



## **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ORAL STATEMENT TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE ON THE OCCASION OF THE REVIEW OF PAKISTAN**

AI Index: ASA 33/8615/2024

14 October 2024

Honorable Committee members,

Amnesty International welcomes the opportunity to engage with the Committee ahead of its review of Pakistan.

Despite its obligations under the ICCPR, Pakistan has failed to deliver on its promises and human rights violations persist, particularly violations of the rights to life, fair trial, freedom of belief and religion, freedom of expression and of peaceful assembly.

Since 2021, at least eight people have been extrajudicially executed by mobs and police officers on suspicion of blasphemy, while overbroad and draconian blasphemy related laws enable abuses. Authorities have failed to hold suspected preparators accountable.<sup>1</sup>

Pakistan's decision to deport Afghan refugees in violation of the principle of non-refoulement has resulted in the harassment,<sup>2</sup> arbitrary detention<sup>3</sup> and forced return of refugees, many of whom<sup>4</sup> risk persecution upon return under the Taliban rule.

Military courts have been routinely used to try civilians in violation of their rights to fair trial and liberty.<sup>5</sup> Currently, 85 participants of the 9 May 2023 protests are under military detention along with prisoners such as Idris Khattak since 2019.<sup>6</sup>

Severe restrictions on peaceful assembly have been put in place through use of existing laws as well as passage of new laws like the Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Act.<sup>7</sup> Authorities have weaponized laws relating to criminal defamation, sedition, hate speech and "cyber terrorism" to muzzle dissent.

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<sup>1</sup> Amnesty International, "Pakistan: One year since Jaranwala attack, minority Christians await justice", 16 August 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/08/pakistan-one-year-since-jaranwala-attack-minority-christians-await-justice>

<sup>2</sup> Amnesty International, "Pakistan: Government must stop harassing and arbitrarily arresting Afghans seeking refuge", 20 June 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/06/pakistan-government-must-stop-harassing-and-arbitrarily-arresting-afghans-seeking-refuge>

<sup>3</sup> Amnesty International, "Pakistan: Halt mass detentions and deportations of Afghan refugees", 10 November 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/11/pakistan-halt-mass-detentions-and-deportations-of-afghan-refugees>

<sup>4</sup> Amnesty International, "Pakistan: Open Letter to Prime Minister on Repatriation of Refugees from Pakistan", 27 October 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa33/7362/2023/en>

<sup>5</sup> Amnesty International, "Pakistan: Civilians must not be tried under military laws", 16 May 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/05/pakistan-civilians-must-not-be-tried-under-military-laws>

<sup>6</sup> Dawn, "Special report: May 9, mayhem and military trials – a year on", 9 May 2024, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1832439>

<sup>7</sup> Amnesty International, "Pakistan: The new Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Act threatens the right to protest", 9 September 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/09/pakistan-the-new-peaceful-assembly-and-public-order-act-threatens-the-right-to-protest>

Pakistan has failed to curb the practice of enforced disappearances as more than 5,000 cases of enforced disappearances have been recorded<sup>8</sup> since 2023 alone.<sup>9</sup> There has also been a concerted crackdown<sup>10</sup> on the right to protest of families of the disappeared.<sup>11</sup>

Amnesty International calls on the Pakistan authorities to:

1. Urgently repeal all blasphemy sections in the Penal Code and ensure justice to victims of blasphemy related violence.
2. Respect and protect the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, including by bringing legislation in line with international human rights law.
3. Reverse the decision to forcibly return Afghan refugees and ratify the 1951 Refugees Convention and its 1967 Protocol.
4. Immediately suspend all military trials of civilians and guarantee the right to fair trials in civilian courts in line with international human rights law and standards.
5. Accede to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, without reservations, and implement it into domestic law.

I thank you for your attention.

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<sup>8</sup> Samaa, “Highest number of 3,485 missing persons reported from KP: report”, 9 January 2024, <https://www.samaa.tv/208737673-highest-number-of-3-485-missing-persons-reported-from-kp-report>

<sup>9</sup> Dawn, “Missing persons commission logs 197 new cases in 2024 so far”, 1 July 2024, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1843174>

<sup>10</sup> Amnesty International, “Pakistan: Amnesty International condemns harassment faced by Baloch protestors in Islamabad”, 24 January 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/01/pakistan-amnesty-international-condemns-harassment-faced-by-baloch-protestors-in-islamabad>

<sup>11</sup> Amnesty International, Pakistan: Braving the Storm: Enforced disappearances and the right to protest in Pakistan (Index: ASA 33/5872/2022), 11 August 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa33/5872/2022/en>