a checkpoint of the Frontier Corps in the Kalat district on 16.11.24. According to official information, seven paramilitary soldiers were killed and more than a dozen injured. The militant separatist group Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) has claimed responsibility for the attack.<sup>41</sup>

## 25 November 2024

### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Attack on Shiite minority in Kurram; disturbances**

On 21.11.24 armed attackers in the Kurram district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province opened fire on a convoy of vehicles carrying first and foremost Shiite Muslims from Parachinar to Peshawar. According to repeatedly updated reports in the media, at least 50 people were killed and more than 40 injured in one of the most lethal attacks in the region in recent years.

According to local sources, at least 25 people were killed in subsequent sectarian disturbances on 22.11.24. Citing official information, other news agencies have reported at least 32 people killed and 47 injured in the disturbances on 22.11.24. A crowd of several hundred Shiite tribespeople reportedly set fire to a number of shops and houses. Local residents in the area, which has a majority Sunni population, have stated that a number of people are missing. In response to the disturbances, curfews were imposed and mobile telephone connections were suspended on 22.11.24. Armed attackers additionally attacked a military checkpoint on 22.11.24. In Parachinar, facilities of the Pakistani army and the paramilitary border troops were attacked and destroyed.

On 24.11.24 the Pakistani government announced that its mediation team had brokered a seven-day ceasefire between the Sunni and Shiite parties to the conflict. According to official information, 82 people were killed and 156 injured in the attack on the convoy and the subsequent disturbances, which continued until 23.11.24. 16 Sunni and 66 Shiite believers were among the dead. In the recent past, dozens of people have been killed in sectarian clashes between the Sunni majority and the Shiite minority in Kurram district. The latter have been complaining for a long time about discrimination and increasing violence in Pakistan, which has a majority Sunni population.<sup>42</sup>

### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Attacks in Bannu district**

Seven police officers were abducted in Bannu district on 18.11.24. According to local sources, the attackers disarmed the police officers before abducting them. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

According to information from the military, at least eleven members of the security forces were killed and at least four injured in a further attack involving a car bomb and a subsequent hours-long fire battle on 19.11.24. A break-away faction of the Pakistani Taliban, the Hafiz Gul Bahadur group, has released a statement claiming responsibility for the attack, in which it alleges to have killed 23 members of the security forces. No independent verification of this death toll has been possible, however. The attack took place as Pakistan's political and military leadership were convening in Islamabad to hold discussions on combating the increasing militant violence.<sup>43</sup>

## 02 December 2024

### **Mass demonstration by PTI in Islamabad broken up**

After breaking up the mass demonstration by the opposition party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), the Pakistani authorities have arrested around 1,000 supporters of imprisoned former prime minister Imran Khan. The demonstrators marched from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province to Islamabad and ignored the ban on public gatherings which was in force. According to various reports in the press, at least six people died, including two protesters, in ensuing clashes with security forces. Security forces broke up the protest in a large-scale night-time operation on 26.11.24. The PTI temporarily suspended the demonstrations and accused the government of using excessive force and live ammunition. Former prime minister Khan, who has been in custody for over a year and

faces 150 lawsuits, remains a popular figure. In connection with the mass demonstration, he and his wife have additionally been charged with terrorism. The government's tough action is meeting with strong criticism in the light of the prevailing political tensions. After the unrest had abated, schools and roads were reopened.<sup>44</sup>

### **Arrest of a journalist sparks criticism**

A number of human rights organisations have demanded the release of journalist Matiullah Jan, who was arrested by the Pakistani authorities on charges of terrorism on 27.11.24. Jan had reported on the protests by PTI supporters. In a statement released on 28.11.24, Amnesty International condemned Jan's "arbitrary" arrest, describing it as an "attack on the right to freedom of expression and the freedom of the media".<sup>45</sup>

### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Continuing sectarian clashes in Kurram**

Despite the efforts to secure peace negotiations, the sectarian clashes in the district of Kurram in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have continued (cf. BN of 25.11.24). Last weekend alone, at least 14 people were killed and 27 injured. The death toll has since risen to at least 130, with at least 186 people injured.<sup>46</sup>

## **16 December 2024**

### **Punjab: Ahmadi killed in Rawalpindi**

According to information from the Ahmadiyya community, two Ahmadi brothers were attacked in the city of Rawalpindi on 05.12.24 after having ignored previous threats and warnings that they should leave the city. One of the two brothers was killed by several blows of an axe to his torso. The attacker reportedly then fled the scene of the crime, making further threats as he left. The killed man was visiting the city from Rajanpur, where he and his family had also received threats. The brother who survived the attack in Rawalpindi is also said to have experienced hostility prior to the incident, including death threats. Only a few days before the attack, a religious assembly directed against Ahmadis reportedly took place close to where the crime occurred. The crime is seen as a direct result of the hate stirred up against the Ahmadis by fundamentalist preachers. The International Human Rights Committee has criticised the inadequate prosecution of hate crimes against Ahmadis, noting that hate campaigns against the Ahmadiyya community have increased throughout the country.<sup>47</sup>

## **23 December 2024**

### **Military courts pass sentence on civilians arrested in the aftermath of the mass protests in May 2023**

The media department of the Pakistani armed forces announced on 21.12.24 that 25 persons who had appeared before military courts on charges relating to the mass protests in May 2023 had been sentenced to prison terms of between two and ten years.

On 09.05.23, following the arrest of former Pakistani prime minister Imran Khan in a fraud case, supporters of Khan's Pakistan Tehrik-e Insaf party (PTI) attacked and damaged military facilities, mosques and government buildings in towns and cities all over Pakistan. In reaction to the sentences, PTI wrote on the social network X that the military courts had violated the defendants' constitutional and human rights, adding that the trials were not transparent and that some 80 people had been held in military custody since the mass demonstrations, in violation of their fundamental rights.<sup>48</sup>

### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa TTP attack on checkpoint in South Waziristan; security situation**

On 21.12.24 fighters of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) attacked a checkpoint in the South Waziristan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. According to official information, 16 members of the security forces were killed and eight injured. The TTP has claimed responsibility for the attack, in which it alleges to have killed 35 members of the security forces. No independent verification of the alleged death tolls has been possible. No information has been provided regarding killed militant fighters.

Attacks by the TTP in the north-east Pakistani province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been continually on the increase since Kabul was recaptured by the Afghan Taliban in August 2021. By its own account, the TTP is aiming to introduce the sharia in Pakistan, too. The attack took place after the elders of Dre Maseed in the Sur Rogha region of South Waziristan had held a gathering on 20.12.24 to draw attention to the danger to civilians posed by

counter-terrorism operations by the Pakistani military. In its latest report, the Pakistan Center for Conflict and Security Studies has stated that more than 240 people were killed in "terrorist incidents" in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in November 2024. According to this source, 68 security agents were among those killed; this represents the highest death toll in a single month in 2024.<sup>49</sup>

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