



## COI QUERY

Country of Origin	Pakistan
Main subject	Kidnapping and forced recruitment by the Pakistani Taliban
Question(s)	<b>Information on cases of kidnappings of adult civilians for the purpose of forced recruitment by Taliban groups, in the urban area of Islamabad, between 2012 and 2014</b>
Date of completion	<b>7 August 2018</b>
Query Code	<b>Q107</b>
Contributing EU+ COI units (if applicable)	

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*This response to a COI query has been elaborated according to the [Common EU Guidelines for Processing COI](#) and [EASO COI Report Methodology](#).*

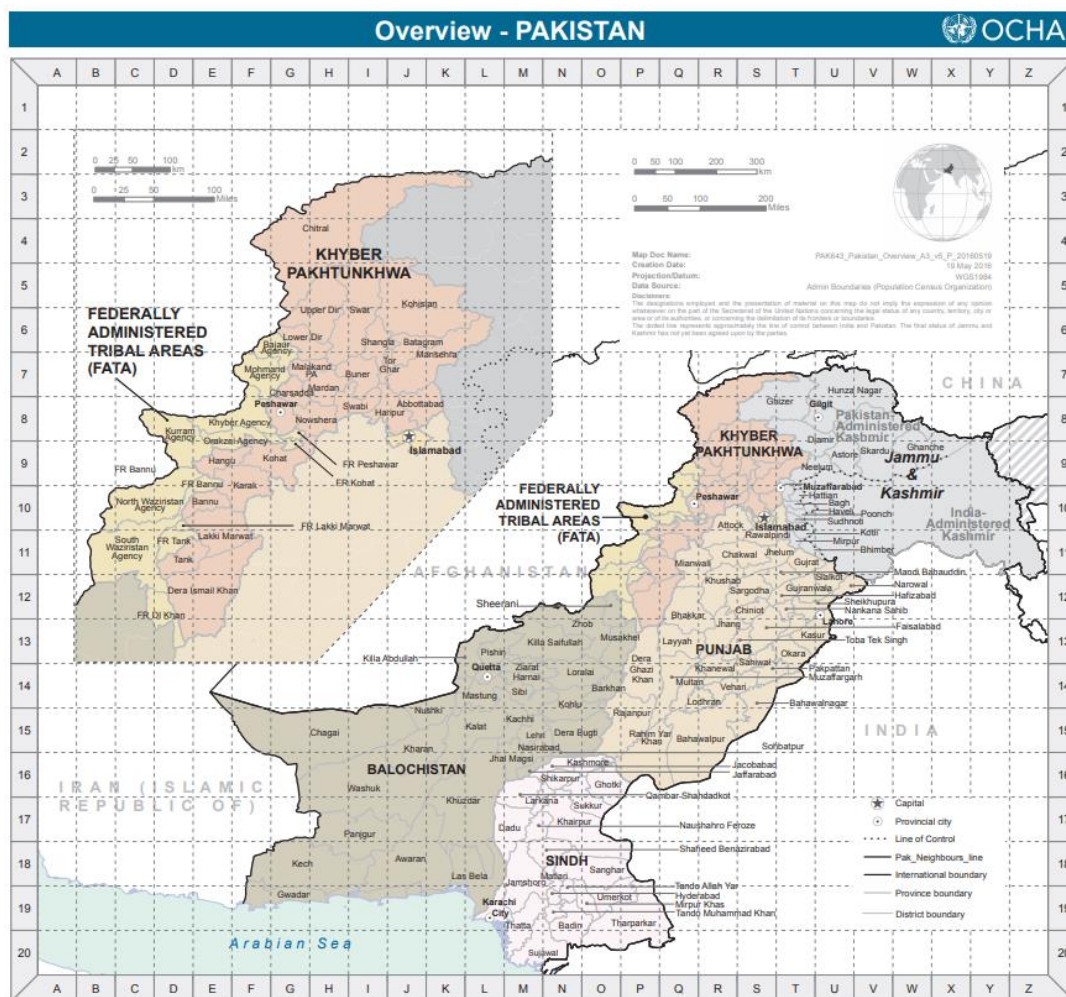
*The information provided in this response has been researched, evaluated and processed with utmost care within a limited time frame. All sources used are referenced. A quality review has been performed in line with the above mentioned methodology. This document does not claim to be exhaustive neither conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection. If a certain event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.*

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*The target audience is caseworkers, COI researchers, policy makers, and decision making authorities. The answer was finalised on the 7 August 2018. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this answer.*

## COI QUERY RESPONSE

Information on cases of kidnappings of adult civilians for the purpose of forced recruitment by Taliban groups, in the urban area of Islamabad, between 2012 and 2014



Administrative map of Pakistan (source: UN OCHA)<sup>1</sup>

Among all sources consulted and within the timeframe allocated to respond to this Query, no information could be found regarding cases of kidnappings specifically of adult civilians for the purpose of forced recruitment by Taliban groups, in the urban area of Islamabad, between 2012 and 2014.

However, the below information on kidnappings committed by Taliban groups in various areas of Pakistan might be of relevance.

<sup>1</sup> UN OCHA, *Pakistan: Overview Map*, 19 May 2016 ([url](#)).



### **Kidnappings of children for forced recruitment:**

An academic paper, published in 2011 by Shehzad H. Qazi<sup>2</sup>, notes that kidnapping had become a 'central feature' of the recruitment strategy used by the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP; Pakistan Movement of Taliban), the largest militant group active in Pakistan<sup>3</sup>. The same source notes the case of approximately 20 boys kidnapped by the local Taliban in Swat:

'In 2009, the Pakistan Army rescued almost 20 boys, most of who had been kidnapped in Swat [in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province] by the local Taliban. While some were cleaning dishes in camps, others were being trained to fight in the field or become informants or suicide bombers. The boys had been kidnapped from their villages and some underwent Islamist indoctrination, being told that militant jihad was the boys "religious duty". Others are coerced into joining through their associations with madaris, which are frequented by the Taliban or affiliated with them'<sup>4</sup>.

The Australian Refugee Review Tribunal refers to the findings of Zahid Hussain<sup>5</sup>, on the recruitment practices by Taliban in Pakistan, up until 2009:

'[Zahid] Hussain reports that anywhere from 1,200 to 1,500 children may have been taken by the Swat Taliban up till 2009. The children were being prepared to become suicide bombers, training for up to 16 hours a day. Many of these young boys were heavily drugged when sent on suicide missions. Some trained boys have also been sold to other militants groups for high prices'<sup>6</sup>.

The US Department of State (US DoS) report on human rights practices for the year 2013 states that militant groups kidnapped boys and girls to 'spy, fight, or die as suicide bomber'<sup>7</sup>. Cases of children being abducted by Pakistani Taliban to become suicide bombers have been reported also by some media<sup>8</sup>.

### **Kidnappings for ransom:**

In January 2011, the Pakistani newspaper Dawn published a news report revealing that kidnapping for ransom had become a widespread phenomenon across the country. The article adds that the rise of such incidents has to be linked with the involvement of militants 'in all corners of Pakistan'.

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<sup>2</sup> Shehzad H. Qazi is a nonresident fellow at the Center for Global Policy. He has written extensively on Pakistan and the Taliban insurgent movements. See: Center for Global Policy, Shehzad Qazi, ([url](#))

<sup>3</sup> The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was founded in about 2007 as a loose formation of Deobandi groupings mainly operating in the Pakistani border area with Afghanistan. In 2010, membership of TTP reached 30,000 to 35,000 armed men. The Pakistani Taliban finances its activities by extortion, smuggling, the drugs trade and kidnappings. For more information, see: EASO, EASO Country of Origin Report – *Pakistan security Situation*, 26 July 2016, p. 18 ([url](#)).

<sup>4</sup> Qazi S. H., (Institute for Social Policy and Understanding), *An extended profile of the Pakistani Taliban*, August 2011 ([url](#)).

<sup>5</sup> Hussain Z., *The Scorpion's tail*, New York, Free Press, 16 November 2010 ([url](#)).

<sup>6</sup> RTT (Australia), *The Pakistani Taliban*, January 2013, p. 8 ([url](#)), source: Qazi, S H, *Rebels of the frontier: origins, organisation, and recruitment of the Pakistani Taliban*, Small Wars and Insurgencies, Vol. 22 no.4, 574-602, p.595.

<sup>7</sup> US DoS, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 - Pakistan*, 27 February 2014, p. 21 ([url](#)).

<sup>8</sup> BBC, *Pakistani schoolgirl 'kidnapped for suicide attack'*, 21 June 2011, ([url](#)); Al Jazeera, *Pakistani Taliban's indoctrinated child bombers*, 17 October 2012, ([url](#)); Foreign Policy, *Pakistan's child soldiers*, 29 March 2010 ([url](#)).



Interviewed by Dawn, senior police officers stated that militant groups were directly involved in kidnapping in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, and Islamabad<sup>9</sup>.

The same source points out a new emerging trend, whereby militants and criminal gangs started to collaborate with each other in kidnapping activities, to the extent where it was 'routine practice' for the local criminals to perpetrate kidnappings in the areas where they lived, on behalf of the militants<sup>10</sup>. With regard to the people targeted as hostages, the article notes:

'With the entry of militants, religion also tends to play a role in the kidnappings from the act to the negotiations to the release. In some cases, militants have picked up hostages, assuming that they were Ahmedi or Shia. The later realisation that the victims were Sunni compelled the militants to accept a reduced ransom. Some years ago a businessman from Islamabad was kidnapped only to be released when he and his kidnappers were intercepted at a checkpoint as they were exiting Islamabad. During interrogations, the kidnappers revealed that they had kidnapped the businessman because they thought he was a Qadiani. A similar perception about a law enforcement personnel's faith also led to him being kidnapped'<sup>11</sup>.

During 2012, there were continued reports of civilians being abducted by militant groups in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Balochistan<sup>12</sup>.

In July 2012, the Pakistani newspaper, 'The Express Tribune', reports on a 'sharp rise in kidnapping for ransom cases across the country', with the highest number of incidents registered in Balochistan. The article also exposes a growing trend, by jihadist groups, to use kidnappings not only in exchange for money but also in exchange for prisoners. The same source adds that a series of high-profile kidnapping cases had been carried out in Punjab by 'well-trained militant groups in collusion with local criminal gangs'<sup>13</sup>.

In 2013, The Express Tribune informs that the 'business' of kidnapping for ransom had also reached Islamabad and the adjacent city of Rawalpindi, where an organised gang, known as 'the Sakhakot gang', ran a kidnapping network. According to this source, the only victims of the Sakhakot gang were wealthy people who could afford to pay a ransom of more than 50 million rupees<sup>14</sup>.

International Crisis Group, in a report entitled 'Policing urban violence in Pakistan' (2014), notes that kidnappings for ransom continued to increase and had 'become integral to militant fundraising'. According to the organisation, criminal gangs 'often sell an abducted person, especially a high-profile individual, to militant groups due to their "higher retaining capacity"'<sup>15</sup>.

Some media articles have also reported various kidnap-for-ransom cases across the country, targeting in particular business men, journalists, foreigners, aid workers, and high profile people<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Dawn, *Kidnapping for ransom a boon for militants*, 25 January 2011 ([url](#)).

<sup>10</sup> Dawn, *Kidnapping for ransom a boon for militants*, 25 January 2011 ([url](#)).

<sup>11</sup> Dawn, *Kidnapping for ransom a boon for militants*, 25 January 2011 ([url](#)).

<sup>12</sup> US DoS, *Country reports on human rights practices for 2012 - Pakistan*, 19 April 2013, p. 23 ([url](#)).

<sup>13</sup> Express Tribune, *Lucrative business: Abductions on the rise in Pakistan*, 26 July 2012 ([url](#)).

<sup>14</sup> Express Tribune, *Kidnapping for ransom: Organised crime reaches capital*, 25 September 2013, ([url](#)).

<sup>15</sup> International Crisis Group, *Policing Urban Violence in Pakistan*, 23 January 2014, p. 1, 12 ([url](#)).

<sup>16</sup> New York Times, *Taliban gaining more resources from kidnapping*, 19 February 2012 ([url](#)); BBC, *Taliban's brisk trade of kidnapping in Karachi*, 23 March 2012, ([url](#)); Telegraph, *Kidnapped Swiss tourists 'escape' clutches of Pakistani Taliban*, 15 March 2012, ([url](#)); Wall Street Journal, *Splintering of Taliban Fuels Spate of Kidnapping in Pakistan*, 30 July 2014 ([url](#));



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