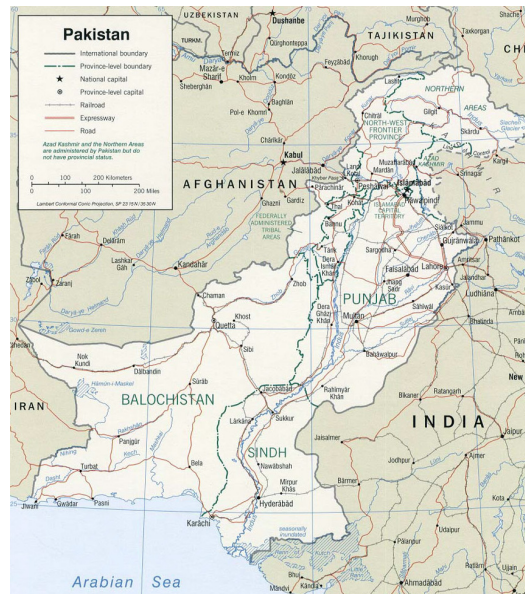


# PAKISTAN PROFILE

October 2008



Source: ReliefWeb

**Country name:** Islamic Republic of Pakistan

**Capital:** Islamabad

## General Information

<b>President</b>	Mr. Asif Ali Zardari (9 September 2008)
<b>Prime Minister</b>	Mr. Yousaf Raza Gillani (24 March 2008)
<b>Parliament</b>	Bicameral Federal Legislature: Senate (Upper House) and National Assembly (Lower House)
<b>Climate</b>	mostly hot and dry
<b>System of government</b>	parliamentary
<b>Population</b>	163.9 million (UN 2007)
<b>Major languages</b>	English, Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, Balochi
<b>Life expectancy</b>	65 years (men), 66 years (women)
<b>Religion</b>	Muslim 97% (Sunni 77%, Shi'a 20%), other religious minorities (Christian and Hindu) 3%
<b>Literacy rate (15 and above)</b>	49.9% (Human Development Report, HDR, 2005), male: 63%, female: 36%
<b>Population growth rate</b>	1.805% (est.)
<b>Natural resources</b>	gas reserves, petroleum, coal, iron ore, copper, salt, limestone

## Geography

<b>Region</b>	South-central Asia	
<b>Area total</b>	796,095 sq km (307,374 sq. miles), excluding Pakistani-administered Kashmir (83,716 sq. km/32,323 sq miles)	
	• <b>Punjab:</b>	205,344 sq. km
	• <b>Sindh:</b>	140,914 sq. km
	• <b>Balochistan:</b>	347,190 sq. km.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>North West Frontier Province:</b> 74,521 sq. km.</li> <li>• <b>Federally Administered Tribal Areas:</b> 27,220 sq. km.</li> <li>• <b>Islamabad (Capital):</b> 906 sq. km.</li> </ul>
<b>Irrigated land</b>	182,300 sq km (2003)
<b>Cultivated land</b>	24.44% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• permanent crops: 0.84%</li> <li>• other: 74.72% (2005)</li> </ul>

## Economy

<b>Monetary unit</b>	1 Pakistani Rupee = 100 Paisa
<b>Currency code</b>	PKR
<b>Exchange rates</b>	USD 1 = PKR 76.5 (2008)
<b>GDP per capita</b>	USD 2370 (HDR 2005)
<b>Labor force</b>	49.18 million <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• agriculture: 42%</li> <li>• industry: 20%</li> <li>• services 38% (est.)</li> </ul>
<b>Unemployment rate</b>	7.5% (est.)
<b>Population below poverty line (USD 1)</b>	17% (HDR 2005)
<b>Inflation rate (consumer prices)</b>	7.8% (est.)
<b>Investment</b>	21.4% of GDP (est.)
<b>Industries</b>	textiles and apparel, food processing, pharmaceuticals, construction materials, paper products, fertilizer, shrimp
<b>Imports</b>	\$30.33 billion (est.)
<b>Exports</b>	\$16.31 billion (est.)
<b>Main exports</b>	textile products, rice, cotton, leather goods
<b>Fiscal year</b>	1 July – 31 June

## Major Political Parties

- Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP)
- Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N)
- Pakistan Muslim League – Quaid-e-Azam (PML-Q)
- Pakistan Muslim League – Functional (PML-F)
- Mutahida Qaumi Movement (MQM)
- Mutahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA)
- Awami National Party (ANP)
- Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaaf (PTI)
- Jamat-e-Islami (JI)
- Balochistan National Party (BNP)
- Pakistan Peoples' Party – Sherpao Group (PPP-S)

## **Judicial System**

- **Supreme Court**

The Supreme Court is the highest court of the land, exercising appellate and advisory jurisdiction. It is the Court of ultimate appeal and therefore final arbiter of law and the Constitution. Its decisions are binding on all other courts. The court consists of a Chief Justice and other Judges, appointed by the President. The court exercises original jurisdiction in inter-governmental disputes, be that dispute between federal government and a provincial or among provincial governments. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court is the Chief Justice of Pakistan

- **High Courts**

There is a High Court in each province. Each High Court consists of a Chief Justice and other Judges. The number of Judges of Lahore High Court is fixed at fifty, High Court of Sindh at twenty-eight, Peshawar High Court at sixteen and Balochistan High Court at nine. The Chief Justice of all High Courts is appointed by the President in accordance with the Consultation with the Chief Justice of Pakistan and other Judges.

- **Federal Shariat Court**

The Court consists of eight Muslim Judges including the Chief Justice of Pakistan. Such Judges are appointed by the President from amongst the serving or retired Judges of the Supreme Court or a High Court. Of the eight Judges, three are required to be Ulema who are well versed in Islamic Law. The Judges hold office for a period of three years and the President may extend such period.

- **Civil & Criminal Courts**

The provincial governments appoint the civil and criminal judges and their terms and conditions are regulated under the provincial civil servants acts/rules. The High Court however, exercises administrative control over such courts. The civil courts consist of District Judge, Additional District Judge and Judicial Magistrate Class I, II & III. The quantum of penalty, appeals against criminal courts lie to Session Judge or High Court.

- **Revenue Courts**

Besides the civil courts, there exist revenue courts, operating under the West Pakistan Land Revenue Act 1967. The Revenue Courts may be classified as the Board of Revenue, the commissioner, the Collector, the Assistant Collector of the First Grade and Second Grade. The provincial government that exercises administration control over them appoints such officers. Law prescribes their powers and functions.

- **Special Courts**

The Constitution authorizes the federal legislature to establish administrative courts and tribunals for dealing with federal subjects. Consequently, several special courts/tribunals have been created which operate under the administrative control of the federal government. Such courts/tribunals include the Special Banking Court, Special Court Custom, Taxation and Anti-corruption, Income Tax (Appellate) Tribunal, Insurance Appellate Tribunal, etc. The judicial officers presiding over these courts are appointed on deputation from the provincial judicial cadre.

- **Service Tribunals**

The government is authorized to set up administrative courts and tribunals for exercising jurisdiction in matters, inter-alia, relating to the terms and conditions of service of civil servants, under Article 212 of the Constitution. The members of these tribunals are appointed by the respective Government.

## Human Rights Issues

- **Gender-based Violence**

Gender-based violence, or violence against women, is a major public health and human rights problem throughout the world, resulting in mental and physical harm and may even result in death, sometimes committed by strangers but mostly by known men.

The use of violence against women is a result of discrimination and it further perpetuates gender inequity. It is frequently reported to and results in physiological, emotional and physical suffering or death to a woman. Women are abused in the name of honor, pride and orthodox customary practices, Prevents or restricts her participation in everyday activities, family life, and cultural activities.

Cases of gender-based violence, including physical violence and sexual abuse stood at 7,870 in 2007, as compared to 7,564 in 2006 (with 3,051 cases of physical abuse and 863 of sexual abuse). Further categorization shows that out of the 7,870 cases, 1,306 were of murder, 104 of murder after rape, 487 of rape, 272 of gang-rape, 1,745 of physical abuse, 810 of Karo Kari (honour killing), 199 of burn cases, 1,321 of kidnapping for ransom, 182 of human trafficking and 1,041 of suicide were reported. Moreover, 193 women were subjected to torture by the police and 210 cases were of the Hudood Ordinance.

According to the provincial break-up, 274 cases of violence against women were reported in Balochistan, 563 in the NWFP, 4,987 in Punjab, and 2,046 in Sindh.

- **Human Trafficking**

The problem of human trade and trafficking is multidimensional in nature, as it needs to be addressed on various fronts. The victims of trafficking are either lured by better job prospects, or kidnapped. Women and children are most vulnerable to human trafficking. In some cases, it is parents, guardians and husbands sell them to traffickers. Sometimes girls are sold after fake marriages, or deceived into illegal cross-border migration.

- **Bonded Labour**

Bonded labour, also called debt bondage or peshgi, is a form of slavery in which poor workers, instead of taking wages in exchange for their work, employee takes advance payment from an employer at overpriced interest rates, and in return promise themselves, or one or more members of their family to work until the loan is paid off.

Universally recognized as slavery, the debt bondage of children and adults has been proscribed in international laws on slavery and forced labour for many years. Most recently, child debt bondage has been defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) as a 'worst form of child labour' and therefore is to be considered an unconditional priority for abolition.

The estimated number of bonded laborers is approximately 1.7 million (mostly in southern Sindh and southern Punjab).

- **Blasphemy Laws**

The blasphemy laws in Pakistan are found in several sections of the Pakistan Penal Code, including Section 295 B and C and 298 A, B and C. It imposes a variety of penalties for different forms of blasphemy, including the death penalty for anyone found to have "by words or visible representation or by an imputation or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiled the name of the Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH)". Similarly, anyone blamed as a blasphemer against the Holy Quran is awarded life imprisonment under section 295C.

Among majority Muslim countries, Pakistan has very strict anti-blasphemy laws. In 1982, President Zia ul-Haq introduced Section 295B to the Pakistan Penal Code punishing "defiling the Holy Qur'an" with life

imprisonment. In 1986, Section 295C was introduced, mandating the death penalty for "use of derogatory remarks in respect of the Holy Prophet".

- **Terrorism**

**Terrorism in Pakistan** has been prevalent since the 1980s mostly due to the Soviet-Afghan War, and the subsequent proxy war against the communists that continued for at least a decade. Terrorism can be attributed to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan's status as the sixth most populous country in the world, with diverse cultures, languages, traditions and customs.

The year 2007 witnessed the most number of suicide bombings as terrorists attacked 57 targets during the year all over the country, killing over 760 persons, in addition to the assassination of former prime minister and late PPP chair Benazir Bhutto, in one such attack in Rawalpindi on 27 December. At least 30 people were killed and over hundred injured in the incident.

- **Independence of Judiciary**

As former President of Pakistan Gen. Pervez Musharaf doffed of his uniform and took his office as civilian President, a very crucial issue of independence of judiciary stand off. He then, attempts to suspend the Chief Justice of Pakistan Iftikhar A. Chaudhry catalysed what came to be known as the 'judicial crisis', the lawyer-led movement to restore Choudhry, covered by some two dozen television news channels. The high-voltage protests and the media coverage rocked the country and Musharaf's popularity plummeted.

- **Freedom of Expression**

Freedom of expression is sometimes used to denote not only freedom of verbal speech but any act of seeking, receiving and delivering information or ideas, regardless of the medium used. Freedom of speech and freedom of expression is closely related to the concept of freedom of conscience and freedom of thought. Violence towards journalists were widespread in various forms including enforced disappearances, intimidation, physical attacks and killing.

- **Torture**

In the first half of 2008, there were 743 cases of torture, of which 416 incidents took place in police stations according to the figure of Madadgaar Helpline, a local NGO. In 2007, 1,723 torture cases was documented. It was reported that the torture was a means to extract confession and to extort money from victims.

Since the government has ratified the Convention on torture in April 2008, it has obligation to comply with the provision to curb the culture of torture.

## **Status of Ratification of United Nations Human Rights Treaties**

### **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)**

Signature: 17 April 2008

### **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)**

Signature: 3 November 2004  
Ratification: 17 April 2008

### **International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)**

Signature: 19 September 1966  
Ratification: 21 September 1966

**Concerns from the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination:**

- The government has not submitted report from 1998 to 2007; the monitoring body issued no concluding observation.

**International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**

Ratification: 12 March, 1996

**Concerns of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 2007 (CEDAW/C/PAK/CO/3)**

- “The Committee recommends that the State party take measures to end impunity for acts of violence against women by ensuring prosecution and punishment of offenders.”(para. 27)
- “The Committee notes with concern that violence against women and girls persists, including domestic violence, rape and crimes committed in the name of honour.” (para. 22)
- “The Prevention and Control of Human Trafficking Ordinance of 2002 does not adequately address the needs of women and girls who are victims of trafficking.” (para. 30)
- “The Committee is concerned about the high illiteracy rate of women, the low enrolment of girls in schools and their high dropout rate, especially in rural areas” (para. 36)

**International Convention against Torture (CAT)**

Signature: 17 April 2008

**International Covenant on the Rights of Child (CRC)**

Signature: 20 September 1990

Ratification: 12 November 1990

**Concerns of the Committee on the Rights of Child, 2003 (CRC/C/15/Add.217):**

- “Make greater efforts to ensure that, in accordance with article 2, all children within its jurisdiction enjoy all the rights set out in the Convention without discrimination, particularly girl children, children belonging to a religious or other minority group, children with disabilities and other vulnerable groups of children.”(para. 30)
- “deeply concerned at the numerous reports of torture, serious ill-treatment and sexual abuse of children” (para. 40)
- “The still very high infant, under-5 and maternal mortality rates, due partly to weak antenatal and postnatal care and maternal malnutrition”...“the poor provision of health care, particularly in rural areas, owing to lack of necessary support structures such as education, communication, transport and other facilities, as well as reports of corruption within the framework of projects supported by international organizations” (para. 52)
- “The prevalence of child labour is still extremely high, and that the phenomenon is widely accepted in society.” (para. 69(a))

**Sources:**

Human Development Report 2007/2008, United Nations Development Programme

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations

Last Updated: October 2008