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House Committee on Foreign Affairs,  
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

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Hearing on Balochistan

## Balochistan: An overview

Balochistan, Pakistan's western-most province, borders eastern Iran and southern Afghanistan. It is the largest of the country's four provinces in terms of area (44 percent of the country's land area), but the smallest in terms of population (5 percent of the country's total). According to the last national census in 1998, over two-thirds of its population of nearly eight million people live in rural areas.<sup>1</sup> The population comprises those whose first language—an important marker of ethnic distinction in Pakistan—is Balochi (55 percent), Pashto (30 percent), Sindhi (5.6 percent), Seraki (2.6 percent), Punjabi (2.5 percent), and Urdu (1 percent).<sup>2</sup>

There are three distinct geographic regions of Balochistan. The belt comprising Hub, Lasbella, and Khizdar in the east is heavily influenced by the city of Karachi, Pakistan's sprawling economic center in Sindh province. The coastal belt comprising Makran is dominated by Gwadar port. Eastern Balochistan is the most remote part of the province. This sparsely populated region is home to the richest but largely untapped deposits of natural resources in Pakistan including oil, gas, copper, and gold. Significantly, it is the area where the struggle for power between the Pakistani state and local tribal elites has been most apparent.<sup>3</sup>

Balochistan is both economically and strategically important: not only does the province border Iran and Afghanistan, it hosts a particular ethnic mix of residents, and is allegedly home to the so-called Quetta Shura of the Taliban in the provincial capital Quetta.<sup>4</sup> The situation is further complicated by the large number of foreign states with an economic or

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<sup>1</sup> Census of Pakistan 1998, Balochistan Provincial Report; and World Bank, *Balochistan Economic Report: From Periphery To Core*, Volume II, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Census of Pakistan 1998, Balochistan Provincial Report.

<sup>3</sup> Robert G. Wirsing, "Baloch Nationalism And The Geopolitics Of Energy Resources: The Changing Context Of Separatism In Pakistan," *Strategic Studies Institute*, United States Army War College, April 2008, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub853.pdf> (accessed November 22, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* The Quetta Shura is a militant organization composed of top leadership of the Afghan Taliban. It formed after US-led forces attacked the Taliban in Afghanistan in November 2001 and its senior leadership escaped into Pakistan.

political stake in the mineral-rich province, including the United States, China, Iran, India, and the United Arab Emirates.<sup>5</sup>

## Conflict in Balochistan

The province has historically had a tense relationship with Pakistan's government, in large part due to issues of provincial autonomy, control of mineral resources and exploration, and a consequent sense of deprivation. Under President Gen. Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's military ruler from 1999 until 2008, the situation deteriorated markedly.<sup>6</sup> Two assassination attempts on Musharraf in 2005 and 2006 during visits to Balochistan resulted in a crackdown on Baloch nationalists by armed forces and Military Intelligence (MI), its lead intelligence agency in the province. These operations ultimately led to the killing in August 2006 of influential tribal chieftain Nawab Akbar Bugti and 35 of his close followers.

The Pakistani military charges that Baloch militants receive arms and financial support from India.<sup>7</sup> While India consistently denies these allegations, Pakistani officials say that India's role in stoking unrest in Balochistan is illustrated by the scale and sophistication of recent attacks on Pakistan interests, alleged confessions of captured militants, and past evidence of support by "foreign" powers for separatist elements.<sup>8</sup>

Militancy in Balochistan has been fueled by ethnic Baloch anger over the Pakistani government's efforts to harness local mineral and fossil fuel resources, maintain large numbers of troops in the province, and construct the Gwadar deep-sea port at the mouth of the Persian Gulf with non-Baloch workers.

In December 2009 Pakistan's newly elected civilian government, in an effort to bring about political reconciliation in the province, passed the *Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan* ("Beginning of Rights in Balochistan") package of constitutional, political, administrative, and economic reforms. It noted the province's "sense of deprivation in the political and

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. See also Maha Atal "China's Pakistan Corridor," *Forbes Asia*, May 10, 2010, <http://www.forbes.com/global/2010/0510/companies-pakistan-oil-gas-balochistan-china-pak-corridor.html> (accessed November 22, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> See Ahmed Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos* (New York: Viking, 2008), pp. 283-287.

<sup>7</sup> Salman Masood, "Pakistan Spy Chief to Visit India," *New York Times*, November 28, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/29/world/asia/29pstan.html> (accessed November 22, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> "What's the Problem with Pakistan?" *Foreign Affairs*, March 31, 2009, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/discussions/roundtables/whats-the-problem-with-pakistan> (accessed November 22, 2010).

economic structures of the federation” and past failure to implement provisions of the 1973 Pakistan Constitution that sought to empower the provinces.<sup>9</sup>

The package aims, among other things, to delegate a range of federal areas of authority to the Balochistan government, and requires federal authorities to obtain provincial government consent with respect to major projects. It seeks to redress the province’s socio-economic disparity compared to the rest of the country by increasing Baloch employment in the civil service, giving provincial and local government authorities a greater share of resource industry revenues, and compensating communities displaced by violence. It also calls for military cantonments under construction in the resource-rich Sui and Kohlu regions to be temporarily halted and for the military to be replaced there by the Frontier Corps, a paramilitary force that answers to the civilian Federal Ministry of the Interior. Under the package, the Balochistan chief minister is to have control over the Frontier Corps’ law and order operations. The package also calls for an investigation of missing persons, and for all persons detained without charge to be released.<sup>10</sup>

As a result of the package, the Pakistan federal government in 2010 released Rs12 billion (US\$140 million) to the Balochistan government in outstanding debts owed to it with respect to natural gas revenues and announced a Rs152 billion (US\$1.77 billion) budget for the province, double that of 2009.<sup>11</sup> The package also establishes a judicial inquiry into the killing of Nawab Akbar Bugti and other Baloch political leaders.<sup>12</sup>

Despite these attempted reforms, doubts persist within Baloch society about the Pakistan government’s intentions. Significant Baloch nationalist parties and leaders have rejected the package, claiming it does not adequately address core grievances or genuinely enable greater provincial autonomy.<sup>13</sup> Many have continued to call for complete separation from

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<sup>9</sup> Preamble, Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan, December 9, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan, December 9, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Nasir Jamal and Saleem Shahid, “Rs152 billion budget for Balochistan,” *Dawn*, June 22, 2010, <http://news.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/front-page/rs152-billion-budget-for-balochistan-260> (accessed November 30, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> Raja Asghar, “Govt offers olive branch to Balochistan,” *Dawn*, November 25, 2009, <http://news.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/04-balochistanpackage-qs-10> (accessed November 30, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> Murtaza Ali Shah, “Baloch nationalists reject package,” *The News International*, November 25, 2009.

Pakistan.<sup>14</sup> However, Baloch nationalists are highly splintered and it is unclear how much influence Baloch political leaders now exert over militant groups.<sup>15</sup>

Divisions among Baloch nationalists have exacerbated lawlessness and violence in the province. In 2010, Baloch militants escalated ethnically motivated targeted killings, especially in Quetta.<sup>16</sup> In addition, they have continued to target gas pipelines, railway lines and electricity networks, and government buildings, including schools.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, sectarian killings by religious extremist groups such as the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi have also escalated, targeting Shia, particularly the ethnically distinct Hazara Shia community.

## Human Rights Abuses in Balochistan

Since 2005, Pakistani human rights organizations have recorded numerous serious human rights violations by security forces, including extrajudicial executions, torture, enforced disappearances, forced displacement, and excessive use of force.<sup>18</sup> According to the Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, violence in 2005 around Dera Bugti district alone displaced around 6,000 people and killed scores.<sup>19</sup> The total number of people displaced from all districts remains unknown, with estimates ranging from tens to hundreds of thousands.<sup>20</sup> After Musharraf's ouster in 2008, Pakistan's Interior Ministry estimated that 1,100 Baloch had "disappeared" during his rule.<sup>21</sup> To date, the government has only uncovered the fate of a handful of these people.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Sajid Hussain, "18th Amendment Fails To Appease Most Of Baloch Nationalists," *The News On Sunday*, April 11, 2010; Syed Talat Hussain, "Regime of Fear," *Newsline*, April 21, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Syed Talat Hussain, "Regime of Fear," *Newsline*.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> "Pakistan Fails To Curb Violence In Balochistan," *Sify*, July 6, 2010.

<sup>18</sup> Human Rights Commission of Pakistan "Human Rights Violations: Conflict In Balochistan," August 2006, <http://hrcp-web.org/pdf/Conflict%20in%20balochistan--%20Complete.pdf> (accessed November 22, 2010).

<sup>19</sup> "Pakistan: Tens of Thousands Displaced by Army Operations Against Insurgent Groups," *Internal Displacement Monitoring Center*, October 10, 2006, p. 7, [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/\(httpInfoFiles\)/6CEF209F30020F37C1257203004E6189/\\$file/Pakistan%20-October%202006.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/6CEF209F30020F37C1257203004E6189/$file/Pakistan%20-October%202006.pdf) (accessed November 22, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2009* (New York: Human Rights Watch 2009), Pakistan chapter, <http://www.hrw.org/en/world-report/2009/pakistan>.

<sup>22</sup> Asian Human Rights Commission, "Pakistan: More than 168 children have disappeared from Balochistan, a war crime tribunal should be constituted," February 2, 2010,

Armed militant groups in Balochistan are responsible for targeted killings and destroying private property. In the past several years, they have increasingly targeted non-Baloch civilians and their businesses, as well as major gas installations and infrastructure.<sup>23</sup> They have also struck police and security forces and military bases throughout the province.<sup>24</sup>

Three distinct non-state groups are responsible for violence against civilians in the province: militant Baloch nationalist groups seeking separation or autonomy for Balochistan that target Punjabis and other minorities; militant Sunni Muslim groups such as the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi that attack members of the Shia community; and armed Islamist groups that have most recently attacked those who act contrary to their interpretation of Islam.<sup>25</sup>

Militant nationalist groups such as the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) and the Baloch Liberation United Front (BLUF) have claimed responsibility for most killings of non-Baloch civilians, including teachers and other education personnel. They attempt to justify these attacks as a nationalist Baloch response to grievances against the state, and retaliation against abuses that state security forces have committed against Baloch community members.

Amidst the violence, Balochistan's long-term problems of governance and the stand-off between the Pakistani military and Baloch militants have deepened a general perception in the province of neglect, discrimination, and denial of rights. These are exacerbated by the continuing tribal system and its archaic social structures, the influence of the tribal chief on the justice system and police, and the consequent denial of citizens' fundamental rights.

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<http://www.ahrchk.net/statements/mainfile.php/2010statements/2395/> (accessed November 22, 2010).

<sup>23</sup> "Pakistan Fails to Curb Violence in Balochistan," *Sify*, July 6, 2010, <http://sify.com/news/pakistan-fails-to-curtail-violence-in-balochistan-news-international-khgqOpbaide.html> (accessed November 22, 2010).

<sup>24</sup> Syed Talat Hussain, "Regime of Fear," *Newsline*, April 21, 2010, <http://www.newslinemagazine.com/2010/04/regime-of-fear> (accessed November 22, 2010).

<sup>25</sup> A large proportion of the population of urban dwellers comprises people who settled there in the 1930s or at the time of independence in 1947. Those committing the recent violence make no distinction between these "settlers" and more recent migrants to the province. Older urban areas (Quetta, Loralai, Zhob, Sibi) were largely inhabited by the settlers, Pathtuns (and the Hazara community in Quetta), while the Baloch remained largely in the rural villages or small rural towns.

The poor and marginalized, particularly women, are adversely affected by traditional forms of dispute resolution and lack of access to other redress mechanisms. They lack assets and opportunities, have no social safety net, and are bound by practices that affect their welfare.<sup>26</sup> There are frequent reports of both state law enforcement agencies and local power-brokers committing abuses against marginalized populations. Labor conditions are abysmal, and there is no single system of justice despite a uniform civil and criminal code. The widespread use of tribal *jirgas* (councils) and other informal forums of justice increase the difficulty of seeking redress and obtaining justice, devaluing its quality.

Finally, the violence has denuded the already thinly spread provision of public safety. Organized police services cover only a fraction of the province's territory (about 4 percent of the land area), while the rest is covered by tribal recruits forming levies.<sup>27</sup>

As the violence in Balochistan intensifies, atrocities mount. While the Pakistani military and Baloch militants readily exploit the misery of civilians for their own political purposes, they have failed to address these grievances or to accept responsibility for them.

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<sup>26</sup> Violence against women and girls, including rape, domestic violence, and forced marriage, remains a serious problem. In one case in 2008, five women were shot and buried alive by members of their own tribe after three of them refused to get married as their families had demanded. Israrullah Zehri, a senator from Balochistan province, publicly defended the killings as "tribal custom." Another legislator, Hazar Khan Bijrani, stands accused of presiding over a tribal *jirga* (council) that in 2006 ordered the handing-over of five girls, aged six and younger, as "compensation" in a dispute. Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2009* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2009), Pakistan chapter, <http://www.hrw.org/en/world-report/2009/pakistan>.

<sup>27</sup> Asian Development Bank, *Report and Recommendation to the President on the Pakistan - Balochistan Resource Management Program*, 2004. The Pakistani state recruits men from local communities into the Levies, a quasi-police force, the Frontier Constabulary and Frontier Corps. The Frontier Corps is a federal paramilitary force consisting almost entirely of ethnic Pashtuns from the province's northern regions. Although the force is part of the civilian federal Interior Ministry, its forces are commanded by officers of the Pakistan Army.

## Enforced Disappearances in Balochistan<sup>28</sup>

The problem of disappearances in Pakistan is widespread and is not limited to Balochistan province. However, the focus here is specifically on “disappearances” in Balochistan, as they are a distinctive feature of the conflict there between government security forces and armed militants that has devastated the province over many years. These disappearances take place in a province in which armed militants, particularly Baloch nationalist armed groups, have attacked security forces and military bases throughout the province. These groups have been responsible for many targeted killings, including the killing of numerous teachers and other educators. In recent years they have increasingly attacked non-Baloch civilians and their businesses, as well as major gas installations and infrastructure. Human Rights Watch documented abuses by militants in its 2010 report, *“Their Future Is at Stake”*: *Attacks on Teachers and Schools in Pakistan’s Balochistan Province*.

Cases documented by Human Rights Watch show that Pakistan’s security forces, particularly its intelligence agencies, targeted for enforced disappearance ethnic Baloch suspected of involvement in the Baloch nationalist movement. Evidence of a broader campaign by the authorities includes detailed accounts of the released detainees and their relatives, witness accounts describing the circumstances of abductions and the identity of the perpetrators, and admissions by government officials. In a few cases representatives of the intelligence agencies admitted responsibility to the families, or during court hearings. None of the victims, their relatives, or eyewitnesses to the alleged disappearances interviewed by Human Rights Watch blamed armed Baloch groups. Most blamed Pakistan’s intelligence agencies or the paramilitary Frontier Corps.

Abductions were carried out in broad daylight, often in busy public areas, and in the presence of multiple witnesses. Victims were taken away from shops and hotels, public buses, university campuses, homes, and places of work.

The victims of enforced disappearances in the cases documented were predominantly men in their mid-20s to mid-40s. Three of the disappeared were children, the youngest of whom was 12 years old at the time of the abduction. In three cases, the victims were over 60 years

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<sup>28</sup> For a detailed examination of issues outlined in this section please see “We Can Torture, Kill or Keep You for Years”: Enforced Disappearances by Pakistan Security Forces in Balochistan, Human Rights Watch, July 2011. <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2011/07/25/we-can-torture-kill-or-keep-you-years>.



old. Most victims appear to have been targeted because of alleged participation in Baloch nationalist parties and movements, including the Baloch Republican Party (BRP), Baloch National Front (BNF), Baloch National Movement (BNM), and Balochistan National Party (BNP), as well as the Baloch Student Organization (Azad) (BSO-Azad). In several cases, people appeared to have been targeted because of their tribal affiliation, especially when a particular tribe, such as the Bugti or Mengal, was involved in fighting with Pakistan's armed forces.

Witnesses frequently described the perpetrators as armed men in civilian clothes, usually arriving in one or more four-door pickup trucks. The witnesses typically referred to these assailants as representatives of the "agencies," a term commonly used to describe the intelligence agencies, including the Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Military Intelligence (MI), and the Intelligence Bureau (IB). Other information obtained by Human Rights Watch in many cases corroborates these claims.

In 16 cases documented by Human Rights Watch, the abductions were carried out by, in the presence of, or with the assistance of uniformed personnel of the Frontier Corps (FC), an Interior Ministry paramilitary force. In a number of cases, police assisted by being present at the scene or securing an area while plainclothes intelligence officers abducted individuals who later "disappeared."

In all the cases Human Rights Watch documented, even evident members of the security forces did not identify themselves, explain the basis for arrest or where they were taking those apprehended. Often instead they beat the victims and dragged them handcuffed and blindfolded into their vehicles. For example, on July 1, 2010, Shams Baloch, the 49-year-old former mayor of Khuzdar town in Balochistan, was abducted from an ambulance while accompanying his sick mother to a hospital in Quetta, Balochistan's capital. About an hour after they left Khuzdar, men in Frontier Corps uniforms stopped the ambulance at a checkpoint and ordered Baloch to get out. They proceeded to beat him, while holding others at gunpoint. Four armed men in plain clothes arrived a short time afterwards and took Baloch with them. The police refused to investigate.

Another feature of enforced disappearances in Balochistan is that many of the victims, especially senior political activists, have been "disappeared" more than once. They have been abducted, held in unacknowledged detention for weeks or even months, released, and then abducted again. And sometimes "disappearances" occur after the security forces have made several unsuccessful attempts at abducting a person before finally apprehending and disappearing the victim.

Information on the fate of persons subjected to enforced disappearances in Pakistan is scarce. Some of the alleged disappeared are being held in unacknowledged detention in facilities run by the Frontier Corps and the intelligence agencies, such as at the Kuli army cantonment, a military base in Quetta.

Those who the security forces eventually release are frequently reluctant to talk about their experiences for fear of being disappeared again or facing other repercussions. Many have been threatened with retaliation if they discuss who abducted them or reveal that they were tortured in custody. Without exception in the cases Human Rights Watch investigated, released detainees and relatives who were able to obtain information about the disappeared person's treatment in custody reported torture and ill-treatment. Methods of torture included prolonged beatings, often with sticks or leather belts, hanging detainees upside down, and food and sleep deprivation.

There is increasing evidence to substantiate the fears of many families that disappeared relatives who have been missing for months or years have been killed in custody. According to media reports, more than 70 bodies of previously disappeared persons have been discovered between July 2010 and February 2011.

While the problem is widespread, the exact number of enforced disappearances perpetrated in recent years by Pakistan's security forces remains unknown. Anti-government Baloch nationalists claim thousands of cases. Official numbers of disappeared persons are wildly contradictory. In 2008 Pakistan's interior minister, Rehman Malik, admitted at least 1,100 victims. In January 2011 Balochistan's home minister, Mir Zafrullah Zehri, told provincial legislators that only 55 persons were considered missing. The minister provided no explanation for these figures, which are inconsistent with those of credible sources.

Some of the disappeared have been traced by various institutions. The Balochistan home minister claimed in January 2011 that 32 people had been traced. According to separate investigations by the federal Interior Ministry and provincial Home Ministry, 23 victims of disappearances have been traced. The Commission of Inquiry for Missing Persons, established by the Supreme Court of Pakistan, has traced a total of 134 persons throughout Pakistan, of which 23 have so far been released. However, this list is not publicly available and it is not known if disappeared persons from Balochistan are on this list.

Since President Asif Ali Zadari took office in 2008, his government has taken significant steps to address Baloch grievances. It offered a public apology to the people of Balochistan

for human rights violations perpetrated by the state under military rule, including large-scale disappearances. In December 2009 the government, seeking political reconciliation in Balochistan, passed the Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan (“Beginning of Rights in Balochistan”) package of constitutional, political, administrative, and economic reforms. It noted the province’s “sense of deprivation in the political and economic structures of the federation” and past failure to implement provisions of the 1973 Pakistan Constitution that sought to empower the provinces.

Yet the government has not kept its promises to address the crisis of enforced disappearances in Balochistan. Those responsible for enforced disappearances in the cases documented in this report have not been held accountable. The security forces have continued to behave with the same impunity they enjoyed under the military government of President Gen. Pervez Musharraf. This impunity seems to penetrate the system at all levels: police who refuse to register and investigate disappearance cases, courts that appear unwilling or unable to fully enforce the law against the security forces, intelligence agencies that continue to blatantly ignore court orders, and high-level government officials who talk of the need for accountability yet are unwilling or unable to rein in the security forces. The reality is that security forces controlled by the military, including intelligence agencies and the Frontier Corps, continue to act outside all formal mechanisms of civilian oversight.

In the vast majority of cases we documented, relatives of the disappeared reported the cases to the local police. In most cases the police eventually, often after an order from the Supreme Court, registered the cases. Yet that is where official activity usually ended, as no investigations followed. Police often explicitly told the families that they had no powers to investigate disappearances allegedly committed by the intelligence agencies or Frontier Corps personnel.

The right to habeas corpus continues to be largely undermined both by the failure of the courts to meaningfully uphold it and by security agency defiance. In 27 disappearance cases documented in this report, the families of the victims or lawyers acting on their behalf filed petitions with the Balochistan High Court. In none of those cases did the court establish the whereabouts of the disappeared.

The Supreme Court has been more active. In 2009, it reopened the inquiry into disappearance cases across Pakistan that it began during the Musharraf period and that had led to a confrontation resulting in Musharraf’s dismissal of the chief justice. In May 2010 the Supreme Court formed the Commission of Inquiry for Missing Persons, with a mandate to investigate enforced disappearances and provide recommendations for eliminating this

practice. A new Commission of Inquiry for Missing Persons was established by the federal Ministry of Interior on March 1, 2011. While some of the disappeared were traced by the first commission, no perpetrators were brought to account, possibly because of fears within the courts about confronting Pakistan's powerful intelligence and security agencies.

The inability of law enforcement agencies and the criminal justice system to tackle the problem of disappearances is exacerbated by the continuing failure of Pakistani authorities at the national and provincial level to exert the political will to address the issue of disappearances in Balochistan. The authorities have failed so far to send a strong message to the security forces and intelligence agencies and to implement a set of concrete measures that would put an end to the practice of enforced disappearances.

This failure remains one of the key factors contributing to the persistent cycle of abuse and impunity in the region, which takes a heavy toll on the Baloch community. It not only affects the victims whose lives are brutalized and lost, but also their families who live in the anguish that they may never learn the fate of their loved ones. It also deeply undermines the efforts of the Pakistani government to win the trust of the Baloch people and achieve reconciliation in the province.

### **Targeted Killings of Baloch Nationalists<sup>29</sup>**

Across Balochistan since January 2011, at least 300 people have been abducted and killed and their bodies abandoned—acts widely referred to as “kill and dump” operations, in which Pakistani security forces engaged in counterinsurgency operations may be responsible. Assailants have also carried out targeted killings of opposition leaders and activists. Human Rights Watch has extensively documented enforced disappearances by Pakistan's security forces in Balochistan, including several cases in which those “disappeared” have been found dead.

The surge in unlawful killings of suspected militants and opposition figures in Balochistan has taken the brutality in the province to an unprecedented level. For example, In the first 10 days of July, nine bullet-riddled bodies, several of them bearing marks of torture, were discovered in the province, Human Rights Watch said. On July 1, the body of Abdul Ghaffar Lango, a prominent Baloch nationalist activist, was found in an abandoned hotel in the town of Gadani, in the Lasbela district. The local police told the media that, “The body bore multiple marks of brutal torture.” Lango had been abducted by men in civilian clothes in

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<sup>29</sup> Please refer to “Pakistan: Upsurge in Killings in Balochistan,” Human Rights Watch news release, July 13, 2011, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/07/13/pakistan-upsurge-killings-balochistan>.

Karachi, in Sindh province, on December 11, 2009. When Lango's relatives tried to lodge a complaint about his abduction, the police refused to take it. An officer told the family that Lango had been detained because he was a BNP leader and that the "authorities" wanted to restrain him from participating in politics.

Hanif Baloch, an activist with the Baloch Students Organisation (Azad), was abducted from the town of Hub, Lasbela district, on July 4. His body was found in Mach, Bolan district on July 6, with three bullet wounds to his upper body. On the same day in Kech district, the bodies of Azam Mehrab, a resident of Tump, and Rahim, a resident of Mand, were found dumped in Juzak, on the outskirts of the town of Turbat. Both had been shot dead under unknown circumstances.

While Baloch nationalist leaders and activists have long been targeted by the Pakistani security forces, since the beginning of 2011 human rights activists and academics critical of the military have also been killed. Siddique Eido, a coordinator for the highly regarded nongovernmental organization Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), was abducted with another man by men in security forces uniforms on December 21, 2010, from the town of Pasni in Gwadar district.

The bodies of both men, bearing marks of torture, were found in Ormara, Gwadar district, on April 28. HRCP said that "the degree of official inaction and callousness" in response to Eido's death amounted to "collusion" in his killing. Earlier, on March 1, an HRCP coordinator for the city of Khuzdar, Naeem Sabir district, was shot and killed by unknown assailants.

On June 1, Saba Dashtiyari, a professor at the University of Balochistan and an acclaimed Baloch writer and poet, was shot dead by unidentified gunmen in the provincial capital, Quetta. Dashtiyari had publicly backed the cause of an independent Balochistan.

Human Rights Watch has repeatedly called upon the Pakistan government to take immediate measures to end killings in Balochistan, to conduct prompt, impartial, and transparent investigations into alleged extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances and ensure that all those responsible, regardless of rank, are fully prosecuted, including as a matter of command responsibility. Victims of abuses by government security forces should be provided appropriate redress.

## Recent Extrajudicial Killings in Balochistan

Human Rights Watch has investigated cases of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances in Balochistan. Below are recent cases of killings that indicate involvement by the Pakistani military, its intelligence agencies, or the paramilitary Frontier Corps. There has been a notable failure by the federal government in Islamabad and the Balochistan provincial government in Quetta to investigate these cases and hold perpetrators accountable.

### *Enforced disappearance and killing of Abdul Ghaffar Lango*

On December 11, 2009, a group of unknown men abducted Abdul Ghaffar Lango, a prominent Baloch nationalist activist, outside a hospital in Karachi in Sindh province. At 3 p.m. that day, Lango was leaving the Institute of Surgery and Medicine, a hospital in Karachi, with his wife, who had just been discharged after surgery. Lango's wife told Human Rights Watch that as the couple reached the main gate, two white Toyota Vigo pickup trucks drove up at high speed in front of them and suddenly stopped. About 10 men in civilian clothes approached the couple. One beat Lango unconscious with the butt of his rifle, and Lango fell to the ground. The men then dragged him into one of the cars and drove away. Lango's wife said there were many witnesses to the incident since it took place in a crowded area in broad daylight.

Later that day, Lango's relatives tried to lodge a complaint about his abduction at the Garden police station in Karachi, but the police refused to accept it. A police officer at the station told the family that Lango had been detained because he was a BNP leader and authorities wanted to restrain him from participating in politics. But the police would not provide any information on his whereabouts.

The family filed a petition with the Sindh High Court on January 12, 2010. On January 15, the court ordered the deputy attorney general and advocate general of Sindh to submit a report on Lango's whereabouts within two weeks. On March 3, Sindh Deputy Attorney General Umer Hayat Sindhu told the court on behalf of the director general of the Intelligence Bureau that Lango had not been detained or arrested by the Intelligence Bureau, which, he explained, was "only an intelligence agency that does not detain anyone for interrogation." Police representatives also told the court that Lango was not in their custody. No other security or intelligence authorities reported on Lango's whereabouts.

On July 1, 2011, Lango's body was found in an abandoned hotel near the Lakbado area of the town of Gadani, in Lasbela district of Balochistan. The local police, represented by the

station house officer of the Gadani police station, told the local media: “The body bore multiple marks of brutal torture. The cause of death was stated to be a severe wound in the head, caused by a hard rod or some other hard or sharp object.” Lango appeared to have been recently killed.

***Enforced Disappearance and Killing of Siddique Eido and Yusuf Nazar***

Siddique Eido, a coordinator for the highly regarded nongovernmental organization Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), and Yousaf Nazar, a tailor by profession, were abducted by men in security forces uniforms on December 21, 2010, from the town of Pasni in Gwadar district. Eido and Nazar were returning from Gwadar to their native Pasni after appearing in court in a criminal case lodged against them. Seven other co-accused and four police officers were travelling with them when their van was stopped by three unlicensed vehicles. The assailants, who were in Frontier Corps uniforms, abducted Eido and Nazar at gunpoint in the presence of the police officers. The bodies of both men were found in Ormara, Gwadar district, on April 28, 2011. Both bore marks of torture.

In response to the killings and the authorities’ failure to seriously investigate the case, HRCP said: “The uniforms of the abductors and the vehicles they had used gave credence to the belief that state agents were involved. Siddique had been abducted in the presence of several policemen, but despite such clear evidence no action was taken to publicly identify abductors or secure release.” HRCP added that “the degree of official inaction and callousness” amounted to “collusion” in Eido’s killing.

***Enforced Disappearance and Killing of Naseer Kamalan***

Naseer Kamalan was abducted at gunpoint on November 5, 2010, from a passenger van on the Makran Coastal Highway near Pasni in Gwadar district. Kamalan’s fellow passengers told Human Rights Watch that his abductors were in Frontier Corps uniforms and were driving a jeep of the type commonly used by the Frontier Corps. Kamalan’s body was found on January 17, 2011, dumped on the Makran Coastal Highway.

***Enforced Disappearance and Killing of Jamil Yaqub***

Jamil Yaqub was abducted in the town of Turbat on August 28, 2010, by a group of men in Frontier Corps uniforms, who had arrived in a jeep with military markings and insignia. Family members described to Human Rights Watch how they hid from the Frontier Corps personnel and then watched helplessly as Yaqub was abducted during daylight hours. Yaqub’s body, bearing marks of torture, was found on February 10, 2011, on the outskirts of Turbat.

### **Other Killings Verified by Human Rights Watch**

According to eyewitnesses, Hanif Baloch, a Baloch Students Organisation (Azad) (BSO-Azad) activist, was abducted from the town of Hub on July 4, 2011, by armed men in military uniform. His body was found on July 6, with three bullet wounds to his upper body.

On July 6, 2011, two bodies bearing multiple bullet wounds were found dumped near Juzak on the outskirts of Turbat in Kech district. Turbat District Headquarters Hospital authorities identified them as Azam Mehrab, a resident of Tump, and Rahim, son of Muhammad Yousaf, a resident of Go Kurth area of Mand, in Panjgoor district.

On June 18, 2011, the BSO-Azad junior joint secretary, Shafi Baloch, was abducted from the Lakhpas area of Mastung district. Witnesses told Human Rights Watch that Baloch was going to Mastung from Quetta in a passenger van for medical treatment when uniformed, armed men in three cars made him disembark and abducted him at gunpoint. His bullet-riddled body was found dumped near Mach, in Bolan district, 60 kilometers from Quetta.

On June 1, 2011, Prof. Saba Dashtiyari, a professor at the University of Balochistan in Quetta and an acclaimed writer and poet, was killed after being shot repeatedly by unidentified gunmen on Sariab Road in Quetta. Dashtiyari was the author of several books on Baloch culture and language and was a scholar on Islam. In recent years, he had publicly backed the cause for an armed struggle to achieve an independent Balochistan. No one has claimed responsibility for Dashtiyari's killing.

### **Targeted Killings by Baloch Nationalists and other militant groups<sup>30</sup>**

#### **Attacks By Baloch Nationalists**

Armed militant groups in Balochistan are responsible for killing many civilians and destroying private property. In the past several years, they have increasingly targeted non-Baloch civilians and their businesses, police stations, and major gas installations and

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<sup>30</sup> Abuses by militants in Balochistan were documented by Human Rights Watch in a December 2010 report "*Their Future is at Stake*": *Attacks on Teachers and Schools in Pakistan's Balochistan Province*, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/12/13/their-future-stake>.



infrastructure. They have also attacked security forces and military bases throughout the province. Abuses by militants in Balochistan were documented by Human Rights Watch in a December 2010 report *“Their Future is at Stake.”*

Teachers, professors, and school administrators have found their lives increasingly under threat in Balochistan. Between January 2008 and October 2010, suspected militant groups targeted and killed at least 22 teachers and other education personnel in the province. Militants have also threatened, bombed, or otherwise attacked schools, resulting in injuries, deaths, property damage, and curtailed education for Balochistan’s children and youth. In 2009, government schools were open for only 120 days, compared with around 220 days in the rest of Pakistan.

Fearing for their safety, many teachers—particularly ethnic Punjabis and Shiite Muslims and other targeted minorities—have sought transfers, further burdening what is already the worst educational system in Pakistan. Since 2008, more than 200 teachers and professors have transferred from their schools to the relatively more secure capital Quetta, or have moved out of the province entirely. Nearly 200 others are in the process of making such transfers. New teachers are hard to find, and replacements often less qualified than predecessors. In Baloch areas of the province, schools are often under or poorly staffed, and many remaining teachers say they are so preoccupied with declining security their teaching has been adversely affected.

Human Rights Watch has interviewed teachers, government officials, journalists, nongovernmental organizations, and school children, who describe attacks on Balochistan’s educational facilities, teaching personnel, and students as part of broader political, religious, and cultural divisions. We have considered the consequences of such attacks for education in the region, including pervasive fear, fewer school days, and hemorrhaging of qualified teachers.

Killing people of a certain ethnicity or religion who have dedicated their lives to teaching only undercuts opportunities and outcomes in a province already struggling to educate its populace and achieve greater development, making a bad situation even worse. There is no acceptable justification for targeted killings of teachers and other education personnel, or attacks on schools. Beyond the killings’ simple unlawfulness, the militant groups that are responsible demonstrate disturbing willingness to make the education of the province’s children a pawn of their armed agenda.

Education falls in the crosshairs of three distinct violent conflicts in Balochistan. The first is a nationalist conflict, in which militant Baloch groups such as the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) and the Baloch Liberation United Front (BLUF) seeking separation or autonomy for Balochistan have targeted Punjabis and other minorities, particularly in the districts of Mastung, Kalat, Nushki, Gwadar, Khuzdar, and Quetta. While individuals from all professions have been the victims of such “targeted killings,” teachers and students constitute a significant proportion of victims because militant groups view schools and educational personnel, particularly ethnic Punjabis, as representatives of the Pakistani state and symbols of perceived Punjabi military oppression of the province.

Often no group claims responsibility for attacks, and few perpetrators have been apprehended and prosecuted. Those that do claim responsibility for such violence often justify it as a response to perceived lack of Baloch control over resources, under-representation in the national government, and retaliation for abuses by state security forces against the Baloch community. For example, the recent surge in killings can be traced to the 2006 assassination of prominent Baloch tribal leader Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti, and the murders of three prominent Baloch politicians in April 2009 by assailants believed to be linked to the Pakistan military. Apparent militant nationalist groups have threatened school officials, demanding that they stop teaching Pakistani history, flying the Pakistani flag, and having children sing the national anthem. The BLA claimed responsibility for the shooting death of Anwar Baig, a senior teacher killed in Kalat in June 2009 because he supposedly opposed recitation of the Baloch nationalist and hoisting the nationalist flag instead of the Pakistani flag.

### **Attacks by Sectarian Groups<sup>31</sup>**

The second distinct conflict is a sectarian one, in which militant Sunni Muslim groups have attacked members of the Shia community, especially members of the Persian-speaking Hazara community. Such sectarian attacks appeared to have increased since 2009, and occur mainly in Quetta and its neighboring districts. Further, armed Islamist groups are also attacking those who act contrary to their interpretation of Islam.

Human Rights Watch has documented over 300 killings of members of the Shia community, mostly from the Hazara community that have taken place since 2008. For example, on October 4, 2011, gunmen riding on motorbikes stopped a bus carrying mostly Hazara Shia

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<sup>31</sup> For further details see the Human Rights Watch press releases “Pakistan: Prevent Targeted Killings of Shia Muslims,” October 4, 2011 <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/10/04/pakistan-prevent-targeted-killings-shia-muslims>, and “Pakistan: Protect Shia Muslims,” December 3, 2011, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/12/03/pakistan-protect-shia-muslims>.

Muslims who were headed to work at a vegetable market on the outskirts of Quetta, the provincial capital. The attackers forced the passengers off the bus, made them stand in a row, and opened fire, killing 13 and wounding six others.

On September 19, near the town of Mastung, gunmen forced about 40 Hazara who had been traveling by bus to Iran to visit Shia holy sites to disembark, shot 26 dead, and wounded six. Although some Hazara managed to escape, another three were killed as they tried to bring victims to a hospital in Quetta. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, a Sunni militant group, claimed responsibility for the September 19 attack.

On November 29, Mohammad Danish Alam, a Shia teacher at Balochistan University, became victim of an apparent sectarian killing when he was gunned down by unidentified men in the Zarghoonabad suburb of Quetta, Balochistan's capital. Local police reported that Alam, a science and information technology lecturer, was on his way to the university on his motorcycle when gunmen opened fire and killed him.

Pakistani and international human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch, have made numerous calls to Pakistan's authorities to hold those responsible for the attacks to account. While authorities claim to have arrested dozens of suspects, no one has been charged in these attacks.

While sectarian violence between Sunni and Shia militant groups has been a persistent problem in Pakistan, more recent attacks have primarily targeted ordinary Shia going about their daily lives. Despite Pakistan's return to constitutional rule in 2008, scores of unarmed Shia have been killed across Pakistan by Sunni extremists, particularly around the Islamic month of Moharram, which is of particular significance to the Shia. Human Rights Watch has recorded at least 16 attacks on the Shia so far in 2011 across Pakistan.

Sunni militant groups such as the supposedly banned Lashkar-e Jhangvi operate with impunity even in areas where state authority is well established, such as Punjab province and the port city of Karachi. Both in Balochistan, where local militants challenge government authority, and elsewhere across Pakistan, law enforcement officials have been seen to look the other way during attacks on Shia and other vulnerable groups.

## Recommendations to the United States Government

### In its discussions with the government of Pakistan, the US should:

- Press the government of Pakistan to take all necessary measures to end enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and arbitrary detentions, and fully investigate and prosecute as appropriate all persons, regardless of position or rank, who order or carry out such abuses.
- Communicate directly to the agencies responsible for disappearances and other abuses, including the army, ISI, IB, Frontier Corps, police, and other law enforcement and intelligence agencies, to demand an end to abuses and facilitate criminal inquiries to hold perpetrators accountable. Make it clear that continued disappearances will result in conditions on or an end to relationships with those agencies.
- Suspend police and military assistance and cooperation programs with the Frontier Corps, police, and Pakistan Army units based in Balochistan until military and civilian authorities fully investigate and take appropriate action regarding allegations of disappearance and other abuses by their forces.
- Actively implement the Leahy Law by ensuring that the Pakistani government has effective mechanisms in place to ensure that no security unit funded or trained by the US is responsible for human rights violations and that adequate vetting and oversight mechanisms are in place to help deter abuses in the future.
- Urge that the Pakistani government investigate alleged human rights abuses by the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and other militant groups and hold those responsible to account, particularly those who have committed serious abuses in Balochistan, including multiple killings of members of the Shia community.
- Demand that the Pakistani government take urgent measures to protect members of the Shia community and other vulnerable groups in Balochistan and across Pakistan.

### The US government should urge Baloch nationalist groups to:

- Cease attacks and threats against all civilians, particularly non-Baloch residents of the province.
- Cease attacks on teachers, professors, education personnel, and against schools.
- Immediately issue a public statement directing group members to respect the lives of non-Baloch residents of the province and to end attacks on schools, students and teachers.

- Take appropriate disciplinary action against group members who order or participate in attacks on civilians.
- Recognize that the United States considers attacks targeting people on the basis of ethnicity or religion to be particularly reprehensible and will seek to hold all groups that engage in such practices accountable.