



**Statement for the Record  
Submitted to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission  
Hearing: Pakistan – Ongoing Political Repression  
Submitted by: First Pakistan Global  
Date: July 15, 2025**

Co-Chairman Smith, Co-Chairman McGovern and Honorable Members of the Commission,

On behalf of First Pakistan Global (FPG), a U.S.-based nonprofit dedicated to the advancement of democracy, human rights, and rule of law in Pakistan, we thank you for holding this important and timely hearing.

We would like to submit attached documents titled:

- 1. A White Paper on Human Rights and Democratic Backsliding in Pakistan**
- 2. Short Report: Islamabad Massacre (November 26, 2024)**
- 3. Countering Transnational Repression Targeting Pakistani American Pro-Democracy Advocates**

*First Pakistan Global (FPG) is a U.S.-based nonprofit organization committed to advancing democracy, protecting human rights, and strengthening civil society in Pakistan. Through policy advocacy, public education, and international engagement, FPG works to support a democratic future for Pakistan rooted in constitutional governance and the rule of law.*



First Pakistan Global

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# A White Paper on Human Rights and Democratic Backsliding in Pakistan



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## Executive Summary

Pakistan, with over 240 million citizens and a critical geostrategic position, faces escalating political instability driven by military dominance, democratic backsliding, and economic collapse. Despite being a formal parliamentary republic, Pakistan's military has long exerted disproportionate control over national governance, foreign policy, and economic sectors, systematically undermining civilian institutions and democratic development.

The current military regime, under General Asim Munir, has intensified authoritarianism, violently suppressing political dissent, manipulating elections, and weaponizing the judiciary. Notably, the November 26, 2024, massacre of peaceful protesters in Islamabad and widespread human rights abuses signal a deepening punitive state model that mirrors tactics seen in other authoritarian regimes.

U.S. policy toward Pakistan has historically prioritized short-term strategic gains—counterterrorism, arms control, and now mineral access—over long-term democratic development. However, continued reliance on Pakistan's military elite risks greater instability, undermines U.S. strategic interests in South Asia, and alienates Pakistan's large, youthful population.

## Recommendations for U.S. Policymakers:

- Support the Pakistan Democracy Act (H.R. 2311) and impose Global Magnitsky sanctions on human rights violators.
- Condition military cooperation on demonstrable democratic reforms and civilian oversight.
- Demand the release of political prisoners and support international investigations into election manipulation and state violence.
- Engage and protect the Pakistani diaspora while investing in civil society, independent media, and climate resilience efforts.

## Conclusion:

A recalibrated U.S. policy that prioritizes democracy, civilian governance, and human rights in Pakistan is a strategic and moral imperative. Stability and long-term U.S.-Pakistan relations will only be secured by backing the democratic aspirations of the Pakistani people, not the generals.

## Prepared by First Pakistan Global (FPG)

*A U.S.-based nonprofit dedicated to advancing democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in Pakistan.*

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# A White Paper on Human Rights and Democratic Backsliding in Pakistan

April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2025

## Introduction

Pakistan, home to over 240 million people, more than 60% under the age of 30, is the world's fifth most populous and one of its youngest countries. This demographic presents both enormous potential and growing frustration amid deepening political instability. Geographically, Pakistan is positioned at the nexus of South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East, sharing borders with India, China, Afghanistan, and Iran, and a 650-mile coastline along the Arabian Sea. This location gives it critical strategic relevance for regional security, trade, energy transit, and great-power competition.<sup>1</sup>

Since its founding in 1947, Pakistan has grappled with challenges of state-building, civil-military imbalance, and competing ideological narratives. While it is formally a parliamentary republic, the military has consistently exercised disproportionate power over national politics and policymaking. The country's history includes multiple military coups and extended periods of direct or indirect authoritarian rule, contributing to recurring crises of democratic legitimacy.<sup>2</sup>

Today, Pakistan is facing a multifaceted crisis. Democratic institutions are under siege, political dissent is violently repressed, the economy is in freefall, and civil liberties are under severe strain. These developments have direct implications for Pakistan's stability and for U.S. foreign policy in the region. A reassessment of U.S. engagement with Pakistan must begin with an honest understanding of the country's political dynamics.

## Military Dominance and the Erosion of Civilian Rule

### Persistent Interference in Governance

Since independence, Pakistan's military has dominated state policy particularly in foreign affairs, national security, and relations with major powers like the U.S. and China often sidelining elected civilian governments.<sup>3</sup> Three direct military coups (1958, 1977, 1999) and repeated behind-the-scenes interference have stifled democratic development.<sup>4</sup>

### Religious Manipulation and Ideological Control

Since the 1980s, particularly under General Zia-ul-Haq, the military has also shaped the country's ideological trajectory by embedding dogmatic religious narratives into state institutions. This military alliance with sectarian leaders<sup>5</sup> has been instrumental in marginalizing democratic forces and promoting proxy actors to serve regional strategic interests.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Modern Diplomacy. (2024, August 25). *Empowering Pakistan's youth: The path to a brighter future*. <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2024/08/25/empowering-pakistans-youth-the-path-to-a-brighter-future/>

<sup>2</sup> Global Order. (2023). *Pakistan's military dominance: Threat to democracy and regional stability*. <https://www.globalorder.live/post/pakistan-s-military-dominance-threat-to-democracy-and-regional-stability>

<sup>3</sup> Altaf, H. (2019). *History of military interventions in political affairs in Pakistan* (Master's thesis, The Graduate Center, City University of New York). CUNY Academic Works. [https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc\\_etds/4274](https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/4274)

<sup>4</sup> Shah, A. (2021, October 29). Pakistan: Persistent Praetorianism. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. Retrieved 12 Apr. 2025, from <https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-1842>

<sup>5</sup> Akhtar, A. S., Amirali, A., & Raza, M. A. (2006). Reading between the lines: the *mullah* – military alliance in Pakistan. *Contemporary South Asia*, 15(4), 383–397. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09584930701329982>

<sup>6</sup> Khawar, U. (2023, September 28). *Analysis: Revisiting the Faizabad Dharna case*. Dawn. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1778309>

## Economic Empire

Through sprawling enterprises like the Defence Housing Authority (DHA), Fauji Foundation and Army Welfare Trust, the military controls key sectors of the economy from banking and agriculture to construction and media, creating a parallel financial structure that undermines civilian institutions, distorts resource allocation, and entrenches elite interests.<sup>7,8,9</sup> These entrenched financial interests appear to be a primary driver behind the military leadership's determination to retain power whether directly through coups or indirectly through manipulation of civilian institutes and bureaucracy.

## Judicial Undermining and Militarized Law

The military has consistently undermined judicial independence through coercion, constitutional amendments, and political pressure. Judges who resist face removal or intimidation. In 2024, six Islamabad High Court judges issued a public letter exposing intelligence agency interference weaponizing the law for political persecution, underscoring the erosion of the rule of law.<sup>10</sup>

## Electoral Manipulation

The military has routinely engineered election outcomes through candidate disqualifications, voter suppression, and media control. On February 8, 2024, despite widespread pre-election repression and structural interference, millions of Pakistanis voted against the military backed politicians and the decades of dynastic politics of the Bhutto and Sharif families. However, the results were widely viewed as manipulated to secure victory for military-aligned minority parties. This not only undermined the public mandate but effectively disenfranchised a nation of over 250 million people, stripping them of their democratic agency and political voice.<sup>11,12,13,14</sup>

This entrenched civil-military imbalance, coupled with ideological control and systemic interference, has stunted democratic norms and left Pakistan governed by an unelected and unaccountable security elite.

## From Democratic Backsliding to a Punitive State

To preserve dominance over political and economic resources, the military has, through both overt and covert means, consistently undermined civilian leadership, curtailed judicial independence, and exerted extensive control over the media and policymaking. In recent years, this control has intensified first under the leadership of former Army Chief, Generals Qamar Javed Bajwa and then Gen. Asim Munir, transforming the state into a *Punitive State*<sup>15</sup>, one that governs through coercion and systematic suppression of dissent. Recent developments, such as the passage of Pakistan's 26th Constitutional Amendment, which expands unconstitutional military control over civilian governance, have further deepened concerns about the erosion of democratic institutions.<sup>16</sup> In January 2025, Pakistan's authorities further tightened their grip by passing a sweeping law to control social media and online speech, a move

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<sup>7</sup> Siddiqi, A. (2007). *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>8</sup> <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/12/15/pakistan-s-hybrid-civil-military-economy-pub-86017>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-pakistan-militarys-enduring-political-influence/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/3/27/judges-vs-spies-pakistans-jurists-accuse-intel-agency-isi-of-intimidation>

<sup>11</sup> Human Rights Watch. (2024, February 5). *Pakistan: End Crackdown on Political Opposition*. Retrieved from

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/02/05/pakistan-end-crackdown-political-opposition>

<sup>12</sup> Al Jazeera. (2024, January 30). *Can Pakistan's politicians break the military's stranglehold?* Retrieved from

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/30/can-pakistans-politicians-break-the-militarys-stranglehold>

<sup>13</sup> <https://freedomhouse.org/article/pakistan-polls-february-election-results-reflect-unexpected-rejection-status-quo>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/pakistans-surprising-and-marred-2024-election-and-what-comes-next/>

<sup>15</sup> Waseem, Z. (2024, June 20). *Inside the punitive state: Governance through punishment in Pakistan*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/06/pakistan-punitive-state-terrorism-police>

<sup>16</sup> Dawn. (2024, April 9). *Senate passes 26th Constitutional Amendment Bill expanding military control*. Dawn. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1830412>

condemned by Amnesty International as a grave violation of free expression and an alarming tool for suppressing dissent.<sup>17</sup>

### Human Rights Crisis

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International, 2023 saw an alarming rise in human rights violations: enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests, excessive force against protesters, and suppression of opposition parties like Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Baloch rights movements. Religious minorities faced mob violence and blasphemy-related persecution. Nearly half a million Afghan refugees were deported without due process. Climate-related disasters further deepened the hardships of marginalized communities.<sup>18,19</sup> Additionally, credible reports indicated that the events of May 9th, initially framed as attacks on military installations, were manipulated through a false flag operation to justify a widespread crackdown on political dissent.<sup>20</sup>

Dissidents abroad have increasingly been surveilled, harassed, and threatened, including in the U.S., U.K., and UAE, mirroring authoritarian tactics used by China, Iran, and Russia.<sup>21</sup> Journalists in Pakistan have faced abduction, intimidation, and even extrajudicial killings, often linked to the country's intelligence agencies, particularly when reporting on military or political corruption.<sup>22</sup> The case of Arshad Sharif, a prominent investigative journalist who was killed in Kenya under suspicious circumstances in 2022, drew international attention and intensified calls for accountability and press freedom in Pakistan.<sup>23</sup> (see *First Pakistan Global Report on Countering Transnational Repression Targeting Pakistani American Pro-Democracy Advocates*).

On November 26, 2024, Pakistani security forces, including the military and police, carried out a violent crackdown on peaceful pro-democracy protesters in Islamabad, resulting in at least 15–17 confirmed deaths and over 100 injuries, many caused by live gunfire (see *First Pakistan Global Short Report on the Islamabad Massacre*). Under the leadership of General Asim Munir, the military played a central role in orchestrating the violence, which involved the use of live ammunition, enforced disappearances, and media suppression.<sup>24</sup> The abduction of journalist Matiullah Jan further underscored the scale of state repression. These actions have drawn international condemnation and prompted urgent calls for independent investigations and global accountability.<sup>25,26</sup>

This erosion of democratic institutions is not merely a domestic issue—it directly affects regional stability and the integrity of U.S. partnerships in the region. When Pakistan's government lacks public legitimacy

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<sup>17</sup> Amnesty International. (2025, January 24). *Pakistan: Authorities pass bill with sweeping controls on social media*. Amnesty International. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/01/pakistan-authorities-pass-bill-with-sweeping-controls-on-social-media/>

<sup>18</sup> Amnesty International. (2024). *Pakistan 2023*. Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/pakistan/report-pakistan/>

<sup>19</sup> Human Rights Watch. (2024). *Pakistan: Escalating crackdown on political opposition*. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/pakistan>

<sup>20</sup> Voice of America. (2024, May 9). *Rights groups: Repression in Pakistan worse 1 year after assault on military installations*. Voice of America. <https://www.voanews.com/a/rights-groups-repression-in-pakistan-worse-1-year-after-assault-on-military-installations/7598851.html>

<sup>21</sup> Freedom House. (2024, March 20). *The extraterritorial impact of Pakistan's political crisis*. Freedom House. <https://freedomhouse.org/article/TNR-Watch/extraterritorial-impact-pakistans-political-crisis>

<sup>22</sup> Declassified UK. (2024, February 14). *How Pakistan attacks critics living in the UK*. Declassified UK. <https://www.declassifieduk.org/how-pakistan-attacks-critics-living-in-the-uk/>

<sup>23</sup> Register, E. (2024, February 8). *Revisiting the Murder of Pakistani Journalist Arshad Sharif*. The Diplomat. Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2024/02/revisiting-the-murder-of-pakistani-journalist-arshad-sharif/>

<sup>24</sup> Hussain, M., & Grim, R. (2024, December 10). *Leaked information reveals Pakistan Army planned its brutal crackdown on protests, including live fire and subsequent cover-up*. Drop Site News. <https://www.dropsitenews.com/p/leaked-information-reveals-pakistan>

<sup>25</sup> Amnesty International. (2024, November). *Urgent and transparent investigation needed into deadly crackdown on opposition protesters*. Amnesty International. Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/11/urgent-and-transparent-investigation-needed-into-deadly-crackdown-on-opposition-protesters/>

<sup>26</sup> Medium. (2024). *Global politicians and public figures respond to Islamabad massacre and crackdown on PTI in Pakistan*. Medium. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/%40americanmuslimtoday/global-politicians-and-public-figures-respond-to-islamabad-massacre-and-crackdown-on-pti-in-609bf186f006>



and suppresses democratic participation, it becomes more vulnerable to authoritarian drift, extremism, and political violence.

### **Economic Instability and Structural Decay**

Pakistan's economy is in crisis. It is marked by high inflation, currency devaluation, and unsustainable external debt.<sup>27</sup> Structural problems, compounded by elite capture and military dominance of key industries, have eroded public confidence. Though IMF bailouts have offered short-term relief, the lack of structural reform has left the country vulnerable to default and prolonged stagnation.<sup>28</sup>

The nexus between authoritarianism, economic decay, and human rights violations is clear. The consolidation of power by Pakistan's military elite is not delivering development or stability; it is compounding the crisis and endangering the country's future.

### **U.S.-Pakistan Relations: A Historical Overview**

U.S.-Pakistan relations have been marked by periods of cooperation and tension, largely shaped by geopolitical interests. During the Cold War, Pakistan was a key ally against Soviet influence, but relations cooled after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. Post-9/11, Pakistan became a crucial partner in counterterrorism, though mutual distrust and differing strategic priorities have often complicated the partnership.

Pakistan has paid a significant price for its role in counterterrorism, enduring both economic and human losses. According to some estimates, the country has lost approximately **\$67.93 billion** and **over 80,000 lives** because of terrorism and counterterrorism operations over the past two decades.<sup>29</sup> The country has suffered from terrorist attacks, internal displacement, and a strained economy due to military operations and instability. Among the country's large and increasingly disillusioned youth population, there is growing resentment toward the United States—widely perceived as supporting Pakistan's military establishment and granting it tacit approval, despite its unconstitutional grip on power and suppression of democratic institutions.<sup>30</sup>

In recent years, U.S. policy has pivoted toward India and the Indo-Pacific, reducing Pakistan to a transactional low priority partner. Yet, Pakistan's demographic weight, nuclear capability, and centrality to regional stability make disengagement risky and shortsighted. Continued reliance on military interlocutors, without regard for democratic representation, undermines long-term U.S. interests and will only produce short-term gains.<sup>31</sup>

### **Recommendations for U.S. Policymakers**

Widespread distrust of U.S. policymakers among Pakistanis is driven by longstanding perceptions of American interference to support the military generals instead of their representative leaders. Historically, U.S. policy toward Pakistan has prioritized short-term strategic interests, such as counterterrorism, arms control, and now potentially access to mineral resources, over the promotion of democratic development.

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<sup>27</sup> Deutsche Welle. (2023, February 10). *Is Pakistan's economic collapse imminent?* Deutsche Welle. <https://www.dw.com/en/is-pakistans-economic-collapse-imminent/a-64587974>

<sup>28</sup> Al Jazeera. (2023, December 5). *Pakistan's economy in freefall: Can it recover?* <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2023/12/5/pakistans-economy-in-freefall-can-it-recover>

<sup>29</sup> Ali, A. (n.d.). *Economic cost of terrorism: A case study of Pakistan*. Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad. Retrieved from [https://www.issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/1299569657\\_66503137.pdf](https://www.issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/1299569657_66503137.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> AJ+. (2023, September 11). *Why Pakistan doesn't matter to Americans* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/Uta2jdHgXfk>

<sup>31</sup> Nadim, H. [@HNadim87]. (2025, April 10). [Tweet]. X. <https://x.com/HNadim87/status/1912186496540377385>

Pakistan's current military regime, deeply unpopular and desperate, jeopardizes national stability and sovereignty by making undeliverable promises. A more sustainable approach would be for the U.S. to support democratic governance, and for Pakistan's elite to abandon reliance on military rule and geopolitical manipulation before lasting damage is done.

U.S. policy must shift toward a long-term, democracy-centered approach. We recommend the following actions:

- **Support the Pakistan Democracy Act** (H.R.2311 by Rep. Wilson and Rep. Panetta) to hold accountable those responsible for political persecution and democratic suppression.
- **Impose Global Magnitsky sanctions** on senior military officials and civilian enablers involved in human rights violations, enforced disappearances, and transnational repression.
- **Condition all military aid and cooperation** on demonstrable progress toward civilian oversight, judicial independence, and human rights compliance.
- **Demand the release of political prisoners**, including Former Prime Minister Imran Khan, and uphold their right to fair trials in civilian courts.
- **Condemn the 26th Amendment**, which expands unconstitutional military control over civilian governance.
- **Support an international investigation** into:
  - The February 2024 general elections.
  - The May 9 false-flag operation allegedly staged by the military.
  - The November 26 massacre in Islamabad.
- **Oppose political engineering** and call for the resignation of General Asim Munir for his role in dismantling democratic structures.
- **Strengthen democratic institutions and civil society** by supporting independent media, judicial reform, and human rights defenders.
- **Engage the Pakistani diaspora** as partners in democratic advocacy and protect them from foreign surveillance or intimidation.
- **Prioritize inclusive development and climate resilience** over short-term security deals with authoritarian actors.

**Conclusion:** Pakistan's future is not only a matter of human rights and democratic values, but also a critical strategic concern for the United States. As a nuclear-armed nation with a population of over 250 million, a key geographic position bordering China, India, and Afghanistan, and a large global diaspora, Pakistan holds significant influence in the regional and global order. Instability in Pakistan, whether through authoritarian backsliding, economic collapse, or state-sponsored repression, directly threatens U.S. interests in South Asia, counterterrorism, regional trade, and global security.

Continued reliance on Pakistan's military generals, at the expense of its democratic institutions and civil society, has yielded short-term tactical gains but long-term instability. A recalibrated U.S. policy, one that prioritizes democratic governance, civilian oversight, and human rights, is not just a moral imperative, but a strategic necessity. Supporting the aspirations of the Pakistani people for accountable governance and political freedom is the most reliable path to regional stability, sustainable partnerships, and a more secure and prosperous future for both nations.

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March 2025

## Short Report: Islamabad Massacre (November 26, 2024)

**Overview:** On November 26, 2024, a violent crackdown took place in Islamabad against pro-democracy protesters.<sup>1</sup> Security forces, including the military and police, deployed excessive force to disperse the unarmed demonstrators. The incident resulted in multiple deaths and injuries, with reports indicating at least 15 to 17 fatalities and over 100 injuries, although the actual extent of casualties remains undetermined. Many of the injured sustained gunshot wounds.

**Details of the Incident:** Protests demanding democratic reforms, the release of political prisoners, including former Prime Minister Imran Khan, and raising concerns about the alleged stolen mandate in the February 8th, 2024 elections were met with a violent response from security forces.<sup>2</sup> Eyewitnesses and independent reports indicate that live ammunition, tear gas, and baton charges were used against the protesters. Following the crackdown, the authorities attempted to suppress casualty figures and restrict media access to the situation, further exacerbating concerns about transparency and accountability.<sup>3</sup> Hundreds of protestors were also arrested in the aftermath of this incident.<sup>4</sup>

**The Fall from the Containers: A Symbolic Moment in the Collapse of Civility:** On November 26, during protests in Pakistan's capital, a man praying on top of cargo containers was violently pushed by a security officer, symbolizing the collapse of civility. The video showed the man's desperate attempt to hold on before falling.<sup>5</sup> This act of brutality highlighted the erosion of basic human dignity, as the military turned on its own citizens in a premeditated assault (*see section on military involvement*). The authority's claim that the man was filming a TikTok video instead of praying to shift attention from the military's violent crackdown. This incident symbolized the nation's descent into unchecked violence and the suppression of peaceful dissent.

**Casualties and Data Suppression:** While two major government hospitals in Islamabad, the *Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS)* and the *Federal Government Polyclinic (commonly known as Poly Clinic)*, treated a large number of the injured, the full scale of the massacre remains unclear due to restrictions on media coverage and the abduction of investigative journalists.<sup>6</sup> Reports indicate that several of the injured did not seek treatment at these hospitals, either returning home or going to other facilities.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Economic Times. (2024, March 16). *Islamabad massacre: Hundreds of Imran supporters smothered; PTI calls it darkest hour of Pakistan* [Video]. Economic Times. <https://bit.ly/3l9tXUb>

<sup>2</sup> Tribune International. (2024). *Bloodshed in Islamabad: The tragic massacre of November 26, 2024*. Tribune International. Retrieved from <https://tribune-intl.com/bloodshed-in-islamabad-the-tragic-massacre-of-november-26-2024/>

<sup>3</sup> Voice of America. (2024). *Pakistan media experienced surge in violence, suppression in 2024*. Voice of America. Retrieved from <https://www.voanews.com/a/pakistan-media-experienced-surge-in-violence-suppression-in-2024/7906338.html>

<sup>4</sup> The Guardian. (2024, November 26). *Pakistani security forces raid supporters of Imran Khan after unrest in Islamabad*. The Guardian. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3l2z5B8>

<sup>5</sup> LiveMint. (2024, November 26). *Watch video: Man pushed off container stack by Pakistani forces amid Imran Khan supporters' protest in Islamabad*. LiveMint. Retrieved from <https://www.livemint.com/news/world/watch-video-man-pushed-off-container-stack-by-pakistani-forces-amid-imran-khan-supporters-protest-in-islamabad-11732895515289.html>

<sup>6</sup> Deutsche Welle. (2024, March 16). *Khan protest Pakistan: Reporter Matiullah Jan arrested*. Deutsche Welle. <https://www.dw.com/en/khan-protest-pakistan-reporter-matiullah-jan-arrested/a-70907445>

<sup>7</sup> The New Indian Express. (2024, November 27). *Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party blames government for using violence and killing hundreds of its workers*. The New Indian Express. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3LKcuEz>

Table: Reported Dead and Injured in Islamabad Massacre

Source	Reported Dead (Names if mentioned)	Reported Injured
Guardian <sup>8</sup>	17	40-100
PTI Sources <sup>9</sup>	At least 6 individuals (initially reported), later claimed to be around 20	Not specified
Al Jazeera <sup>10</sup>	5 (Anees Shehzad, Mobeen Aurangzeb, Malik Sadar Ali, Mohammad Ilyas)	Not specified
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Funerals <sup>11</sup>	At least 2 men	NA
Independent Urdu <sup>12</sup>	10 people died	110 civilians injured (bullet injuries), 5 police injured
BBC <sup>13</sup>	5	Not specified
*Independent Journalist Mati Ullah Jan (MJ) <sup>14,15</sup>	15	134 (81 of 134 were documented as bullet injuries)

\* MJ was abducted on November 27, 2024, from a hospital parking lot while attempting to gather evidence of the military's assault on unarmed civilian protesters. The data he presented consists primarily of hospital record estimations based solely on information from November 26, 2024. He was arrested before he could access results from November 27, 2024, onward. *MJ collated data from two government hospitals, Poly Clinic and PIMS, cross-referencing it with information provided by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to prevent duplication. However, the data does not account for deceased or injured individuals who did not seek treatment at these hospitals—either returning home or receiving care at other facilities.*

**Military Involvement:** The military's involvement in the violent crackdown has sparked widespread condemnation. Independent journalists and human rights organizations have accused the military of orchestrating the violence to silence dissent. Testimonies from eyewitnesses and journalists at press conferences hosted by First Pakistan Global (FPG) further corroborate these claims, detailing the military's role in planning and executing the attack.<sup>16</sup> FPG has also organized congressional hearings to highlight the massacre's scale, the efforts to deny and suppress casualty figures, and the direct involvement of the military under General Asim Munir in orchestrating the violence.<sup>17</sup> An independent investigative report has also documented how the military led the planning of the crackdown and suppressed casualty numbers.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The Guardian. (2024, November 27). *Pakistan army and police accused of firing on Imran Khan supporters*. The Guardian. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3l5pYmG>

<sup>9</sup> Dawn. (2024). *News article*. Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1875242>

<sup>10</sup> Al Jazeera. (2024, December 4). *Dead but not counted: Hidden victims of Pakistan's latest political clash*. Al Jazeera. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2024/12/4/dead-but-not-counted-hidden-victims-of-pakistans-latest-political-clash>

<sup>11</sup> Dialogue Pakistan. (2024). *Shahid Khaqan confirms death of two people of his constituency in Islamabad massacre*. Dialogue Pakistan. Retrieved from <https://dialoguepakistan.com/en/live-section/shahid-khaqan-confirms-death-of-two-people-of-his-constituency-in-islamabad-massacre>

<sup>12</sup> Independent Urdu. (2024). *News article*. Independent Urdu. Retrieved from <https://www.independenturdu.com/node/177161>

<sup>13</sup> BBC News. (2024). *News article*. BBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cvg02lvj1e7o>

<sup>14</sup> YouTube. (2024). *MJtv BREAKING REVELATION: Govt used live ammunition against PTI protestors on Nov 26 - hospital record* [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/y9mYe6Vi3Fo?si=OhvzXFGHjDbLh6Bj>

<sup>15</sup> YouTube. (2024). *#MJtv BREAKING: Govt hospital record reveals no & cause of deaths of PTI workers* [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DkHOxG\\_mUrc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DkHOxG_mUrc)

<sup>16</sup> YouTube. (2024). *ISLAMABAD MASSACRE: A Black Day in History* [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/live/rNCICSEYzCw?si=4-s2GgA9XACYM55q>

<sup>17</sup> FirstPakistanGlobal. (2024, March 16). [Tweet]. X. <https://x.com/FirstPakGlobal/status/1882323474535821572>

<sup>18</sup> Dropsite News. (2024). *Leaked information reveals Pakistan's involvement in the Islamabad massacre*. Dropsite News. Retrieved from [https://www.dropsitenews.com/p/leaked-information-reveals-pakistan-r=11cwhw&utm\\_campaign=post&utm\\_medium=web](https://www.dropsitenews.com/p/leaked-information-reveals-pakistan-r=11cwhw&utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=web)

**International Reaction:** The massacre has sparked outrage both domestically and internationally, with human rights organizations, political activists, and international observers calling for an independent investigation and accountability for those responsible for the excessive use of force.<sup>19,20</sup>

**Conclusion and Call to Action:** The Islamabad Massacre highlights escalating political repression in Pakistan, where military-led crackdowns on dissent are widespread. Efforts to silence victims and obstruct investigations demand urgent international intervention. The UNHRC, U.S. State Department, and global human rights organizations must pressure Pakistan to allow an independent investigation.

Under the Global Magnitsky Act,<sup>21</sup> sanctions (travel bans, asset freezes) should be imposed on officials complicit in human rights abuses. Additionally, U.S. and EU foreign aid must be contingent on measurable improvements in human rights protections and democratic governance.

The Islamabad Massacre must not fade into obscurity.

## First Pakistan Global

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<sup>19</sup> Amnesty International. (2024, November). *Urgent and transparent investigation needed into deadly crackdown on opposition protesters*. Amnesty International. Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/11/urgent-and-transparent-investigation-needed-into-deadly-crackdown-on-opposition-protesters/>

<sup>20</sup> Medium. (2024). *Global politicians and public figures respond to Islamabad massacre and crackdown on PTI in Pakistan*. Medium. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/%40americanmuslimtoday/global-politicians-and-public-figures-respond-to-islamabad-massacre-and-crackdown-on-pti-in-609bf186f006>

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Congress. (2016). *Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act*, Pub. L. No. 114-328, 130 Stat. 2533 (2016). Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/284>



## **Countering Transnational Repression Targeting Pakistani American Pro-Democracy Advocates**

**Date:** Jul 15th, 2025

**Prepared by:** First Pakistan Global

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### **Executive Summary**

Transnational repression—the practice of governments targeting critics living abroad through harassment, coercion, and violence—poses an urgent threat to U.S. sovereignty, national security, and human rights. This white paper highlights the systematic campaign by Pakistan's military regime under General Asim Munir to intimidate and silence Pakistani American activists, journalists, and dissidents living in the United States. This briefing outlines the nature of the threat, provides documented case studies, and proposes a concrete action plan for U.S. lawmakers and institutions.

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### **Definition of Transnational Repression**

According to Freedom House (2021), transnational repression includes actions by a state to silence, intimidate, or harm critics abroad violating the sovereignty of host countries and the civil liberties of their residents.<sup>1</sup>

### **Key Findings**

- Pakistan's military regime has engaged in transnational repression through abductions, threats, surveillance, and coercion targeting U.S. citizens and residents.
- These activities frequently use embassies and Pakistani local courts as instruments of repression.
- Family members in Pakistan are regularly targeted to pressure or silence dissidents abroad.

### **Background:**

Over the past few years, several Pakistani dissidents have died under suspicious circumstances abroad, pointing to a disturbing pattern of transnational repression. These include journalist Sajjid Hussain in Sweden, human rights activist Karima Baloch in Canada, and journalist **Arshad Sharif**, who was murdered in Kenya after likely being tortured. In the Netherlands, a murder-for-hire plot targeting blogger Waqas Goraya led to a conviction in 2022.<sup>2,3</sup>

U.S. lawmakers have increasingly condemned attacks on Pakistani dissidents. Reps. Greg Casar and Ro Khanna urged sanctions and visa bans, targeting Pakistan's military leadership. Rep. Brad Sherman, after

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<sup>1</sup> <https://freedomhouse.org/report/transnational-repression>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.declassifieduk.org/how-pakistan-attacks-critics-living-in-the-uk/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dropsitenews.com/p/audio-pakistan-global-critics>

a 2023 human rights briefing, called for action against transnational repression and for democratic governance in Pakistan.<sup>3,4</sup>

## Documented Case Studies in USA

1. **Muhammad Ahmad Noorani (March 2025)**
  - U.S.-based journalist and founder of Fact Focus.
  - His brothers were abducted by Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agents in Islamabad after he published an exposé on alleged corruption involving General Asim Munir.<sup>5,6</sup>
  - Legal petitions were ignored; international condemnations followed.
2. **Bilal Ansar Khan (July 2023, March 2025)**
  - Graduate student based in the U.S. who started speaking up on Twitter and TikTok against the abuses in Pakistan.
  - His family has been harassed on at least two occasions because of his speaking up (and not backing down).
  - He does not feel comfortable sharing details because of the fear of an aggravated reprisal in case he does so.
3. **Dr. Shahbaz Gill (June 2024)**
  - Former chief of staff and advisor to Imran Khan and U.S. permanent resident.
  - Ghulam Shabbir brother of Shahbaz Gill was abducted from his home in Lahore by armed men, some in Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) uniforms.<sup>7</sup>
  - Amnesty International identified this as part of a broader pattern of enforced disappearances.
4. **Wajahat Saeed Khan (November 2023)**
  - Veteran journalist and U.S. permanent resident.
  - Received threats at his New York residence.<sup>3</sup>
  - In June 2023, Islamabad police accused Khan and other journalists of "abetting mutiny" and inciting attacks on military sites during the May 9, 2023 events.<sup>8</sup>
5. **Lt. Col. (Ret.) Syed A. Hussain (June 2023)**
  - U.S. citizen, former officer in Pakistan Army.
  - Testified that Pakistan's military used its U.S. embassy to issue threats.<sup>9</sup>
  - Summoned under the Pakistan Army Act, highlighting use of military courts.
  - In June 2023, Islamabad police filed a First Information Report (FIR) accusing Hussain, along with others of "abetting mutiny" and inciting attacks on military properties during the events of May 9, 2023.<sup>8</sup>
6. **Dr. Salman Ahmad (March 2023)**
  - Musician and activist.
  - His U.S. citizen brother-in-law was abducted and tortured for refusing to surrender social media credentials.<sup>9</sup>
7. **Dr. Moeed Pirzada (November 2022)**
  - Veteran political analysts and U.S. permanent residents.
  - Forced into exile after threats following the assassination of Arshad Sharif.<sup>9</sup>
  - Pirzada was alerted by FBI of credible threats in 2023.

<sup>4</sup> <https://sherman.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/sherman-convenes-briefing-on-human-rights-in-pakistan>

<sup>5</sup> <https://x.com/amnestysasia/status/1902326181820842331>

<sup>6</sup> <https://cpi.org/2025/03/exiled-pakistani-journalists-brothers-abducted-another-journalist-disappears/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/ASA3382552024ENGLISH.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/6/16/rights-press-bodies-slam-pakistan-crackdown-on-critical-voices>

<sup>9</sup> <https://efile.fara.gov/docs/7361-Informational-Materials-20240321-1.pdf>

- In June 2023, Islamabad police filed a First Information Report (FIR) accusing Dr. Moeed Pirzada, along with other Journalists of “abetting mutiny” and inciting attacks on military properties during the events of May 9, 2023.<sup>8</sup>
- In May 2025, a leading newspaper in Pakistan publicly disclosed Moeed Pirzada’s U.S. home address, property records, and financial details—including his LLC registration and tax-related transactions—placing him and his family at serious risk. Given his history of fleeing Pakistan due to threats to his life, this disclosure raises grave concerns about his safety and constitutes a potential act of transnational repression.<sup>10</sup>

### Escalation in June–July 2025: Tech Suppression & Hostage Tactics

Transnational Repression emanating from Pakistan is reaching new heights. It now seriously threatens the freedoms guaranteed to American citizens and residents under the U.S. Constitution.

On June 14, 2025, Pakistani American communities from across the United States staged a peaceful demonstration outside the Embassy of Pakistan in Washington, DC. Within 48 hours, Pakistani authorities—utilizing electronic surveillance and internal databases—identified the relatives of key speakers inside Pakistan and abducted several of them. While a few Americans have since reported these incidents to the FBI, most victims have been intimidated into silence. Although the FBI has continued documenting such instances, the failure of both the FBI and the Department of Justice to pursue concrete, deterrent actions have emboldened Pakistan’s military-led regime to expand its campaign of silencing dissent across borders.

In an alarming new phase, Pakistani courts—now functioning as tools of the executive—have begun issuing directives to U.S.-based technology companies to censor dissent originating abroad. In early July 2025, multiple journalists and content creators based in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia received notifications from Google/YouTube informing them that Pakistani magistrates had ruled their YouTube channels to be in violation of Pakistan’s cyber laws. The platform warned that unless these individuals complied with the Pakistani court orders—despite operating entirely within countries with strong constitutional protections for free speech—their channels could be removed without further notice.<sup>11</sup>

### Implications for U.S. National Security and Democracy

- **Threats on U.S. Soil:** Foreign intelligence activities in the U.S. jeopardize domestic security.
- **Violation of Civil Liberties:** Surveillance and intimidation of U.S. residents infringe on constitutional protections.

### Recommendations

**To address the growing threat of transnational repression by Pakistan’s military regime, we urge the following actions:**

1. **Hold a Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing Focused on Pakistan**  
Convene a full hearing of the House Foreign Affairs Committee dedicated to Pakistan's escalating transnational repression and human rights violations. Survivors, legal experts, and human rights advocates should be invited to testify on:

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1314058-from-fleeing-pakistan-to-1m-house-moeed-pirzada-s-us-property-purchase>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/society-equity/more-than-two-dozen-critics-pakistan-government-face-youtube-ban-2025-07-09/>

- Targeting of political dissidents and journalists abroad
  - Arbitrary detentions, torture, and military trials of civilians
  - Electoral manipulation and authoritarian consolidation
2. **Support the Pakistan Democracy Act (H.R. 2311)**  
Introduced by Reps. Joe Wilson (R-SC) and Jimmy Panetta (D-CA), this bipartisan legislation is critical to holding Pakistan's military and government officials accountable. The Act:
- Sanctions individuals responsible for political persecution, transnational repression, and election fraud
  - Directs the State and Treasury Departments to assess Global Magnitsky Act sanctions on General Asim Munir
  - Bars visas and U.S. entry for individuals complicit in gross human rights abuses
  - Requires congressional oversight of U.S. foreign policy toward Pakistan
3. **Initiate Federal Investigations into Transnational Repression**  
Direct the FBI and Department of Justice to open formal investigations into foreign intimidation, coercion, and surveillance targeting U.S. citizens and residents by Pakistani state actors or their proxies.
4. **Apply Financial Pressure via International Institutions**  
Condition all U.S. financial assistance—directly or through institutions like the IMF and World Bank—on verifiable progress in restoring democratic governance and halting acts of transnational repression.
5. **Enforce Targeted Travel Restrictions**  
Impose visa bans and travel restrictions on Pakistani military and intelligence officials involved in political repression and transnational threats against diaspora communities.
6. **Strengthen U.S. Laws Against Transnational Repression**  
Support the Countering Transnational Repression Act of 2025 (H.R. 2158), introduced by Rep. August Pfluger (R-TX), which would amend the Homeland Security Act to establish a DHS working group tasked with monitoring and combating foreign repression and associated terrorism threats.

## Conclusion

The unchecked spread of transnational repression threatens the safety of American residents and the democratic values of the United States. If left unaddressed, it will encourage authoritarian regime of Pakistan to expand their reach into diaspora communities with impunity. The United States must act now to protect its citizens, reaffirm its commitment to human rights, and send an unequivocal message that repression will not cross borders unchecked.

*First Pakistan Global (FPG) is a U.S.-based nonprofit organization committed to advancing democracy, protecting human rights, and strengthening civil society in Pakistan. Through policy advocacy, public education, and international engagement, FPG works to support a democratic future for Pakistan rooted in constitutional governance and the rule of law.*