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Transnational Repression By Pakistan

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1. Executive summary & recommendations

Transnational repression threatens the sovereignty of the member States of the United Nations.

On 23 September 2026, more than 130 UN Special Procedures mandate holders and members of UN treaty bodies condemned the increasing use of transnational repression to silence, intimidate and punish individuals abroad for their political opinions, dissent or human rights activities. The UN experts highlighted the tactics used in transnational repression including surveillance, online harassment, reprisals against family members, politically motivated prosecutions, passport restrictions, unlawful deportations, enforced disappearances, torture and targeted killings. They warned that these practices threaten freedom of expression, independent journalism, civic space, refugee protection and the rule of law, placing exiled journalists, activists, human rights defenders and minority communities at particular risk.¹

This report exposes Pakistan's alleged campaign of transnational repression across the world that ought to be taken into account.

This report documents 28 cases of alleged transnational repression by Pakistan targeting journalists and commentators, human rights defenders, Baloch and other ethnic activists, academics, political opponents, former military personnel critical of the establishment, and other government critics living abroad. The countries in which the Pakistani government allegedly targeted individuals include Australia, Canada, France, Iran, Germany, Kenya, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates, the

United Kingdom and the United States. Family members of individuals living in exile have also reportedly been targeted in Pakistan as part of this transnational repression.

These 28 cases of transnational repression by Pakistan involve at least 48 distinct, identifiable individual victims. These include 18 victims who were killed or died under suspicious circumstances; two victims who were deported or forcibly returned; six victims who were abducted, forcibly disappeared or detained; 10 victims who faced physical attacks, threats or reprisals against their families; at least 10 victims who faced legal persecution and judicial harassment, including journalists and two brothers of a journalist; and two human rights defenders who faced surveillance and monitoring. Furthermore, family members of victims of transnational repression residing in Pakistan have also reportedly been subjected to abduction, threats, harassment, surveillance, torture, intimidation, the freezing of bank accounts, the cancellation of passports and other official documents, and other restrictions intended to pressure overseas critics into silence.

The issue of transnational repression by Pakistan has been raised, among others, by the UK Parliament's Joint Committee on Human Rights on 30 July 2025;² the US Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission in 2025,³ Amnesty International,⁴ the US-based Freedom House,⁵ the Committee to Protect Journalists⁶ and *Reporters Sans Frontiers* (RSF).⁷

2. The nature, scale and methods of transnational repression by Pakistan including in Australia

The submission documents 28 cases / incidents of alleged transnational repression by Pakistan targeting journalists and commentators, human rights defenders, Baloch and other ethnic activists, academics, political opponents, former military personnel critical of the establishment, and other government critics living abroad. These incidents comprise eight cases of murder or suspicious deaths; two cases of deportation and forced return; four cases of abduction, enforced disappearance and detention; 10 cases of physical attacks, death threats and retaliation against family members; two cases of legal persecution and judicial harassment in absentia; and two cases of surveillance and monitoring, as detailed below:

- | | |
|---|--|
| Case 1: Mysterious death of journalist Sajid Hussain in Sweden | Case 10: Deportation of journalist Syed Fawad Ali Shah from Malaysia |
| Case 2: Mysterious death of Baloch activist Karima Baloch in Canada | Case 11: Incommunicado detention of Usman Ghani and Abdul Rehman in Saudi Arabia |
| Case 3: Killing of journalist Arshad Sharif in Kenya | Case 12: Disappearance of Ustad Wahid Kambar Baloch in Iran |
| Case 4: Killing of Baloch activist Hani Baloch and her husband in Iran | Case 13: Disappearance of Osman, a Baloch, in Iran |
| Case 5: Killing of nine Balochis in Iran | Case 14: Detention of Syed Salman Raza Zaidi and Muhammad Junaid Jahangir, PTI digital media team in UAE |
| Case 6: Killing of Baloch activist Sabir Baloch in Saravan in Iran | Case 15: Attack on blogger Ahmed Waqass Goraya in the Netherlands |
| Case 7: Killing of Akhtar Baloch in Dashtiyari in Iran | Case 16: Death threats to human rights researcher, Roshaan Khattak in the United Kingdom |
| Case 8: Killing of two Balochis, Zubair and Jameel, in Iran | Case 17: Repeated attacks on Shahzad Akbar, former cabinet Minister under Imran Khan in the United Kingdom |
| Case 9: Deportation of Baloch activist, Rashid Hussain Brohi from the UAE | Case 18: Attack on exiled journalist Adil Raja in the UK |
| | Case 19: Threats and intimidation to journalist Taha Siddiqui in France |
| | Case 20: Threats to former advisor to Imran Khan, Dr. Salman Ahmad and his family in the United States |
| | Case 21: Threats to journalist, Wajahat S. Khan and his family in the United States |
| | Case 22: Alleged abduction and torture of a family member of HRD Salman Shabbir in Australia |
| | Case 23: Intimidation of family members of Baloch activist Abdullah Abbas in Germany |

- Case 24: Threat to academic and political commentator Ayesha Siddiqi in the UK
- Case 25: Sentencing of seven Pakistani journalists and commentators living in exile in absentia
- Case 26: Reprisals against journalist Ahmad Noorani and family members in United States
- Case 27: Surveillance on journalist Kiyya Baloch in Norway
- Case 28: Surveillance on HRD Mahrang Baloch in Norway

Apart from murder and suspicious deaths, facilitating deportation, abduction, enforced disappearance, detention, physical attacks, death threats, retaliation against family members, legal persecution and judicial harassment in absentia, and surveillance, the methods of transnational repression allegedly employed by Pakistan also include passport cancellation, administrative restrictions, the freezing of bank accounts, and other restrictions intended to pressure overseas critics into silence.

The victims of transnational repression cited in this submission include at least 48 distinct, identifiable or countable individuals. These include 18 victims who were killed or died under suspicious circumstances; two victims who were deported or forcibly returned; six victims who were abducted, forcibly disappeared or detained; 10 victims who faced physical attacks, threats or reprisals against their families; at least 10 victims who faced legal persecution and judicial harassment, including journalists and two brothers of a journalist; and two human rights defenders who faced surveillance and monitoring. Furthermore, family members of victims of transnational repression residing in

Pakistan have also reportedly been subjected to abduction, threats, harassment, surveillance, torture, intimidation, the freezing of bank accounts, the cancellation of passports and other official documents, and other restrictions intended to pressure overseas critics into silence.

Baloch individuals were disproportionately targeted. The victims included at least 17 individuals who were explicitly identified by ethnicity as Baloch or described as Baloch activists. While 17 Baloch individuals were killed or died under suspicious circumstances, one Baloch individual was deported, two Baloch individuals faced abduction, enforced disappearance or detention, one Baloch individual faced physical attacks and threats, and two Baloch individuals were subjected to surveillance and monitoring.

Cases of transnational repression by Pakistan have been reported in 14 countries: Australia, Canada, France, Iran, Germany, Kenya, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States. Meanwhile, family members of people living in exile have reportedly been targeted in Pakistan as part of these alleged acts of transnational repression.

3. Illustrative cases of transnational repression by Pakistan

3.1 Murder and suspicious deaths

In eight cases of alleged transnational repression by Pakistan, 18 victims were reportedly killed or died under suspicious circumstances in Sweden, Kenya, Canada and Iran, as detailed below.

Case 1: Mysterious death of journalist Sajid Hussain in Sweden



On 2 March 2020, Sajid Hussain, a Pakistani journalist who lived in exile in Sweden after fleeing Pakistan in 2012 because of threats linked to his reporting on human rights abuses and enforced disappearances in Balochistan, disappeared after boarding a train from Stockholm to Uppsala. His body was found in the Fyris River near Uppsala on 23 April 2020. He had been granted political asylum in Sweden in 2019 and was working as a part-time lecturer at Uppsala University while continuing his journalism. Hussain had also received death threats. *Reporters Sans Frontiers* raised concerns about possible involvement of Pakistani intelligence agencies.⁸

Case 2: Mysterious death of Baloch activist Karima Baloch in Canada



On 21 December 2020, Karima Baloch, a 37-year-old Baloch human rights activist who had received asylum in Canada in 2016, was found dead on Toronto's Centre Island after she went missing. She had fled Pakistan following alleged threats and intimidation linked to her activism against enforced disappearances and human rights abuses in Balochistan. Her husband, Hammal Haider, said that she continued to face threats and that he received messages warning him that his family could be targeted before her disappearance. He expressed concern that foul play could not be ruled out.⁹

Case 3: Killing of journalist Arshad Sharif in Kenya



On 23 October 2022, Pakistani journalist Arshad Sharif, a prominent critic of Pakistan's powerful military establishment, was shot dead by Kenyan police near Nairobi. He had fled Pakistan in

August 2022 amid multiple legal cases, including sedition charges linked to comments considered offensive to the military, and had stayed in the United Arab Emirates before travelling to Kenya. Kenyan police initially described the shooting as a case of mistaken identity. However, a report by Pakistani investigators, released on 7 December 2022, concluded that Sharif's killing was a "planned, targeted assassination" rather than an accidental shooting. The report cited contradictory statements by Kenyan police and alleged that the police may have been used as instruments in the killing, but did not provide supporting evidence for this allegation or identify those responsible. It suggested that individuals in Kenya, Dubai or Pakistan might have played a role. The circumstances of Sharif's death raised serious concerns about the safety of journalists forced into exile, although the report did not establish the responsibility of any specific individual or government.¹⁰

Case 4: Killing of Baloch activist Hani Baloch and her husband in Iran



In August 2023, the mutilated bodies of exiled Baloch activist Hani Baloch and her husband, Sameer Baloch, were found in the town of Iranshahr, Iran. The couple had reportedly been abducted by unknown men in Iran approximately two weeks before their bodies were discovered in the western part of Iranian Balochistan, where they had been living in exile. Baloch human rights activists said that Hani had been protesting

enforced disappearances since she and her then-fiancé, Muhammad Naseem Baloch, had allegedly been abducted by security forces in Karachi in 2019. This case was reported in the *2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan*, published by the US Department of State, as a case of transnational repression.¹¹

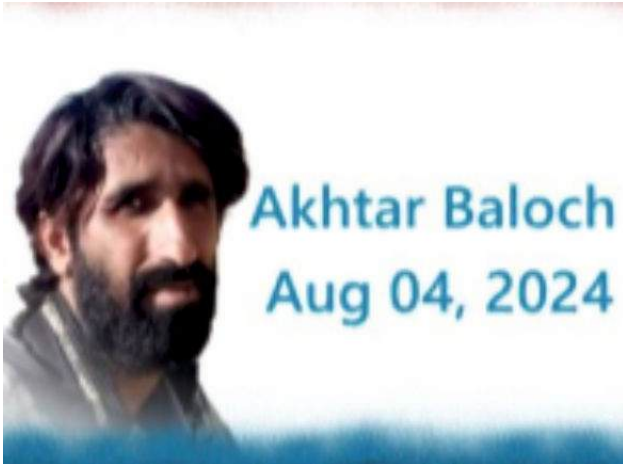
Case 5: Killing of nine Balochis in Iran

On 18 January 2024, Pakistan conducted military strikes in Iran's Sistan and Balochistan Province, killing nine Baloch individuals of Pakistani origin. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the Pakistani military targeted hideouts of Baloch insurgent groups in Iran. Baloch rights groups alleged that the victims included innocent women and children. This case was reported in the *2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan*, published by the US Department of State, as a case of transnational repression.¹²

Case 6: Killing of Baloch activist Sabir Baloch in Saravan in Iran

According to the Baloch human rights organisation *Paank*, Sabir Baloch, son of Dad Shah, a labourer from Awaran district, Balochistan, was killed on 4 August 2024 in Saravan, Iran. *Paank* attributed his killing to Pakistani agents, alleging that the perpetrators had pursued a Baloch individual who had fled across the border. The organisation also reported that Sabir's family had left their home in Pakistan fearing arrest, extrajudicial killing and enforced disappearance.¹³

Case 7: Killing of Akhtar Baloch in Dashtiyari in Iran



On 28 August 2024, Akhtar Baloch, son of Muhammad and a resident of Gomazi, Tump in Kech district of Balochistan, Pakistan, was reportedly shot dead by unidentified gunmen in the Dashtiyari area of Iranian Balochistan. According to the Baloch National Movement's human rights organisation, Paank, the killing occurred in western Balochistan across the border in Iran. Paank alleged that Pakistani agents were responsible for the killing.¹⁴

Case 8: Killing of two Balochis, Zubair and Jameel, in Iran

On 21 June 2026, Zubair and Jameel, sons of Master Nabeel and originally from the Kolahu area of Tump, Kech district of Balochistan, were killed in Saravan, Iran, where they had relocated after being displaced by Pakistani military operations. According to reports, the attack was carried out by operatives of a Pakistani-backed death squad.¹⁵

3.2 Deportation and forced return as part of transnational repression

At least two cases of deportation and forced return of the two Pakistani activists were reported.

Case 1: Deportation of Baloch activist, Rashid Hussain Brohi from the UAE



On 27 October 2018, Rashid Hussain Brohi, a Baloch activist associated with the Baloch National Movement in Pakistan, was detained by Emirati security forces in the United Arab Emirates. According to Amnesty International, he was held incommunicado for seven months without being given an explanation for his detention. On 22 June 2019, the UAE forcibly returned him to Pakistan. Amnesty International warned that his forced return placed his life at risk because of his Baloch ethnicity and described the return as unlawful.¹⁶ In February 2023, Pakistan's Foreign Ministry reportedly acknowledged before the Islamabad High Court that he had been extradited, but his whereabouts remained undisclosed.¹⁷

Case 2: Deportation of journalist Syed Fawad Ali Shah from Malaysia



In August 2022, at the request of Pakistan's High Commission in Kuala Lumpur, the Malaysian government deported Pakistani journalist Syed Fawad Ali Shah, who had reported on enforced disappearances linked to the security services. Upon his return to Pakistan, Shah was held for five months at locations he described as "black sites," where he said he was tortured. He was later charged with defamation, intimidating officials and spreading false news online.¹⁸

3.3 Abduction, enforced disappearance and detention as part of transnational repression

At least four cases of alleged abduction, enforced disappearance or detention involving six victims as part of alleged transnational repression by Pakistan have been reported.

Case 1: Incommunicado detention of Usman Ghani and Abdul Rehman in Saudi Arabia

Between January and August 2022, Usman Ghani and Abdul Rehman, two Pakistani brothers residing and working in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, reportedly experienced prolonged incommunicado detention following their arrests by Saudi authorities. The brothers had moved from Faisalabad to Riyadh in 2016, where they lived with their families and worked in the computer dyeing and CNC machinery industry. In 2021, Usman Ghani discovered that his passport could not be renewed because it had been blocked. On 10 January 2022, their father was reportedly informed by Pakistan's Passport and Immigration Headquarters in Islamabad that both brothers' passports had been blocked by Pakistan's Counter Terrorism Department (CTD), without prior notice or any explanation being provided to the family.¹⁹

Abdul Rehman was reportedly taken into custody during a raid by Saudi authorities on 9 January 2022. Usman Ghani was subsequently arrested on 21 August 2022. Their families were allegedly denied information about their whereabouts and legal status. Abdul Rehman reportedly resurfaced in February 2023, when it became known that he was being held in a prison in Riyadh. In May 2022, the Islamabad High Court issued an order directing Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to address the family's grievance concerning Abdul Rehman, but the order was not effectively implemented. Pakistani embassy officials in Riyadh allegedly refused to provide the family with information about the brothers' detention.²⁰

Case 2: Disappearance of Ustad Wahid Kambar Baloch in Iran



On 19 July 2024, Ustad Wahid Kambar Baloch, aged 74, a veteran Baloch political leader, reportedly disappeared in Kerman, Iran, while staying with relatives and receiving medical treatment for a heart condition. According to the Baloch National Movement (BNM) and other Baloch political organisations, he was abducted by personnel allegedly linked to Pakistani intelligence agencies and taken to an unknown location. His supporters subsequently alleged

that he had been transferred to Pakistan and held in the custody of the Pakistan Army. Following his disappearance, his family and Baloch political organisations repeatedly called for information about his whereabouts and demanded his safe release.²¹

His case attracted renewed attention in July 2026, when the BNM marked the second anniversary of his disappearance and appealed for international intervention. On 21 July 2026, the BNM alleged that Wahid Kambar Baloch had remained in Pakistan Army custody for two years and called for his immediate public appearance. The organisation further claimed that he had been subjected to severe physical and psychological torture in an attempt to force him to abandon his political beliefs.²²

Case 3: Disappearance of Osman, a Baloch, in Iran

On 18 June 2026, Osman, son of Mauldad, from Gobard Mand, Kech district, Balochistan, was reportedly detained in Chabahar, Iran, by Pakistani intelligence agencies, allegedly with the assistance of local informants. His whereabouts and legal status remain unknown.²³

Case 4: Detention of Syed Salman Raza Zaidi and Muhammad Junaid Jahangir, PTI digital media team in UAE

Muhammad Junaid Jahangir and Syed Salman Raza who were once part of imprisoned former Prime Minister Imran Khan's digital media team, helping run social media accounts supporting his party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) were disappeared allegedly at the behest of the Pakistan Army.²⁴ Zaidi went missing from his residence in Sharjah on Sept 27, 2024, and was subsequently taken into custody by UAE authorities. Jahangir was allegedly detained on

Sept 24, 2024, at Dubai airport on his return from Saudi Arabia.

On 22 October 2026, the Lahore High Court (LHC) issued notices to Foreign Secretary Asim Iftikhar in two separate contempt petitions over alleged non-compliance with an earlier court order concerning two PTI-affiliated Pakistani citizens detained in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). On 14 September 2026, the LHC had directed the foreign secretary to process and decide within 15 days representations concerning the detention of two citizens — Syed Salman Raza Zaidi and Muhammad Junaid Jahangir. The two individuals remained deprived of consular, diplomatic, and legal access.²⁵

3.4 Physical attacks, death threats and retaliation against family members in Pakistan as part of transnational repression

At least 10 victims faced physical attacks, death threats and retaliation against family members as part of alleged transnational repression by Pakistan have been reported in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, France, the United States, Australia and Germany.

Case 1: Attack on blogger Ahmed Waqass Goraya in the Netherlands



In February 2020, the Netherlands-based political blogger Ahmed Waqass Goraya, whose blog focuses on the Pakistani military's poor human rights record, was attacked in Rotterdam. Goraya claimed that the assailant was acting on orders from Pakistani intelligence agencies. Two years later, a UK jury convicted a British man whom prosecutors said had been hired by a middleman in Pakistan to kill Goraya.²⁶ Goraya was previously abducted and tortured in connection with his work in Pakistan. Goraya had previously been abducted and tortured in connection with his work in Pakistan. He also alleged that his family members in Pakistan had been harassed.²⁷

Case 2: Death threats to human rights researcher, Roshaan Khattak in the United Kingdom



Roshaan Khattak, a Pakistani human rights researcher and postgraduate student at the University of Cambridge, reported receiving threats linked to his research on enforced disappearances in Balochistan and his advocacy for his cousin, Idris Khattak, a Pakistani human rights defender who was forcibly disappeared and subsequently convicted by a military court.²⁸

On 21 December 2024, Khattak reportedly received a threatening message warning that neither Cambridge nor the United Kingdom

would be safe for him or his family if he continued his human rights work. He reported the threats to the police, the University of Cambridge and Wolfson College. However, Khattak alleged that the responses from university officials and police were inadequate and that the situation adversely affected his accommodation, access to research materials and academic progression.²⁹ In February 2025, Khattak submitted written evidence to the UK Parliament alleging intimidation and threats by individuals he believed were linked to the Pakistani government in retaliation for his research on enforced disappearances and human rights abuses in Balochistan. Khattak linked the threats to his advocacy for his cousin, Idris Khattak, a human rights researcher who was forcibly disappeared in 2019 and subsequently convicted by a military court.³⁰

The case subsequently attracted attention from human rights organisations and UK parliamentarians. On 14 July 2025, an Early Day Motion was tabled in the UK Parliament expressing concern about the handling of his case and calling for stronger protections against transnational repression in higher education.³¹ On 6 October 2025, Freedom House and other civil society organisations also raised concerns about the case and called for more effective institutional safeguards against foreign intimidation.³²

The threats have since escalated. In November 2025, Khattak received explicit death threats and further messages referring to specific dates and events, including an incident in which his filming equipment was stolen in Sweden while he was investigating the suspicious death of Baloch journalist Sajid Hussain, whose body was found in a river in Uppsala in 2020. The messages also included his passport number and other confidential details.³³

Case 3: Repeated attacks on Shahzad Akbar, former cabinet Minister under Imran Khan in the United Kingdom



In December 2025, Mirza Shahzad Akbar, a Pakistani human rights lawyer and former cabinet member under Imran Khan, was assaulted at his home in Cambridgeshire, England. Akbar told *The Guardian* that a man knocked on his door, checked his identity and punched him repeatedly, reportedly up to 30 times. On 31 December 2025, his home was targeted again in an alleged arson-related incident. On 23 January 2026, UK counter-terrorism police announced that three British men had been charged in connection with the attacks. Akbar, a prominent critic of Pakistan's government and military establishment, said he feared for his life and his family's safety. He believed the attacks were intended to intimidate him.³⁴ This was not the first time Akbar had been targeted. In November 2023, Akbar was attacked with acid outside his home in the United Kingdom by a helmeted assailant in front of his four-year-old daughter. He suffered burns and other injuries but said his glasses and quick reaction helped protect his eyes. In May 2023, Shahzad Akbar's brother, Murad, was reportedly

abducted from his home in Islamabad by Pakistan's ISI and held without charge at an undisclosed location. A senior government official allegedly stated that he would remain detained indefinitely unless Akbar returned to Pakistan. Murad was released on 27 August 2023 following international pressure, including an open letter to the then-British Foreign Secretary, James Cleverly, warning that he faced risks of torture, disappearance and death.³⁵

Case 4: Attack on exiled journalist Adil Raja in the UK



In December 2025, the home of Adil Raja, a Pakistani journalist living in the United Kingdom, was broken into and ransacked while he was away. On 27 January 2026, the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) welcomed the arrest of four suspects in connection with the attack on Raja's home. Raja, a former Pakistani army officer who retired in 2017, became an investigative journalist and critic of Pakistan's government, reporting on alleged corruption and human rights abuses. He had reportedly faced other forms of pressure, including the cancellation of his passport and identity

documents, seizure of his assets in Pakistan, a court martial in absentia and the abduction of his mother. The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) expressed concern that the incident was intended to intimidate Raja and obstruct his journalism. It urged the UK government to protect him against threats and resist any attempt to extradite him.³⁶ Adil Raja was among those convicted in absentia by an Anti-Terrorism Court in Islamabad on 2 January 2026.³⁷

Case 5: Threats and intimidation to journalist Taha Siddiqui in France



In January 2019, Pakistani journalist Taha Siddiqui described the continuing security concerns he faced after fleeing Pakistan and settling in France. Siddiqui had left Pakistan in 2018 after surviving an attempted abduction in Islamabad, which he believed was connected to his critical reporting on the Pakistani military. He alleged that he had faced threats for years because of his journalism and criticism of the military establishment. In an article published by *The Washington Post* on 8 January 2019, Siddiqui explained that fleeing Pakistan had not necessarily ended his fears for his safety. He

described the pressures that had forced him to leave his home country and raised concerns about the vulnerability of journalists who continue to criticise powerful state institutions after going into exile.³⁸

Case 6: Threats to former advisor to Imran Khan, Dr. Salman Ahmad and his family in the United States

Dr. Salman Ahmad, a Pakistani-American musician and former adviser to Imran Khan, has reportedly faced threats and intimidation linked to his political association with the former prime minister. Ahmad was travelling with Khan during an assassination attempt and subsequently received an email from a senior Pakistani military officer enquiring about their safety. In March 2023, an individual claiming to be an Army brigadier reportedly warned Ahmad's elderly father in Lahore that his son's life was in danger and advised him not to return to Pakistan. Following a private Zoom meeting involving Ahmad, US Representative Maxine Waters and Khan, during which Khan discussed threats to his life, Khan was arrested the following day, and Ahmad was forced to leave Pakistan.³⁹

Despite residing in the United States, Ahmad and his family have reportedly continued to face threats. In an alleged act of retaliation intended to silence him, masked men, some reportedly wearing police uniforms, broke into the Karachi home of his sister and brother-in-law, both US citizens. His brother-in-law, Shahid, was abducted and detained without charge for five days. During this period, Ahmad reportedly received threats and demands from unidentified individuals that he surrender his X (formerly Twitter) account credentials and publicly denounce the anti-military protests of 9 May

2023. The FBI and US State Department reportedly intervened to secure Shahid's release. Ahmad's sister has since reduced communication with him because of fears for her family's safety, while concerns about continued surveillance and intimidation persist.⁴⁰

Case 7: Threats to journalist, Wajahat S. Khan and his family in the United States



Wajahat S. Khan, an Emmy-nominated journalist and US permanent resident, had reportedly faced transnational repression because of his reporting on Pakistan's military establishment. In 2018, he was allegedly blacklisted from mainstream Pakistani media and briefly detained and interrogated by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), prompting him to leave Pakistan for the United States. After resuming independent reporting in 2022 and interviewing former Prime Minister Imran Khan in 2023, he was charged in Pakistan with sedition, terrorism and incitement and declared an absconder by an anti-terrorism court. Wajahat S. Khan was among those convicted in absentia by an anti-terrorism court in Islamabad on 2 January 2026.⁴¹

The alleged reprisals extended to his family. In May 2024, his then-partner reportedly received threatening calls and ended their relationship out of fear. His brother-in-law allegedly faced an attempted abduction and was pressured to publicly disassociate himself from Khan. Authorities also reportedly demanded that Khan's sister record a video portraying him as an agent of foreign powers; following her refusal, she cut off contact to protect her family. Her bank accounts and those of Khan's former in-laws were reportedly frozen. The FBI had reportedly acknowledged the threats against Khan as a case of transnational repression. The cancellation of his Pakistani passport has further restricted his international travel, while security concerns have reportedly prevented his daughters from visiting him.⁴²

Case 8: Alleged abduction and torture of a family member of HRD Salman Shabbir in Australia

In March 2024, Salman Shabbir, an Australian citizen of Pakistani origin who ran the social-media account "Citizen Action", reported that his brother was abducted from his home in Pakistan by men dressed in black. Shabbir had been campaigning for democratic reforms, raising concerns about Pakistan's 2024 elections and advocating for international scrutiny of the country's human rights record. According to an investigation by Drop Site News, Shabbir subsequently received calls from a man who demanded that he stop criticising the Pakistani government, surrender his account credentials and delete a post reporting his brother's abduction. During one call, the man allegedly threatened Shabbir's family and had his brother beaten while Shabbir listened over the phone. The caller identified himself as "Hamza" but did

not confirm whether he worked for Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).⁴³

Case 9: Intimidation of family members of Baloch activist Abdullah Abbas in Germany



In 2011, Abdullah Abbas, a Baloch human rights activist and later the Executive Director of the Human Rights Council of Balochistan (HRCB), fled Pakistan after reportedly being beaten by unidentified men near his university in Karachi. He stated that security forces subsequently raided his family home and the apartment where he had been living, raising concerns about surveillance and intimidation. He later settled in Germany and continued documenting alleged human rights violations in Balochistan.⁴⁴ Abdullah Abbas was allegedly subjected to transnational repression through the targeting of family members who remained in Pakistan. His relatives experienced harassment, surveillance and intimidation by state authorities. These actions were reportedly intended to pressure or silence Abbas by exploiting his concern for his family's safety.⁴⁵

Case 10: Threat to academic and political commentator Ayesha Siddiqi in the UK



In February 2022, British media reported that Ayesha Siddiqi, a Pakistani academic and political commentator based in London who has written critically about Pakistan's military establishment, was among several Pakistani dissidents warned by UK authorities of credible threats to their lives. The warnings followed concerns about potential attacks on Pakistani critics living abroad. Siddiqi reportedly said that a well-connected lawyer had informed her that British-based Pakistani criminal networks could be used to target her. She urged the UK government to press Pakistan to investigate the alleged networks behind the threats.⁴⁶

3.5 Legal persecution and judicial harassment in absentia as instruments of transnational repression

International human rights organisations have described the in absentia sentencing of journalists in Pakistan as a form of transnational repression, given the measures taken by Pakistan in connection with these judgments at national

and international level. At least 10 victims including journalists and two brothers of a journalist faced legal persecution and judicial harassment in absentia.

Case 1: Sentencing of seven Pakistani journalists and commentators living in exile in absentia

On 2 January 2026, an anti-terrorism court in Islamabad sentenced seven exiled journalists and commentators to life imprisonment in absentia over allegations of promoting violence against state institutions during the 2023 protests following former Prime Minister Imran Khan's arrest. The individuals convicted included former army officers-turned YouTubers Adil Raja and Syed Akbar Hussain; journalists Wajahat Saeed Khan, Sabir Shakir and Shaheen Sehba, commentator Haider Raza Mehdi and analyst Moeed Pirzada.⁴⁷ The convictions followed a warning by Pakistan's Interior Minister, Mohsin Naqvi, who threatened online critics with being brought back to Pakistan and held accountable.⁴⁸

The convictions were linked to allegations that the journalists and commentators had incited violence during the May 2023 protests following former Prime Minister Imran Khan's arrest and had spread hatred against state institutions. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), the journalists disputed the proceedings, stating that they had not been formally notified of the charges, served summonses or indictments, informed of hearing dates, given access to the evidence or provided a meaningful opportunity to defend themselves. They rejected the verdicts and argued that the proceedings violated their constitutional and international fair-trial standards. The journalists maintained that the proceedings were intended to intimidate them and restrict their reporting.⁴⁹

The convictions were accompanied by other reported measures against the journalists. Sabir Shakir who is based in London told CPJ that his and his wife's national identity documents and bank accounts had been frozen. He also alleged that individuals linked to the Pakistani army had offered to drop the charges if he stopped reporting critically on the government and military. Shaheen Sehba reported that his Pakistani passport, national identity card and official documents had been cancelled and expressed concern about threats and possible extradition.⁵⁰

Freedom House has identified the convictions as part of Pakistan's escalating campaign of transnational repression.⁵¹ The RSF described the sentencing of four of the journalists as an act of transnational repression.⁵²

Case 2: Reprisals against journalist Ahmad Noorani and family members in United States



US-based Pakistani investigative journalist Ahmad Noorani, co-founder of *Fact Focus*, has reportedly faced legal harassment linked to his reporting on alleged military interference in civilian institutions and corruption among senior army officials. In December 2025, an Islamabad court reportedly issued an arrest warrant against him over alleged anti-army propaganda on social media and declared him an absconder. Noorani

told the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) that he had been unaware of the case and feared detention if he travelled to countries closely aligned with Pakistan.⁵³

The alleged reprisals extended to his family. In March 2025, his two brothers were reportedly abducted in Islamabad and remained missing for more than a month. Noorani said his family faced continued harassment, travel restrictions, frozen bank accounts and job losses affecting both of his brothers.⁵⁴

In December 2025, the RRSF characterised the wider campaign of alleged judicial and financial harassment against Noorani and his family as transnational repression, citing criminal proceedings, restrictions and reprisals against relatives that were allegedly intended to pressure Noorani while he was living in exile in the United States.⁵⁵

3.6 Surveillance and monitoring

At least two Baloch human rights activists faced surveillance and monitoring as part of the transnational repression by Pakistan in Norway as given below:

Case1: Surveillance on journalist Kiyya Baloch in Norway

Pakistani freelance journalist Kiyya Baloch, who lives in Norway, reported concerns about transnational repression linked to his critical reporting on Pakistan's military and the human rights situation in Balochistan. He learned that he was being accused of engaging in anti-Pakistan activities in the West. He was also advised to seek police protection in Norway because of possible threats against him. His family members in Pakistan were reportedly harassed multiple times.⁵⁶ In 2020, his name

appeared on a leaked Pakistani Interior Ministry memo listing six journalists based abroad who were accused of engaging in anti-Pakistan activities or producing anti-state content. The memo reportedly instructed relevant authorities to monitor the journalists' movements and social-media accounts and suggested that they could be approached with a view to persuading them to stop their reporting.⁵⁷

Case 2: Surveillance on HRD Mahrang Baloch in Norway



In May 2024, Baloch human rights activist Dr Mahrang Baloch visited Norway and reported harassment and surveillance by Pakistani state officials while participating in a human rights symposium in Norway. International media reports also alleged that she was followed by individuals linked to the Pakistani state. This case was reported in the '*2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan*' published by the US Department of State as a case of transnational repression.⁵⁸

On 22 June 2026, Dr Mahrang Baloch and her fellow activist, Sibghatullah Shah, were sentenced to life imprisonment by a Pakistani anti-terrorism court on charges of terrorism,

sedition and murder in connection with the death of a paramilitary soldier during a protest in the town of Gwadar in 2024. Dr Mahrang had been leading a protest in Quetta following the burial in the city of 13 unclaimed bodies believed to belong to missing persons. The authorities claimed that the bodies were those of militants killed following the Bolan Pass train hijacking, although this claim could not be independently verified. Dr Mahrang's father, Abdul Ghaffar Langove, a political activist, disappeared in

2009, when she was 16. Three years later, her family received a phone call informing them that his body had been found in Lasbela district, in the southern part of the province. Her personal experience of suffering prompted her to become one of the leading voices of the BYC, a movement that campaigns against enforced disappearances and alleged human rights abuses while also advocating greater control over Balochistan's natural resources.⁵⁹

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