COI QUERY

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COI QUERY RESPONSE – Pakistan

Security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

1. Conflict background and armed actors

Additional information on the security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) can be found in the EUAA COI report Pakistan, Country Focus, published in December 2024.

Armed groups active in KP include Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) (mostly in Peshawar and Kurram districts), Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP)[1], and Hafiz Gul Bahadur (HGB).[2] Sources indicate that TTP is one of the most active armed groups in KP.[3] In particular, the districts of the tribal region, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram, North Waziristan and South Waziristan, have been 'a stronghold of the Pakistani Taliban' (TTP).[4] In January 2025, local police chief stated that there are some 4 000 militants in KP, which includes Afghan nationals.[5] In a July 2025 interview, local provincial authorities admitted that 'armed Taliban militants control certain areas of the region during nighttime'.[6]

Concerning security trends in Pakistan in 2024, the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) found that 'Pakistan experienced a dramatic 66 % increase in terror-related fatalities, the highest in nearly a decade.' Most of the violence occurred in two provinces, namely in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan,[7] which together witnessed 94 % of all fatalities. KP recorded the highest number of fatalities with 1 616 fatalities,[8] representing over 63 % of all fatalities.[9]

[1] IRB, Pakistan: Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan [Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan] (SSP) / Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat [Ahl-e-Sunnat-wal-Jamaat] (ASWJ) [Rah-e-Haq, Rah-i-Haq party (PRHP)], Lashkar-e-Jhangvi [Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, Army of Jhangvi] (LeJ), and Tehrik-i-Taliban [Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan, Tehrik-e-Taliban, Pakistani Taliban, Tehreek-e-Taliban] (TTP) militant groups, including leadership, structure, objectives, activities, and areas of operation; profiles of persons and institutions targeted or likely to be targeted, including polio vaccine workers and ability to track the persons they target; relationships between these groups; state response (2022–December 2024), 2 January 2025, url
[2] PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2024: An Abridged Version, 1 January 2025, url p. 11
[3] CRSS, Pakistan Witnessed Promising Trends in its Security Landscape For Q2, 2025 Including 32% Decline in Violence, 1 July 2025, url; International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch, Pakistan, December 2024-October 2025, url; RFE/RL, Struggle For Peace In Pakistan's Restive Tribal Areas Faces Deadly Challenges, 20 July 2025, url; PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2024: An Abridged Version, 1 January 2025, url, p. 11
[4] RFE/RL, Struggle For Peace In Pakistan's Restive Tribal Areas Faces Deadly Challenges, 20 July 2025, url
[5] International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch, Pakistan, December 2024-October 2025, url
[6] RFE/RL, Struggle For Peace In Pakistan's Restive Tribal Areas Faces Deadly Challenges, 20 July 2025, url
[7] CRSS, Complex Terrorism Landscape in Pakistan-Afghanistan Region, Afghan Emirate as Counter-Terror Partner, 24 January 2025, url, p. 6
[8] CRSS, CRSS Annual Security Report 2024, 31 December 2024, url
[9] CRSS, Complex Terrorism Landscape in Pakistan-Afghanistan Region, Afghan Emirate as Counter-Terror Partner, 24 January 2025, url, p. 10

Most violent incidents took place in the tribal regions Kurram, North Waziristan, and Khyber, while other affected districts in KP included Dera Ismail Khan, Bannu, and Lakki Marwat.[10] The two armed actors identified as the main perpetrators of violence in the country were the TTP, which follows the Deobandi school of Islam and tries to establish an Islamic State in Pakistan, and Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISKP), following Salafism and aiming for a global caliphate. The two groups have shown rivalry because of different goals and targets.[11] Among the targets of the groups active in the region such as TTP and ISKP were 'security forces, government officials, religious leaders, and political opponents'.[12] According to the Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), civilians, and civilian infrastructure were also targeted.[13]

According to the Pak Institute For Peace Studies (PIPS), in 2024, 'Khyber Pakhtunkhwa recorded the highest number of terrorist incidents in the country', killing 509 people and wounding 517, which represented 69 % increase in the number of attacks and 21 % increase in casualties compared to the previous year. PIPS found that 22 districts of KP were affected, and the most attacks took place in six districts in the south, namely North and South Waziristan, Bannu, Tank, Lakki Marwat, and Dera Ismail Khan. The most common targets of the attacks were the army and police personnel.[14] In 2024, TTP and Hafiz Gul Bahadur (HGB) conducted nine suicide attacks in KP, namely in North Waziristan, Dera Ismail Khan, Shangla, Bannu, and North Waziristan.[15]

Since July 2024, the Kurram district in KP witnessed sectarian violence between Sunni and Shia residents.[16] Despite a ceasefire reached in early 2025, other violent incidents were reported in January 2025,[17] and in February 2025,[18] causing casualties,[19] mass displacement in the area and access restrictions.[20]

Armed groups based in KP have increased their attacks since the Afghan Taliban came to power in 2021, and Afghan *de facto* authorities have reportedly provided support for the TTP.[21] Pakistani authorities claimed that Afghan Taliban allowed TTP to operate freely from

[10] CRSS, CRSS Annual Security Report 2024, 31 December 2024, url
[11] CRSS, Complex Terrorism Landscape in Pakistan-Afghanistan Region, Afghan Emirate as Counter-Terror Partner, 24 January 2025, url, p. 6
[12] RFE/RL, Struggle For Peace In Pakistan's Restive Tribal Areas Faces Deadly Challenges, 20 July 2025, url
[13] ACAPS, Pakistan; Key crises to watch, 12 June 2025, url, p. 1
[14] PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2024: An Abridged Version, 1 January 2025, url p. 6
[15] PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2024: An Abridged Version, 1 January 2025, url p. 11
[16] AP News, Death toll rises to 5 in rocket and gun attack on an aid convoy in restive northwestern Pakistan, 17 January 2025, url
[17] AP News, Death toll rises to 5 in rocket and gun attack on an aid convoy in restive northwestern Pakistan, 17 January 2025, url
[18] ACAPS, Pakistan; Key crises to watch, 12 June 2025, url, p. 5
[19] ACAPS, Pakistan; Key crises to watch, 12 June 2025, url, p. 5; AP News, Death toll rises to 5 in rocket and gun attack on an aid convoy in restive northwestern Pakistan, 17 January 2025, url
[20] ACAPS, Pakistan; Key crises to watch, 12 June 2025, url, p. 1
[21] BBC News, Afghan Taliban says Pakistani troops killed in 'retaliatory' border attacks, 12 October 2025, url; CRSS, Complex Terrorism Landscape in Pakistan-Afghanistan Region, Afghan Emirate as Counter-Terror Partner, 24 January 2025, url, p. 6

Afghan territory and conduct attacks against Pakistan from there,[22] which Afghan *de facto* authorities deny.[23] According to Afghan *de facto* authorities, in October 2025, almost 60 Pakistani soldiers were killed during violent clashes in the border region that were reportedly a retaliation for alleged attacks by Pakistan inside Afghanistan. Pakistan stated that 23 soldiers were killed and that '200 Taliban and affiliated terrorists have been neutralized.'[24] In October 2025, Pakistan and Afghanistan agreed on a ceasefire and met in Türkiye for talks.[25]

2. Recent security trends

Concerning the security trends in KP in the first quarter of 2025, CRSS reported that KP, together with Balochistan, remained 'epicenters of violence' in Pakistan. 63 % of all fatalities linked to violence took place in the KP, even though the province saw an 18 % decrease in violence compared to the last quarter of 2024.[26] In March 2025, Pakistan saw a significant increase in militant attacks and KP was among the most affected provinces, in particular its tribal areas, leading to 206 deaths, including 34 civilian deaths.[27] In February 2025, Al Arabiya reported that '[j]ihadist and separatist groups regularly target the army and police along the mountainous border with Afghanistan.'[28] In the second quarter of 2025, CRSS recorded the same trend, with KP and Balochistan accounting for most of the violent incidents and most of the fatalities.[29] Covering the third quarter of 2025, CRSS found that KP and Balochistan remained the provinces most affected by violence in Pakistan, with KP registering some 70 % of all violence-linked fatalities and over 67 % of the incidents of violence.[30] According to an Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD) analysis based on ACLED (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data), in the first half of 2025, 962 incidents killing 1 156 people were recorded in KP.[31] International Crisis Group indicates that the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region was one of the regions most affected by insurgent violence in 2025.[32]

Pakistani authorities conducted 158 operations against militant groups in 2024, of which 118 took place in KP, mostly in North Waziristan, Lakki Marwat, DI Khan, Khyber, South Waziristan, Bannu, and Tank, resulting in 677 casualties of which 621 were recorded as militants.[33] In

[22] AP News, Suicide bombers strike security force headquarters in northwestern Pakistan, killing 3 officers, 24 November 2025, url; DW News, Pakistani Taliban claim attacks in northwest that killed 23, 11 October 2025, url
[23] AP News, Suicide bombers strike security force headquarters in northwestern Pakistan, killing 3 officers, 24 November 2025, url; BBC News, Afghan Taliban says Pakistani troops killed in 'retaliatory' border attacks, 12 October 2025, url
[24] BBC News, Afghan Taliban says Pakistani troops killed in 'retaliatory' border attacks, 12 October 2025, url
[25] RFE/RL, Pakistani Military Reports New Border Clashes Amid Istanbul Talks, 26 October 2025, url
[26] CRSS, Outlaws' Fatalities Surpass Civilian and Security Losses for First Time in 12 Years, Overall Violence Drops 13%, 30 March 2025, url
[27] Think Tank Journal (The), New Security Policies vs. Rising Militancy—Can Pakistan Win?, 2 April 2025, url
[28] Al Arabiya, Militants kill four security force members in northwest Pakistan: Police, 2 February 2025, url
[29] CRSS, Pakistan Witnessed Promising Trends in its Security Landscape For Q2, 2025 Including 32% Decline in Violence, 1 July 2025, url
[30] CRSS, Three Quarters of 2025 Nearly as Violent as Entire 2024, 1 October 2025, url
[31] ACCORD, ACCORD Analysis of ACLED Data – PAKISTAN, 1st Half-Year 2025, 11 September 2025, url, p. 6
[32] International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch, Pakistan, December 2024-October 2025, url
[33] PIPS, Pakistan Security Report 2024: An Abridged Version, 1 January 2025, url p. 12

2025, Pakistani authorities continued with anti-militant operations in the province.[34] For example, between 13 and 16 October 2025, Pakistani army stated to have killed 34 TTP militants, in operations in North Waziristan, South Waziristan, and Bannu.[35]

Below is an indicative overview of some of the incidents occurring in the reference period:

- On 2 December 2025, in Bannu district, a vehicle with a local government official was attacked, killing four people, while no group claimed responsibility for the attack.[36]
- On 1 December 2025, in Lakki Marwat district, a suicide bomber attacked a police car, killing one officer. The police did not provide any information on who was behind the attack.[37]
- On 24 November 2025, two suicide bombers attacked a military target, killing three and wounding 12 soldiers; no group claimed the attack.[38]
- Also in November 2025, armed assailants stormed a cadet college in KP, killing three soldiers. Authorities claimed that Afghan citizens were behind the attack.[39]
- On 17 October 2025, security forces prevented a suicide attack targeting a military camp in North Waziristan, killing four attackers.[40]
- In October 2025, TTP claimed responsibility for several attacks in KP that killed 20 security officials and three civilians.[41]
- In September 2025, explosions in the Tirah Valley killed at least 24 people, including at least 10 civilians, as reported by the police. Neither Pakistani authorities nor armed groups have immediately commented on the attack.[42]
- On 28 June 2025, 13 soldiers were killed in a suicide attack on a military convoy. HGB group claimed responsibility for the attack.[43]
- On 4 March 2025, two suicide bombers attacked a military compound in Bannu district, killing five soldiers and 13 civilians. Most civilian deaths occurred after a collapse of nearby mosque and residential buildings due to the attack. The attack was claimed by the Jaish Al-Fursan group, while Pakistani military claimed that the attack

[34] AA, Security forces foil attack, kill 5 militants in northwestern Pakistan, 18 October 2025, url; International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch, Pakistan, December 2024-October 2025, url; Hindu (The), Pakistan troops foil suicide attack on camp in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; 4 terrorists killed, 17 October 2025, url; The Think Tank Journal, New Security Policies vs. Rising Militancy—Can Pakistan Win?, 2 April 2025, url
[35] Hindu (The), Pakistan troops foil suicide attack on camp in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; 4 terrorists killed, 17 October 2025, url
[36] Al Arabiya English, Gunmen kill a government official, three others in northwestern Pakistan, 2 December 2025, url
[37] AP News, Police officer killed in suicide bombing in northwest Pakistan, 1 December 2025, url
[38] BBC News, Five dead in suicide bombing in Pakistan, 24 November 2025, url
[39] AP News, Pakistan says Afghan nationals carried out this week's suicide attacks, 13 November 2025, url
[40] Hindu (The), Pakistan troops foil suicide attack on camp in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; 4 terrorists killed, 17 October 2025, url
[41] DW News, Pakistani Taliban claim attacks in northwest that killed 23, 11 October 2025, url
[42] Al Jazeera, Calls for probe after killing of civilians reported in northwest Pakistan, 23 September 2025, url
[43] Al Jazeera, At least 13 soldiers killed in suicide bombing in northwestern Pakistan, 28 June 2025, url; RFERL, Suicide Bombing Kills 13 Soldiers In Northwestern Pakistan, 28 June 2025, url

was planned from Afghanistan and Afghan nationals were involved.[44] According to UNICEF, five children were killed during this incident.[45]

- In February 2025, an Islamic seminary was attacked, killing six people. No armed group has claimed responsibility for the attack.[46]
- In February 2025, unknown gunmen killed four members of the security forces and their driver in KP, according to the local police.[47]
- In January 2025, five people were killed after an attack on a humanitarian aid convoy heading to Kurram; no group has claimed responsibility.[48]

3. Impact on the civilian population

According to sources, among those injured and killed in militant attack in the reference period were civilians.[49] Reporting on an attack by TTP on security forces in South Waziristan in December 2024, and on the following operation by the security forces, ACAPS noted that there is a lack of information about their humanitarian impact. According to the same source, 'such attacks directly threaten civilians and their access to services, particularly in conflict-affected areas.' [50] According to an analysis by ACAPS published in June 2025, targets of armed groups in PK have also included civilians and civilian infrastructure, aside from the military targets.[51] Authorities have at times ordered localized internet shutdowns in KP that 'remain common', according to Amnesty International. According to local activists, this is done to prevent reporting on human rights violations in the area.[52] The authorities have also restricted access to the areas affected by militant activities and journalists faced restrictions from the authorities and threats from armed groups.[53]

Since July 2024, Kurram district in KP faced cases of sectarian violence between Sunni and Shia communities allegedly originating in a dispute over a plot of land.[54] Kurram is the only district in Pakistan where Shia Muslims form a majority, in the otherwise Sunni-majority country.[55] Violence escalated in November 2024, when 52 Shia pilgrims were killed while

[44] VOA News, Pakistan confirms 5 soldiers, 13 civilians killed in twin suicide bombings targeting military compound, 5 March 2025, url
[45] UNICEF, UNICEF Statement on attack in Bannu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 5 March 2025, url
[46] BBC News, Five dead in suicide bombing in Pakistan, 24 November 2025, url
[47] Al Arabiya, Militants kill four security force members in northwest Pakistan: Police, 2 February 2025, url
[48] AP News, Death toll rises to 5 in rocket and gun attack on an aid convoy in restive northwestern Pakistan, 17 January 2025, url
[49] ACAPS, Pakistan; Key crises to watch, 12 June 2025, url, p. 1, Al Jazeera, Calls for probe after killing of civilians reported in northwest Pakistan, 23 September 2025, url; DW News, Pakistani Taliban claim attacks in northwest that killed 23, 11 October 2025, url; UNICEF, UNICEF Statement on attack in Bannu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 5 March 2025, url; VOA News, Pakistan confirms 5 soldiers, 13 civilians killed in twin suicide bombings targeting military compound, 5 March 2025, url
[50] ACAPS, Pakistan; Key crises to watch, 12 June 2025, url, p. 3
[51] ACAPS, Pakistan; Key crises to watch, 12 June 2025, url, p. 1
[52] Amnesty International, Shadows of Control: Censorship and mass surveillance in Pakistan, August 2025, url, pp. 28-29
[53] Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 - Pakistan, 2025, url
[54] Al Jazeera, Death toll from sectarian violence in northwest Pakistan rises to 130, 1 December 2024, url
[55] Al Jazeera, Death toll from sectarian violence in northwest Pakistan rises to 130, 1 December 2024, url; VOA News, Pakistan secures peace deal in violence-torn district bordering Afghanistan, 1 January 2025, url

traveling through the province, bringing the number of casualties to 130 killed and 200 injured by 1 December 2024.[56] During the conflict, some 100 homes and 300 businesses were burned down.[57] The attacks were followed by road closures and suspension of internet and mobile phone services, food shortages[58] and mass displacement.[59] According to ACAPS, the closures of roads and restrictions on aid reportedly caused 30 children to die by 20 December 2024 as a result of not getting their life-saving medication.[60] A ceasefire between the warring communities was announced on 24 November and then again on 2 December 2024.[61] In January 2025, 'persistent tensions' continued despite the ceasefire and access to 'food, fuel, medicine, work and trade' remained limited. Because of insecurity in road travel, authorities were delivering goods by helicopter.[62] In January 2025, a convoy carrying humanitarian aid to Kurram was attacked, killing at least five people and burning the trucks. The convoy was carrying food and medicine for 'hundreds of thousands of besieged residents'.[63] Similarly, in February 2025, another convoy of trucks with aid was attacked, killing one driver and one security official and injuring 15 people. The trucks were looted and burned.[64]

Moreover, KP is one of the regions in Pakistan affected by polio. In the period of January-October 2025, 18 registered cases out of 29 nationwide were in KP.[65] Deadly attacks on polio centers continued to be reported, including in February 2025[66] and October 2025.[67] According to a source interviewed by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB), threats against polio vaccine workers remain 'pretty high' in KP.[68] In February 2025, a police officer tasked with protecting a polio vaccination center was shot dead in an attack claimed by the Pakistani Taliban, as reported by France24,[69] while the AP News reported that the perpetrators were not known.[70] On 14 October 2025, a soldier protecting a polio vaccination team was killed by gunmen in the Matta Town of Swat Valley; perpetrators were not identified.[71] On 29 October 2025, one policeman was killed in Upper Orakzai in the KP

[56] Al Jazeera, Death toll from sectarian violence in northwest Pakistan rises to 130, 1 December 2024, url
[57] ACAPS, Pakistan; Key crises to watch, 12 June 2025, url, p. 4
[58] MENAFN, Death Toll Rises To 102 As Kurram Violence Continues Amid Internet Blackout And School Closures, 27 November 2024, url
[59] Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 - Pakistan, 2025, url
[60] ACAPS, Pakistan; Key crises to watch, 12 June 2025, url, p. 5
[61] AP News, A 2nd ceasefire is reached between warring Shiites and Sunni Muslims in Pakistan's restive northwest, 2 December 2024, url
[62] VOA News, Pakistan secures peace deal in violence-torn district bordering Afghanistan, 1 January 2025, url
[63] AP News, Death toll rises to 5 in rocket and gun attack on an aid convoy in restive northwestern Pakistan, 17 January 2025, url
[64] ACAPS, Pakistan; Key crises to watch, 12 June 2025, url, p. 5
[65] Arab News, Gunmen kill security official protecting polio team in northwest Pakistan, 14 October 2025, url
[66] France24, Pakistan Taliban kill police polio escort as vaccination drive starts, 3 February 2025, url
[67] Arab News, Gunmen kill security official protecting polio team in northwest Pakistan, 14 October 2025, url
[68] IRB, Pakistan: Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan [Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan] (SSP) / Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat [Ahl-e-Sunnat-wal-Jamaat] (ASWJ) [Rah-e-Haq, Rah-i-Haq party (PRHP)], Lashkar-e-Jhangvi [Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, Army of Jhangvi] (LeJ), and Tehrik-i-Taliban [Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan, Tehrik-e-Taliban, Pakistani Taliban, Tehreek-e-Taliban] (TTP) militant groups, including leadership, structure, objectives, activities, and areas of operation; profiles of persons and institutions targeted or likely to be targeted, including polio vaccine workers and ability to track the persons they target; relationships between these groups; state response (2022–December 2024), 2 January 2025, url
[69] France24, Pakistan Taliban kill police polio escort as vaccination drive starts, 3 February 2025, url
[70] Ap News, Gunmen kill a police officer working on Pakistan's first polio drive of the year, 3 February 2025, url
[71] Arab News, Gunmen kill security official protecting polio team in northwest Pakistan, 14 October 2025, url

province, by unknown gunmen, leading to the suspension of vaccination activities in the area.[72]

Because of a combination of reasons including economic and climate conditions and conflicts, KP is one of the provinces most affected by food insecurity in Pakistan.[73] According to The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)[74], between November 2024 and March 2025, 11 million people in Pakistan faced 'high levels of acute food insecurity' in 68 districts across the country out of which 25 are in KP. These districts were described as having 'widespread food insecurity, malnutrition, and poverty.'[75]

In August 2025, KP was hit by flash floods, killing over 330 people and causing 'devastation' in the province.[76] By half of September 2025, 1.6 million people have been affected.[77]

KP also hosts Afghan refugees who were instructed to leave the province after the government decided to close the remaining refugee settlements on 15 October 2025, affecting almost 400 000 people in KP. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) noted that this policy 'marks the end of a 40-year settlement and aligns with the national deportation policy for undocumented Afghans, which is currently under implementation by the Government of Pakistan.'[78]

[72] Reuters, Policeman killed in attack on polio vaccination teams in Pakistan, 29 October 2025, url
[73] ACAPS, Pakistan; Key crises to watch, 12 June 2025, url, p. 10
[74] 'The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is an innovative multi-stakeholder global initiative aimed at enhancing food security and nutrition analysis to inform decisions. [...] At the global level, the IPC partnership includes 21 organizations and intergovernmental institutions: [...].' See: IPC, IPC Overview and Classification System, n.d., url
[75] IPC, Pakistan | IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis, 2024 - July 2025, 21 February 2025, url, p. 1
[76] UNICEF, UNICEF Statement on Flash Floods in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, 18 December 2025, url
[77] UN News, 'The needs are huge': Pakistan reels from floods as millions left homeless, 16 September 2025, url
[78] UNOCHA, Pakistan – Situation Report 2: Monsoon Floods, Intersector Coordination Group – November 2025, 20 November 2025, url, p. 2

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ACAPS (Assessment Capacities Project), Pakistan; Key crises to watch, 12 June 2025, available at: https://reliefweb.int/attachments/1f8bed90-5bc9-5bb2-9f83-3d96c4720b7e/20250612_ACAPS_Pakistan_Key_crises_to_watch_in_2025.pdf, accessed 4 December 2025

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