



TRUTH TRACKER

WATCHING OUT FOR PAKISTAN



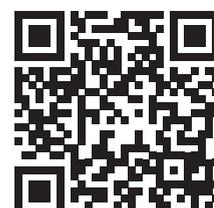
Proscribed groups re-emerge with new labels

Pg. 05

In KP, parents still prefer private over public schools

Pg. 07

Magazine By:



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Editorial

Bleeding Lahore and confused anti-terrorism policies

As these lines were being written on the evening of February 13, Lahore, the heart of Pakistan, suffered a suicide bombing that left 13 persons, including five police officials, dead and 83 injured. The bomber exploded himself near police officials who were engaged in negotiations with representatives of a pharmaceutical and medicine firm protesting against the government's drug policy. Tehrik e Taliban Pakistan's splinter Jamaatul Ahrar claimed responsibility for the attack.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, condemning the attack, claimed, "Our security forces have broken the terrorists' backbone." This is not a shocking or intriguing statement. Now, Pakistanis are habitual to such claims after every incident of terror. Sometimes these words are uttered by political icons and sometimes by military leaders. The fact remains that the terror groups mark their presence repeatedly with such attacks even with a broken backbone.

The rulers and policy makers look confused. At this critical time, when they are supposed to formulate clear and unambiguous policies to fight terror groups, Punjab's rulers are making policies to stop basant (a festival to welcome spring with kite-flying), which is already banned. They want a crackdown against those who want to exchange roses to celebrate Valentine's Day. How confusing is that? The rulers don't want to see a rainbow of kites in the sky because their strings may cut the throats of motorcyclists.

Kite flying has been banned in Punjab for the past eight years after increasing incidents of throat-cutting by strings. So policymakers formulated a policy and managed to bring kite-flying to a halt.

But the rulers cannot stop the terror groups from wreaking havoc in Pakistan because they make vague policies followed by poor implementation. They say that they will not differentiate between good and bad Taliban and will eliminate them. Instead, both still exist.

They say that the supporter of terror groups will be brought to task. Instead fathers of terror groups get official protocols and security. Isn't it confusing?

Now some of the self-styled analysts and experts have started playing a new tune. They want the banned religious and terror groups to be included in the mainstream politics. Are these groups not in mainstream politics already, directly or indirectly?

Historically speaking, whenever these groups or their supporters are given space in mainstream politics, they try to grab more space and impose their agenda. The history of Pakistan is filled with examples in which elected governments were blackmailed by the extremist leaders and groups when they included them in policy making.

Even if these groups are pacified or they start believing in democracy and ballots, what about their splinters? A simple example of this is Harkatul Mujahideen, a banned terror group that was aligned to Al-Qaeda and Taliban. The group is almost peaceful with a new name, Ansarul Ummah, and is a component of the Pakistan Defence Council, an alliance of religious and political parties. But, the majority of people does not know that Omar Khalid Khurasani, chief of Jamaatul Ahrar, the most feared terror group at present in Pakistan, started his militancy as an operative of the HuM. Later, he joined TTP and formed his own group, known as the JuA. Bringing the militant groups to the mainstream politics will make no difference as groups like JuA and leaders like Khurasani will keep coming unless the state adopts a zero-tolerance policy against extremist groups.

Mubasher Bukhari

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Media Foundation 360 holds "Training of Trainers" in Islamabad

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Editor's Note

Crime and Punishment of Pakistani Media

The recent libel ruling by the British court ordered a Pakistani media giant £3 million (PKR 400 million) in damages and costs for airing two dozen separate defamatory claims against rival media outlet and its proprietor. The media giant filed for bankruptcy to escape the fine. The court also revoked licenses of its 3 channels broadcasting in UK. The significance of the court case in UK was that both media organisations rebroadcast in United Kingdom. As the dust seem to settle, one wonders if the verdict signifies that the fierce war between prestigious media organisations is over.

The private electronic media channels surfaced in the country post-millennium, as the then president Musharraf allowed licensing to air news content alongside entertainment. This brought a breath of fresh air to the citizens who longed to hear an independent view on national issues without having to always rely on foreign news.

In this period electronic journalism was nothing short of heroic. We witnessed journalistic command and dedication in times of challenges. Private news channels competed for satellite broadcasting and reached the diaspora across continents. They made a mark representing national views post 9-11 attacks on U.S soil, while keeping a strong eye on the return of Benazir Bhutto and the issues around her subsequent death. News media, through their ethical determination, received accolades and respect from viewers both at home and abroad.

In contrast to its nascent years, recently, media acquires more of a bare-knuckle attitude: aiming to create post-truth by disarming and discrediting individuals, institutions and appealing to emotions of the masses. Media Pundits state that some news channels and anchors try to attain popularity and ratings by lowering their journalistic standards emphasizing the need to influence rather than inform its viewership.

Media in Pakistan has been resilient in the face of regulations and has fought for its freedom. Some journalists, already weary of the institutional pressures influencing journalistic content, now face challenges at the hands of their proprietors who would like to channel the journalistic narrative to safeguard their enterprise's, often, existential interests.

The war between national media networks has been dispiriting for both journalism and the people of Pakistan. Jeering at its competition will not do well for the media. As it is, a similar case of defamation is still in process in Pakistani courts. From what seems the media battle will not subside easily. Reports allege that the smearing campaign was influenced by political, entrepreneurial and media individuals.

It will be prudent for this pillar of the state to value its freedom and protect its independence and that of its community's. Institutions like Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), Pakistan Broadcasting Association (PBA) and Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) should be empowered to effectively address issues pertaining to media and journalism. Media professionals and networks should discard personal rivalries for serving the interests of the powerful might as well mean driving a nail in its coffin.

Aameera Javeria

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Truth Tracker Team:

Executive Editor:

Mubasher Bukhari

Designer:

Ahmad Fraz

Consultant Editors:

Lisa Schnellinger
Michelle Betz

Assistant Editors:

Aameera Mehmood
Mariyam Ali

International Mentors:

Bronwyn Curran
Naheed Mustafa

Photographer:

Mohsin Raza

Editors:

Aurangzaib Khan
Aameera Javeria
Fatima Ali

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Ahmad Huma Ali
Alizer

Manager Logistics:

Azhar Khan

GM Operations:

Masim Temar

Legal Advisor:

Adv. Fahim Abbas

Security

Proscribed groups re-emerge with new labels



Waqar Gillani

Islamabad: Pakistan's latest bid to curtail radical preaching group and anti-India militant organisation Jamaatud Dawah (JuD) and its chief Hafiz Muhammad Saeed appears to be another half-hearted step to shun extremism.

The JuD, accused of actively supporting Kashmiris to get rid of India, was placed 'under watch' by the government while Saeed along with four other leaders were placed in 'preventive detention' as terror suspects last month.

Last month the Interior Ministry took initiative against JuD and its relief wing Falah e Insaniyat Foundation (FIF) to comply with the delayed United Nations Security Council Resolution 1267, which urges states to curtail public and financial activities of alleged terrorists linked to the Taliban.

The ministry also placed FIF in the watch list for close surveillance under the 1997 Anti-Terrorist Act for six months. JuD has been under observation since 2007, according to the National Counterterrorism Authority (NACTA).

However, it has been operating freely for the past several years without any official charge, other than being on the watch list. Prior to last month's detention of Saeed and fellow leaders, JuD had announced nationwide public events to show solidarity with the Indian Kashmir freedom movement.

JuD has said that it now plans to continue

work under different guise and to carry Pakistani flags instead of JuD flags. Some rickshaw-ads in Lahore are showing JuD re-labelled as "Tehreek e Azadi e Jammu o Kashmir" (Movement for Freedom of Jammu and Kashmir).

"We are not banned. We are under observation. And under observation status does not bar us from activities," Yahya Mujahid, JuD spokesperson told Truth Tracker.

"We are also moving court against the unjustified detention of our leadership." He said, "These steps were taken on American pressure to please India and such steps have given negative message to freedom fighters in Indian Kashmir." He said the group will continue to work as part of different religious alliances and legally and politically resist its leaders' detention.

"Hence we have dedicated this year to Kashmiris' struggle so we will carry Pakistani flags in our rallies instead of the JUD's flags," he said.

Outlawing radical organisations is not new in Pakistan. Since 2001 when Pakistan joined the US alliance in the war on terror, steps against extremist and militant factions have produced few results.

Hafiz Saeed was first detained in December 2001 after Indian allegations of his involvement in the attack on the Indian parliament. He was again briefly detained in 2006 after the Mumbai train bombings, but was freed on the orders of the Lahore High Court after no proof was produced against him. In 2009 he was placed in 'preventive custody' following the Mumbai hotel attack after the United

Nations placed him on the list of alleged terrorists under Security Council resolution 1267. The courts again freed him after a few months after the government was unable to prove anything against him. In 2015 a Pakistani court also set free Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi, another alleged mastermind of the Mumbai attacks and an alleged key leader of JuD and Lashkar-e-Taiba.

Lashkar-e-Taiba had been banned in Pakistan, after which JuD surfaced, declaring its mission was to preach Islam and Jihad.

Masood Azhar, leader of Jaish-e-Mohammad, another banned outfit active on Kashmir front, was detained in Pakistan after the Indian parliament attack in 2001, only to be freed on court orders in 2002.

Pakistan claimed to have detained him again in 2016 following an attack on the Pathankot airbase. However his exact whereabouts are unknown. Pakistan banned the JeM in January 2002, but it re-emerged with the new label "Khuddam-ul-Islam" which was also banned in 2003. JeM however is still active in Pakistan with its flag, online presence and periodical publications.

Pakistan banned another sectarian extremist group Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) in 2002. It re-emerged as Millat-e-Islamia Pakistan, also banned in 2003. It again re-emerged, under the name Ahl-e-Sunnah Wal-Jamaat (ASWJ), which was banned in 2012. The group nevertheless continues to operate freely and hold public events.

The group's militant wing Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) was proscribed in 2001 but

it remains active through splinter groups and an alliance with Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan, Al-Qaeda and Daesh, according to official reports by intelligence agencies and Interior Ministry.

Tehreek-i-Jaferia Pakistan (TJP), a Shiite organization countering the SSP and LeJ was banned in 2002 and re-emerged as Islami Tehreek Pakistan only to be added to the list of proscribed groups in 2003. But, it's chief Allama Sajid Naqvi is active with a title of Quaid e Millat e Jaferia (Leader of Shia Nation) and enjoys security by the government.

"As far as I recall, we lack a proper law on it," Khawaja Khalid Farooq, former head of NACTA, told Truth Tracker

"The people and organisations take advantage of legal lacunas. However, we can control them by targeting them individually, like effective monitoring of people on the watch list (under observation) according to existing laws.

The mechanisms are there but, perhaps, they are not followed in letter and spirit." In 2003, Pakistan again decided to ban all extremist outfits who have reportedly regrouped under new names but could not

do much. Following the National Action Plan to counter terror in 2014, verbal efforts went high to counter these groups and subgroups.

Point Seven of the 20-point National Action Plan agenda calls for "ensuring against re-emergence of proscribed organizations." A 2016 report by FATA Research Centre (FRC), a non-profit research group, found that militancy and violence by proscribed factions went up by 34 per cent in the tribal areas.

"Many in Pakistan under-estimate the consequences of falling afoul of the guidelines issued by groups like the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), of which the Asia Pacific Group is a sub-grouping," Khurram Hussain, columnist and analyst said.

"If Pakistan does not act against these persons and organisations listed in UNSCR 1267, it will have far reaching impact on the ability of Pakistani banks to establish correspondent banking relationships with banks around the world, negatively impact our trade, remittances and all manner of financial flows with the outside world."

He said that as a first step, Pakistan should

comply with UNSCR 1267 "which lists groups and individuals to be banned, meaning their travel and movement is to be controlled, their assets seized and funds frozen."

"At a minimum, this compliance would at least ensure that the presence of entities and individuals designated by the United Nations as terrorists does not pose an imminent threat to the country's financial system, and thereby to the larger economy."

Imtiaz Gul, executive director of the Centre for Research Security Studies think-tank attributes the lack of action by Pakistani authorities to "a matter of will."

"Poor enforcement of law is the lead cause of such issues. The government will have to act to stop individuals and groups from hate mongering and enforcing ideology," Gul told Truth Tracker.

There are several other banned militant groups like Harkatul Mujahideen and Jamaatul Ansar, whose leaders can be seen in the rallies of Difa e Pakistan Council (Pakistan Defence Council).



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Contact:
4-A/1, Race View, Jail Road, Lahore.
Phone: 042-35408403



info@newslens.pk

www.newslens.pk

Accountability

In KP, parents still prefer private over public schools



Abdul Salam Afridi

Peshawar: Public spending on elementary and secondary education (ESE) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province is up. However, parents are increasingly choosing private schools despite only marginally higher performance rates among private school students. Official data shows an eight percent annual increase in private school enrollment over the last 2 years. The results are perturbing. Over half of the students in both private and public schools cannot pass basic mathematics and literacy tests.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government announced a hefty increase in its education for upcoming 2017-2018 budget. The Elementary and Secondary Education Department (ESED) received 26 per cent share of the total provincial budget. This means that the ESED got a lion's share of the provincial education budget, giving them the freedom to exercise new approaches to increase student enrollment and improve quality. Naji Ullah Khattak, consultant and spokesperson ESE, told Truth Tracker that the budgetary increase was initiated following an education emergency put in place by the province.

The public education campaign 'Ghar Aya Ustad', launched in 2015, focused on bringing students, who have dropped out of school, back into the classroom and boost the quality of that education. Mr. Idrees Azam, Chief Planning Officer ESE (KP) said in an interview he was hopeful of success since the government. He said that his department "has planned different programmes and initiatives upon demand base from local schools."

Although many students transitioned from private to public schools during a campaign supported by a programme to improve the quality of education in the northwest led by Adam Smith International, the KP government still struggles to enrol 2.6 million children who are still out of school, according to Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan in 2013. In year 2016 the government conducted a survey to measure progress on bringing children into the classroom but it has yet to be published. Naji Ullah Khattak, consultant and spokesperson ESE (KP) said that ESE expects to launch grade 5 reading and writing test surveys which could present a comparison of quality between private and public schools in the province.

The cost of public versus private education

With nearly a quarter of KP's budget dedicated to education, the government has never devoted so many resources to primary and secondary education. Yet the spending has failed to deliver all the changes the government promised.

The KP government spends over 22,000 rupees per year per student in the public school system. According to a rough estimate for private schools, monthly fees in the vast majority of schools are below 2,000 rupees, which comes out to about 20,000 per year (just under the government's annual investment per public school

KP KIDS FLOCK TO PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Local Parents Prefer To Enroll Their Children In Private School

Enrollment Rates In Private School Climbing Faster Than Public School

Government

Private

Public School Teachers Have To Serve Almost Twice As Many Students In Their Classrooms As Private School Teachers

Government School

34

Private School

20

Private School Students Fare Slightly Better On English Tests

Data Source:
<http://www.financekpp.gov.pk>
<http://www.kpese.gov.pk>
<http://aserpakistan.org>

Years:
2014-15 & 16

Promise Tracking

PTI's promise to provide poor patients with free treatment compromised



Rehmat Mehsud

The Promise

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan had formally inaugurated the Social Health Protection Initiative of Sehat Sahulat Program titled "Sehat Insaf Card" Phase 2, an initiative of the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) to facilitate poor segment of society with better and easy health facility.

Background

In August last year, Khan had said the program would cover all the districts of KP.

The scheme would cover 50 per cent of the population of KP including 1.8 million households while each household would get free treatment in public and private hospitals up to Rs 5, 40,000.

Khan had said KP would be made a model province of Pakistan and the Sehat Insaf Card would provide free treatment to the poor people.

He noted the provincial government took all measures to improve the life standards of the poor people. For the first time in the history of KP, he had said hospitals were made autonomous and now they would make their own decisions to improve the quality of health service in hospitals without any interference.

Tracking

Truth Tracker approached Dr. Riaz Tanoli, Director of the Health Protection Initiative, who offered minute details into the program by saying that inauguration ceremony of the program was held on August 31, 2016 by Khan himself.

The total cost of the program, he recalled was Rs. 5.4 billion with two years' time frame. A total of 1.8 million families would benefit and their registration process is underway, he added.

The registration of families to benefit from the program include Peshawar division, Mardan division, Hazara division and Kohat division, and the process is almost entered its final stages.

While enrollment of families will start in February this year in rests of the areas such as Bannu division, D. I. Khan division and Malakand division, which will complete by April this year.

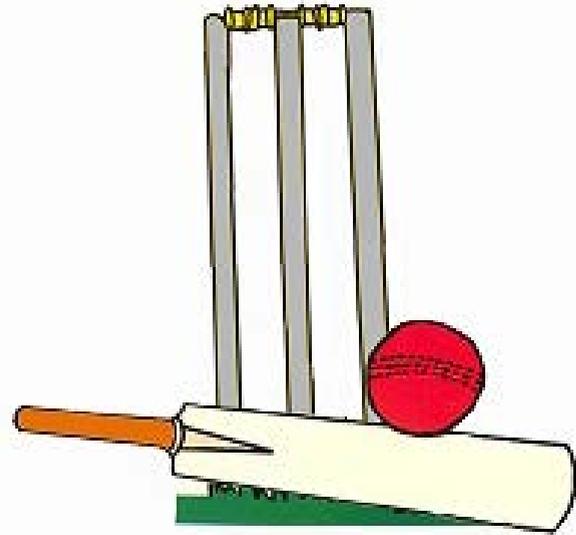
Private hospitals, he said in most of the areas are on the program panel where families are getting benefit, having their Sehat Insaf Cards.

"Obviously, we have a very good feedback of better health facilities from people having Sehat Insaf Cards. But yes, maybe, there are some deficiency and we're working to remove those hurdles to ensure provision of better health facilities to all," Riaz noted.

He said all the provincial hospitals would be brought on the program's panel within the next two months and the target people would get their cards.

"We are working on a draft law for this program, which will be sent to the provincial assembly to give it legal cover so that future governments keep it on," he added.

When contacted for comments, Sardar Aurangzeb Nalotha,



C O M P R O M I S E

Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) from Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N), said of Sehat Insaf Card: "The PTI has virtually destroyed this program and Sehat Cards are distributed on preferences basis to undeserved people."

Look, he said those people who are millionaire or even billionaire have got Sehat Insaf Cards while poor people who could not afford medicines are vying for treatment without getting any card.

The same people, he said are being targeted to get the Sehat Insaf Cards who are cardholders of Benazir Income Support Program (BISP).

Sehat Ka Insaf? (Justice of health) What is Sehat Ka Insaf? interjected Sayed Jaffar Shah, MPA from Awami National Party (ANP). "I'll invite you on my own expenses to see for yourself the state of private and government-run hospitals even in Peshawar," he added.

The poor patients, he said continue to suffer and they have no access to free medicines in government-run hospitals, he remarked. "I really don't see any change and the situations are going toward worst," Shah added.

Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha, another MPA from Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP), said that Sehat Ka Insaf Cards are being distributed on favouritism basis. It is a good initiative, which should be appreciated but the PTI-led government should have conducted fresh survey to identify deserving and poor people to avail the facility.

Mian Iftikhar Hussain Shah, an ANP stalwart and former provincial information minister, said of PTI's Sehat Ka Insaf Cards that program is a replica from foreign countries, which is a good step if it is implemented in letter and spirit.

"The tragic aspect of the program is that the PTI is using it as a political bribery. Come and see how patients are treated in KP hospitals," he observed.

He wondered that the province is under acute financial crisis and how the PTI would manage to keep the Sehat Card program forward.

Independent Viewpoint

Aqeel Yousufzai, a Peshawar independent analyst and senior

journalist, recalled the PTI chief Imran Khan's election campaign was based to improve mainly three areas such as local governance system, education and health.

But unfortunately, he said Khan has no team to work in tandem because it has now been four years of PTI rule but provincial government performed badly to deliver in a single sector.

The problem with PTI, Yousufzai said is that the party is making announcements sans any implementations.

He said the provincial government has lagged far behind to improve the two sectors such as health and education, which are of paramount importance.

"Come and see the condition of Peshawar hospitals, which is a metropolitan city then you can judge the state of health centers in far-flung regions such as Bannu and Swat," he noted.

Ruling

In the light of comments and views of director of the program, opposition lawmakers and an independent analyst, Truth Tracker finds that the PTI has dragged its heels, compromising its promise to ensure provision of better health facilities to poor people of the province.

Promise Tracking

PML-N compromised promise about job quota for minorities



Durdana Najam

The Promise

Pakistan Muslim League had promised in its 2013 election manifesto to enforce the job quota for minorities in educational institutions and public sector jobs including diplomatic missions.

Background

In March 2009, the government of Pakistan reserved 5 per cent job quota for minorities across the country. The quota was reserved under Article 260(3)(b) of the Constitution of Pakistan. The religious minorities had been demanding at least 6 per cent reserved quota in jobs protesting of discrimination and religious intolerance that keeps them from getting a job on merit.

The government has been accused of not enforcing 5 per cent quota at the workplace. In its 32-pages landmark ruling on religious minority issues, on June 19, 2014, the Supreme Court of Pakistan had ordered all the governments in Pakistan to implement the law in letter and spirit however it was not to be. According to Ramesh Kumar, MNA from Pakistan Muslim League-N no government had been serious about providing a decent workplace with adequate job opportunities to the members of minorities in the country.

The verdict from the Former Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice retired Tasaduq Hussain Jilani, stated: "In view of the statement made by learned Attorney General for Pakistan and learned Additional Advocate Generals of Punjab, KPK and Balochistan regarding reservation of quota for minorities in the federal and provincial services, it is directed that the Federal Government and all Provincial Governments shall ensure the enforcement of the relevant policy directives regarding reservation of quota for minorities in all services."

Chaudhry Mushtaq Gill, a member of the Minorities' Advisory Council for the government of Punjab, said that there is deep frustration among the minorities due to lack of proper implementation of job quota. Member of minorities he said are of the opinion that laws about minorities are not respected because of prejudice and religious discrimination.

According to 1999 census minorities were 3 per cent of the total population of Pakistan. Ishtiaq Ahmed an eminent Swedish Pakistani Scholar writes in his book the 'Pakistani Descent,' that the minorities in Pakistan comprise 10 per cent of the total population. For many years since the inception of Pakistan, minorities both from Muslims and non-Muslims had lived a safe and secure life until the wave of Islamisation swept the country



during the Zia regime. Today religious minorities, especially non-Muslims in Pakistan have been excluded from mainstream national life by denying them space in the public sphere through job opportunities, educational facilities, and freedom to practice religion and culture.

According to Jinnah Institute's Report on minorities during the period 2012-15 at least 351 incidents of violence were reported against minorities. (<http://jinnah-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Minority-Report-2016.pdf>).

Minorities have voicing their protest to the government and suggesting to reform public school curriculum that has largely been considered the reason behind gross discrimination of minorities. Of late janitorial jobs in public sectors were especially marked out for Christians. The government had to discontinue the practice after the protest from right activists.

Tracking

Pakistan Muslim League MNA who does not want to be named has told Truth Tracker that the PML-N government has done almost nothing to implement the Judgment of the Supreme Court. He said that even where jobs can be given to minorities were not made available.

Punjab Human Rights Minister Khalil Tahir Sindhu while talking to Truth Tracker agreed that there are gaps in the enforcement of job quota at the Federal level. However, when talking about Punjab, he said things had improved considerably. "Not everywhere in Punjab jobs can be allotted to minorities because there is one seat for minorities against 20 regular jobs. In Punjab, we have introduced 5 per cent quota in every job category. In the

last three years, we have inducted 67 sub-inspectors in the police. Recently the Chief Justice of Lahore High Court Syed Mansoor Ali Shah has announced 5 per cent quota for 636 Additional Session Judges to be hired shortly. Similarly, we have appointed a Sikh SDO in Nankana Sahib Punjab. Even Public Service Commission has reserved 5 per cent job quota for minorities," said Sindh.

He added that one 14 November 2014 the Chief Minister of Punjab announced that the job quota would be applied from grade 1 to 17. "We have taken notice that every job advertisement carries the provision of job quota for minorities, said Sindh.

Mahmood-ur-Rashid, Leader of Opposition in Punjab Assembly from PTI, told Truth Tracker that the government has been able to implement only 3 per cent of the job quota instead of 5 per cent. He said that the parliamentarians representing minorities had been registering their concern with the government about the inadequate implementation of employment quota but to no avail. "There is a broad sense of disappointment among the minorities over this issue," said Rashid.

Fareed Paracha, leader Jamaat-e-Islami, thinks that the government has failed to meet the expectations of the minorities. He stated that 5 per cent quota is too small and should be increased. "A large population of the minorities are either poor or illiterate, in this situation it becomes more necessary for the government to increase the job quota so that a maximum number of people from the minorities are adjusted," said Paracha.

Independent Viewpoint

Basharat Khokhar, a human rights activist, told Truth Tracker that it was difficult to apply 5 per cent job quota all over the country. "It is important that this quota is raised," said Khokhar. He added that mostly flat cadre jobs are offered to minorities, which, Khokhar emphasized, has increased the trend of discrimination against them.

James Paul, Chairman Pakistan Minority Teachers Association, talked to Truth Tracker on the phone and said that because of 5 per cent job quota it becomes difficult to accommodate enough people from minorities. Usually, said Paul, people from minorities are offered positions in far-flung areas.

Ruling

The government has been unable to enforce the full implementation of 5 per cent job quota for minorities both in the federal and provincial level in Punjab. The government efforts have been half hearted and true empowerment of the religious minorities will happen if the quota's net is broadened and educational systems are made enforce the same leverage to its minority applicants. Only then the job quota will be able to make minority citizen valuable members of our social fabric. The promise has been compromised.

Promise Tracking

PPP's promise to stop forced conversions through law compromised



Shaukat Korai

The Promise

Chairman of "Pakistan Peoples' Party" (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari applauded the "Sindh Criminal Law (Protection of minorities) Bill, 2015" legislation on 24 November, 16 to stop forced conversions in province. PPP is the ruling Party in southern province of Pakistan Sindh. Chairman PPP urged the other provinces to adopt the legislation in other provinces of Pakistan. He promised that the PPP, after coming to power, will introduce the same laws in other provinces too.

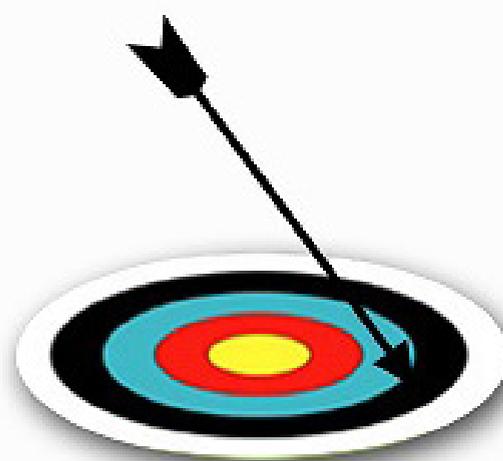
Background

Hindus constitute the largest religious minority of Pakistan; most of them live in Sindh Southern Province of Pakistan. They are facing a serious dilemma as young Hindu girls are forced to convert to Islam and marry Muslim men.

"At least 600 girls and boys have been abducted and forced to convert to Islam during 2016," claimed by Pakistan Hindu Council (PHC) a non-governmental organization (NGO) of working class Hindus. According to PHC claims, "Authorities can not even register cases against forced conversions due to the absence of a law condemning forced conversions"

PPP had promised legislation against forced conversions in Sindh during the election campaign in 2013 general election of Pakistan. The bill was moved by member of Sindh Assembly, reserve seat for Non-Muslims, Pakistan Muslim League Functional, Nand Kumar Goklani.

Sindh Assembly passed the law "Sindh Criminal protection act, 2015" on 24 November, 2016 unanimously against forced conversions in the province.



COMPROMISE

Sub-Section 1 of the section 4 of the law forbids minors from choosing another religion of their free will until they reach the age of eighteen.

The law was lauded by human rights organizations, liberal forces and the political elite of the country. PPP, MQM and other political parties in Sindh Assembly supported the bill and adopted a new law unanimously.

However, Pakistan religious, banned outfits and extremist organizations rejected the new law against forced conversions. Religious parties objected to sub-section 1 of the section 4 of law which forbids minors (Less than eighteen years) from choosing another religion. They declared sub-section 1 of section 4 of law Un-Islamic.

They protested against the law and demanded its withdrawal.

Mutahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) was second largest party



in Sindh assembly, which withdrew its support for the law after protest of the religious parties.

Syed Sardar Ahmed, parliamentary leader of MQM, said that he had written a letter to Governor Sindh asking him to send the bill back to the provincial assembly for review, he told to Truth Tracker.

“They withdrew their support of the law after protest of the religious parties,” he said adding, “their party agreed that prohibition of minors’ conversions is un-Islamic.”

On December 22, 2016 former president of Pakistan and president of Pakistan Peoples’ Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) Asif Ali Zardari talked to Ameer Jamaat Islami, he assured him to review and amendment in law with consultation of religious parties.

“Sindh Criminal protection act, 2015” has been sent back for review to assembly, stated secretary of Sindh Assembly Ghulam Umar Farooq Burirro.

Tracking

Pakistan Truth Tracker approached Bilawal Bhutto Zardari (BBZ) for his opinion but he was on U.S. visit. Media Advisor on minority affairs to PPP chairman BBZ, Surrender Villasai, responded on behalf of BBZ. He said that PPP is very clear on the issue of forced conversions.

Villasai Said, “we have same stance as it was before this act about forced conversions. If governor Sindh sent the Act back to assembly for review, we will review and consider the amendments against forced conversions.” He added that the aim of the party was to discourage and stop the practice of forced conversions.

“Our support for bill in assembly surpassed the promise made to the minorities during the general election 2013 by PPP,” claimed Villasai. He said PPP gave immense support to the legislation in Sindh assembly. “We still promise that whenever in power in other provinces, we will do our utmost to introduce a similar bill there,” he vowed.

Senior Minister for parliamentary affairs of province and president of PPP Sindh Chapter Nisar Khuhro told truth tracker that he had assured minorities on behalf of his party that we would not support any amendments favouring forced conversions.

He said that review of the act is part of legislation; it does not mean that the party has withdrawn the law. If anybody submits amendments or suggestions we will consider, he added.

In reply to question that PPP has compromised after immense pressure of religious parties he responded that protest is

opposition’s democratic right, being government the party has to listen to everyone.

When approached for comments, Nand Kumar Goklani Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) from Pakistan Muslim League Functional (PMLF), said that Governor should have not have sent the Act back to assembly because it was passed unanimously. Nobody had disagreed over the law during its proceeding in assembly session, he added. Assembly is higher forum; opposition should present their amendments to the assembly, Goklani said. He said no amendment has been presented in assembly yet. “Let them present the amendments first, later we present our point of view,” added Goklani.

Dr. Ramesh Kumar, a lawmaker member of national assembly from Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) said that PPP is a liberal and democratic party but in this regard they have compromised after receiving immense pressure from religious parties. “Government of Sindh should convene all parties conference on issue we will present our point view and arguments before religious scholars of Muslims,” he added.

Kumar said that different Muslim countries have adopted law for conversions, in Malaysia no individual has the legal right to choose another religion without the consent of parent before the age of eighteen.

Independent Viewpoint

Akhter Baloch political analyst and human rights activist said that the bill was sent back by governor after huge pressure and protest of religious parties. Government of Sindh, PPP and other political parties stepped down because of protest by religious parties and rightist scholars also. The law was remarkable against forced conversions in province, which is one of the heinous crimes in Sindh, he added.

Baloch said that it was ever first in history of provincial assembly that any private bill has got unanimous support of parliamentarians.

At least democratic and liberal forces should stand united against forced conversions, meanwhile those who oppose the law should be brought on board, he added.

Ruling

The Government of Sindh and political parties including ruling party PPP and MQM stepped down after immense pressure of religious and banned outfits. As a result of the protest by religious parties, parliamentarians agreed to amend the law against the forced conversions in Sindh. PPP promise has been compromised after protest of religious parties.

Promise Tracking

PTI's promise to reform KP police force is underway



Rehmat Mehsud

The Promise

Promising tangible reforms in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan had said his government would soon introduce the Police Act in the assembly to reform the force..

Background

Khan was speaking to participants at the launch ceremony of the Public Liaison Councils (PLCs) at Police Lines in Peshawar in November 2015.

The reforms, he said would be so effective that no succeeding government would be willing to amend them.

Khan had said that Chief Minister Pervez Khattak had empowered the K-P inspector general of police to restore peace. He had said that the IG was asked to take steps to improve security throughout the province.

He said that through PLCs, disputes could be resolved on a local level and crime rates would further decrease. He said members of the councils and local elders supported the police in their collective efforts to stop crime.

Later, in January this year, the KP Assembly passed the KP Police Bill 2017, Ehtesab Commission (amendment) Bill, 2017 and the KP Salaries, Allowances and Privileges Laws (amendment) Bill, 2017.

The Police Bill is aimed at bringing reforms in the police force. Besides other points, the bill gives financial and transfer and postings powers to the inspector general of police. Though, the bill was passed unanimously but the opposition members objected to the transfer of powers to the police chief.

Tracking

Truth Tracker approached Arif Yousuf, Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) from PTI and special assistant to chief minister, who without elaborating positive changes in the police system said the police culture has totally changed and now there is visible peace in the province.

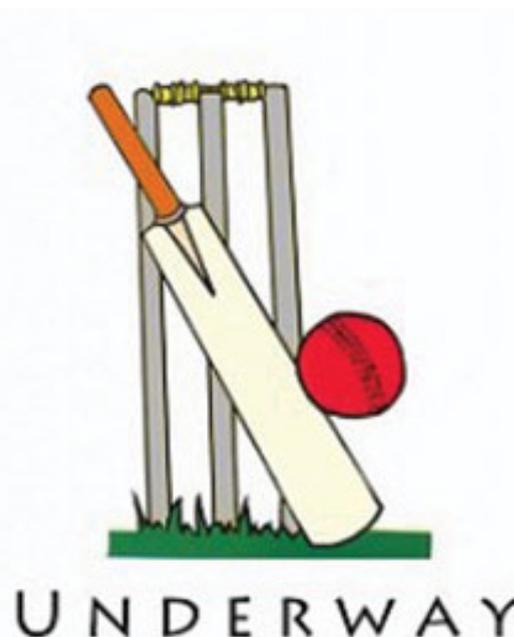
Arif said the First Information Report (FIR) could now be filed online discarding the necessity of plaintiff's physical appearance in the police station.

When asked if the power transfer to Inspector General (IG) Police could make it a one-man show, he said that every citizen has the right to register a complaint against any police officer.

"The PTI has put an end to the culture of political interference in the police department," he remarked.

Mian Iftikhar Hussain Shah, Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) from Awami National Party (ANP) and former information minister, said police reforms is a direly needed subject to be carried amid PTI's converse claims of police independence and de-politicisation.

"Our police force has already gone into depression because of its poor service structure," Mian noted. How police would turn out to be an efficient force at a time when the PTI has empowered the top most police officer (the IG) while low ranking district



police officers are discouraged, he questioned.

"Look, talking non-stop is one thing and doing things practically is something different," Mian said in an apparent reference to PTI promises of change in the province. He said that the PTI boasts of introducing online registration of FIR but he wonders how is it possible to register an online FIR when poor people face unspeakable problems when they record FIR physically.

Sardar Aurangzeb Nalotha, an MPA from the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), said the PTI reform to improve the police system has virtually destroyed the police system.

According to police reforms, the PTI has empowered one man--the IG of the province--- and when the top police officer has all the powers then the system tends to collapse, he added.

"Don't ask me about the so-called police reforms, talk to a police station officer who will for sure reject the new system because all the powers are in the hands of one person---the IG," he added.

Sayed Jaffar Shah, an MPA from ANP, said that according to the new police act, all powers have gone into the hands of IG who would do whatever he wants because there is no proper check and balance system.

He said reforms do not mean to empower one person but the PTI should have provided the police force with advanced weapons and vehicles to fight back criminal elements efficiently.

"I foresee, the province is going to become a sort of police state," Jaffar observed.

Azam Khan, another MPA from Jamiat Ulama-i-Islam-F (JUI-F), said these all are media hype and there were zero changes on the ground during the PTI tenure.

"We have the same police culture, same police stations and same policemen with no visible changes," Azam noted.

Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha, another MPA from Pakistan People's Party (PPP), said that he really appreciates if there are result-oriented reforms in each and every department.

"But giving powers into the hands of one person clearly means, power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely," Bacha said in an apparent reference to powers given to the IG.

Independent Viewpoint

Rehmat Khan, additional inspector general (AIG) police (Retd) and an independent analyst, said he really did not thoroughly read the police reforms package introduced by the PTI government but he would speak about police force's requirements.

He said the police force could perform brilliantly if the force is made internally independent, no political or any other kinds of pressure, need and clean recruitment and advanced training and equipments.

He said that police officers promotion should be performance

based to promote only competent officers, which would help reduce the crime rate to great extent.

Ruling

In the light of comments and views of ruling, opposition lawmakers and an independent analyst, the PTI has brought some amendments in the police system but most of service men are not satisfied. Truth Tracker finds that the PTI promise to reform the police system is underway. However, until results can confirm success thumbs up to PTI will have to wait.

Promise Tracking

PPP breaks promise about reforming Juvenile Justice System



Durdana Najam

The Promise

Pakistan People's Party in its 2013 manifesto promised that when in power it would amend the Juvenile Justice System Ordinance 2000 to allow for the creation of children's courts, and assess other means to strengthen the juvenile justice system.

Background

The Juvenile Justice System does not fall in the civil or criminal justice apparatus; it is a distinct system that requires separate courts as is mentioned in the Juvenile Justice System Ordinance 2000 (JJSO). Offenders below the age of 18 are tried under the Juvenile Justice System. The central aim of the administration of juvenile justice provides rehabilitation of the youth rather than punishment.

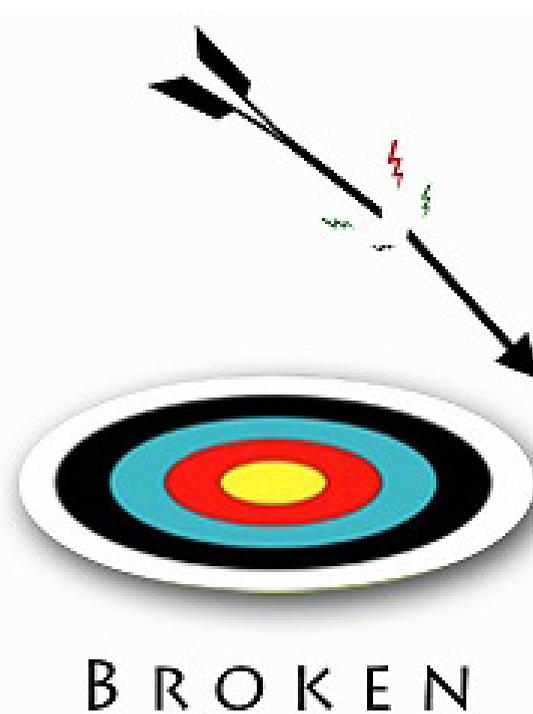
The Juvenile Justice System Ordinance, promulgated on July 1, 2000, prescribes setting up of juvenile courts and specialized procedures for arrests, investigation, bail and trial for the juvenile offenders.

In 2016, the Foundation for Research and Human Development (FRHD) and Sindh prison department carried out a situation study of juvenile offenders in Central Prison Karachi. The study sessions revealed that most of the young inmates were bright and wanted education, but the jail had no such facility to offer. Juvenile offenders usually came from poor and marginalized families, unable to pay surety on their behalf. During one interview session, 23 children admitted they could not hire a lawyer due to the paucity of funds.

Section 3 of the Juvenile Justice System Ordinance (JJSO) 2000, says that the state would provide legal practitioner to a child who is accused or is a victim of an offense. But the members of FRHD were told that the government had failed to provide funds to acquire a state-sponsored legal aid.

According to the research as many as 545 children were brought to Youthful Offenders Industrial School in 2016. Of these, 493 were first time offenders; 48 had faced conflict for a second time while four were incarcerated for the third time. A total of 186 children were facing trial. Under the JJSO 2000, Juvenile courts should decide a case within four months, but a typical case is taken forward to more than two years.

Police behaviour with youth offenders has been a matter of concern for the activists. The report revealed that majority of the police officer had no knowledge of JJSO 2000, Sindh Children Act 1955, or any other law regarding children. In most cases the very law enforcers were oblivious to the law requiring the immediate



notification of the probation officer upon the arrest of a child.

Section 4 (1) of JJSO binds the federal and provincial governments to set-up juvenile courts in each district. However, no such court has been established anywhere in the country. The governments have asked sessions and additional judges or family courts to try juvenile offenders.

Currently, juvenile offenders are even tried in anti-terrorism courts and under Protection of Pakistan Act a child who is accused of a crime can be held in preventive detention. Preventive detention is a measure where an accused is detained for a period of time before proceedings commences, considering the accused as a threat to the proceedings or the community. This practice criticised for robbing the accused of their fundamental human rights.

On May 30, 2012, Ministry of Interior issued a notification that read: "The Federal Government is pleased to designate the existing anti-terrorist courts established under the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 to exercise the power of Juvenile Justice Court in the area of their respective Jurisdiction." However child rights experts have viewed this with dismay saying that the absence of juvenile courts and judges decelerate the judicial process for juveniles.

In Sindh prisons, the government has established separate barracks for young offenders, which is usually near the adult prisoners. In all, there are five detention centres in Sindh for holding Juvenile offenders these include the remand Homes in Karachi along with Youthful Offender Industrial Schools in Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, and Larkana. According to a report by Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child the detention centres in Sindh are in deplorable condition.



Sindh High Court

Tracking

After the 18th Amendment, law and order is provincial subject, therefore to track the PPP promise about the juvenile courts Truth Tracker found it pertinent to know what the PPP government in Sindh has done in this regard. Sharmila Farooqi, Member of Sindh Assembly and a leading figure of PPP, was contacted to get PPP's view. Sharmila agreed that the Sindh government had been unable to do much for the juveniles. She admitted that the remand homes were in deplorable condition and that there were only two probation officers in Karachi. She was painfully acknowledged that children in jails were not given proper education or vocational training, preparing them for a crime-free life as they returned to normalcy.

Talking about the mechanism needed to set up juvenile courts she said that the government had to work with the Chief Justice Sindh High Court to develop a separate system within the existing judicial infrastructure to handle the juvenile offenders. For this, she recommended that the District Judge in every district could be designated to hear juvenile cases. Farooqi further added that since setting up separate courts require budgetary allocations called Money Bill, which usually require years to develop, therefore, she suggested, in the meantime, the government could work on jail reforms, designate separate judges and providing vocational and academic activities to children in prison. "Presently we only have a few barracks in the Karachi Central Prison for the children, which is not enough. In Hyderabad and Sukkur children offenders are kept with adult criminals," said Farooqi.

She further added that the Home, Prison and the Legal departments have to work together to address this important issue.

When Truth Tracker spoke to Inspector General Prison Sindh, Nusrat Mangan he painted an entirely different picture. He agreed that the Sindh government had not established special courts for the juvenile offenders. However, Mangan said there were separate jails for them. About the general well being of the children in prison, he said: "We give proper education and vocational training to these kids in jails." When asked about the absence of legal aids to the children Mangan stated that places where the government could not provide legal aid, the gap is filled by NGOs.

Nusrat Sehar Abbasi, a member of Sindh Assembly from Pakistan Muslim League (Functional) said that the Sindh government had been swift in making laws but passive in getting them implemented. About the condition of jails in Sindh she termed them as deplorable. "Sindh lacks good governance," said Abbasi. "The government might have changed the Chief Minister, but it has not affected the mind-set which is the same as it was at the time of the former chief minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah's time," Abbasi lamented. When asked if her party had taken up the issue of juvenile justice in the Sindh Assembly she told Truth Tracker that the Sindh government had made assembly's proceedings complicated making it difficult to get an issue tabled either through an adjournment motion or call attention order. "Issues given for call attention are balloted and later run through a process of scrutiny and criticism, because of which many issues either get delayed or are not allowed discussion when the time is ripe for them," said Abbasi.

Independent Viewpoint

Justice (r) Wajihuddin Ahmed told Truth Tracker that juvenile courts were necessary and should be made without delay. He further added that unfortunately dispensing justice was not the priority of the government. "Visit any court in Pakistan, and you find it in shambles. Judges and lawyers hardly have enough offices even record rooms are not available," said Ahmed. He doubted if the government would ever get serious in allocating funds to build juvenile courts.

Shaukat Hayat, an eminent lawyer from Sindh High Court, informed Truth Tracker that session judges have been hearing cases of the juveniles. Adding further, Hayat stated that no special court was made for the children. He continued, saying that the police and society have subjected the juvenile offenders to all sorts of abuses and mistreatment.

Ruling

The PPP government has been unable to establish separate Juvenile Courts and strengthen the juvenile justice system, such as by providing vocational and academic training to the children or making jail reforms for them, therefore the promises stands broken.

Accountability

Distressed women find free legal relief at Peshawar District Bar



Asad Khan

PESHAWAR: Sisters Rifat and Jamila have come to the Peshawar District Bar to consult lawyers about their intentions to divorce their Afghan husbands. Pakistani citizens from Peshawar, the sisters had both married brothers Sadeeq Akbar and Mujahid Akbar in 2010. When the Pakistan government launched its crackdown on Afghan refugees, the brothers decided to repatriate to their home country in May last year. Both couples have three children each, and the husbands want to take the children to Afghanistan with them.

The sisters, however, are not prepared to leave Pakistan nor will they let their children go.

"We are not ready to leave our country and take our children to a strange country," Riffat, covered in a black burqa, told Truth Tracker.

"We will divorce our husbands, but we will not go to Afghanistan."

The sisters are poor and cannot afford to pay lawyers.

"A relative informed us to visit Free Information Desk in the District Peshawar Bar to consult lawyers about the divorce," Riffat said.

The Free Information Desk at the Peshawar District Bar was launched by Blue Veins and the Peshawar District Bar Association. The main goal is to give underprivileged women access to justice through free information and resources.

"The initiative aims to provide adequate legal protection to women victims of all forms of gender based violence and discrimination, including domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking," Peshawar District Bar Association Khushnood Zakirullah Begum, of the Peshawar District Bar Association, told Truth Tracker.

Begum assists women seeking justice, information and resources at the Free Information Desk.

According to a 2014 report by Aurat Foundation, one of the largest women rights' organisations in Pakistan, 10,070 cases of violence against women (VAW) were reported nationwide in 2014. The level of violence had increased by 28.2% from the previous year, according to the Aurat Foundation report. The majority of cases were recorded in Punjab, Pakistan's most populous province, which accounted for nearly 75 per cent of cases. Sindh had the second highest incidence of violence against women with 14.37 per cent). In 736 cases were reported from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Islamabad and FATA, the number of

cases reported were 736, 190, 140 and 5 respectively.

Rifat and Jamila need advice on resolving their disputes with their husbands over their plans to relocate their children to Afghanistan.

"The lawyers told us that they would call our husbands for negotiations and resolve our issue," Jamila told Truth Tracker.

The Free Information Desk not only assists women with information but helps hire lawyers to settle issues of violence against women.

"First we study the nature of the causes. Then we guide underprivileged women regarding their cause," Begum said.

She said in the last ten months they had helped 60 women from Peshawar district by referring their cases to pro bono lawyers.

Under the initiative, said Begum, 30 members of the Peshawar District Bar including 20 women have been trained to sensitize fellow lawyers in gender friendly legal practices and to encourage them to take pro-bono cases. They are also working to consolidate a database of legal experts.

She said that the majority of cases related to domestic violence, or women wanting separation from husbands.

Tahira Kaleem, project manager at Blue Veins, told Truth Tracker that the organisation had established an inquiry committee against sexual harassment inside the District Bar Association. It is the first such initiative in the district courts since the enactment of the sexual harassment law six years ago.

However, some lawyers from the Bar criticized the work done under the project, saying it encouraged women to seek divorce instead of reconciliation and destroyed the lives of couples.

"I completely disagree with work of NGOs as they encourage women to seek

separation and create hurdles in the way of reconciliation, so they can collect money from foreign donors," a woman lawyer from the Peshawar District Bar told Truth Tracker, requesting not to be named.

"Couples need to consider compromise and reconciliation before considering something as drastic as separation and divorce. But NGOs encourage women to take the latter option in the name of their rights," she said.

Qamar Naseem, Programme Coordinator for Blue Veins, said violence against women was the worst form of violation of human rights in Pakistan.

"Discriminatory treatment against women not only creates hurdles in social, political, economic and cultural fields, but also strips women of confidence," he told Truth Tracker.

Naseem said women's restricted access to justice in Pakistan, like any other country, is not a result of antiquated laws and the judiciary's lack of ingenuity.

"It is a result of the interplay between various social, cultural, structural, instrumental and legal complexities and anomalies that can only be understood and addressed through a keen interdisciplinary analysis of the justice system and its gatekeepers."

Human Rights

11 years on, schools destroyed by 2005 earthquake await reconstruction



Sheraz Akbar

PESHAWAR: Nearly half of the roughly 3,000 schools damaged in Pakistan's catastrophic earthquake in 2005 have still not been rebuilt, according to official records made available by the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA).

ERRA was mandated to rebuild 2925 of the schools destroyed.

Of the 2995 schools badly damaged or completely destroyed in the most devastating earthquake in Pakistan's history, only 1698 or 58 per cent have

been rebuilt, ERRA records show.

On October 8, 2005, an earthquake of 7.6 magnitude hit the northern parts of the country including KP and Azad Kashmir.

According to ERRA, more than 80,000 people were killed while about 75,000 people were injured in the calamity. The earthquake displaced about 2.8 million people as large number of houses, hospitals and schools and other buildings were destroyed.

Responding to the deadly earthquake, Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's president at the time, established ERRA to help rebuild and reconstruct the earthquake affected area on urgent basis.

However, rehabilitation and reconstruction had yet to complete after eleven years due to paucity of funds, ERRA officials told News Lens.

"Shortage of funds is why we have fallen behind our target on reconstruction of schools," said Shazia Haris, Public Relations Officer at ERRA while talking to Truth Tracker.

She said since 2005, work on reconstruction of 1698 schools had been completed by ERRA with an amount of PKR 9491.023 million.

But 1227 schools still awaited reconstruction, she said, among which 645 schools were at various stages of

construction.

“Work on these schools couldn’t continue when we ran out of funds.”

In view of the delayed reconstruction in the region since the earthquake, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, on a visit to Hazara region in December 2014, announced that the government would rebuild schools hit by the earthquake.

He promised the Hazara people that education centres would be built in districts of Shangla, Batgaram, Mansehra and Abbotabad.

The prime minister promised the project would be fully funded - with an allocation of PKR 8 billion - while other ongoing projects would be transferred to the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with funding from the federal government.

But the premier’s promise of building the

new schools hasn’t come to pass.

“Only 76 schools could be built under the Prime Minister’s reconstruction programme,” said Ms. Haris.

She said although the prime minister had instructed authorities in the earthquake-affected region to reconstruct schools within a year, two years on since his promise work on schools had been dragging due to lack of provision of funds.

Shazia did not say how much of the promised funds had been spent on schools under the prime minister’s scheme and if there was any hope of getting the remaining funds anytime soon.

Hashmat Ali, a Senior Planning Officer at the Education Department in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, said that since ERRA had been mandated to reconstruct the schools, the provincial education department couldn’t work on rebuilding

schools.

“We have written several letters to the federal government to release the required funds to ERRA to complete reconstruction swiftly or provide us the funds to do the same but there has been no response yet,” said Ali.

Ali said that the Minister for Education Muhammad Atif and the spokesperson for the KP government Mushtaq Ahmed Ghani had also held press conference twice for the purpose but it didn’t elicit any response from the prime minister.

Sahibzada Hamid Mehmud, Additional Director Establishment at the Education Directorate, said that dozens of schools taken up by different NGOs soon after the earthquake had been built within a few months, showing better commitment on their part.



media
foundation360
THE WHOLE JOURNALIST

As a part of journalism profession we, at Media Foundation 360, have been seeing the problems and pressures journalists face within the organization and out in the field regarding their rights and security ranges from salary payment issues to murders and kidnappings. This is when we decided to be their voice and stand up for their rights.

With the slogan of “A Whole Journalist”, we are here with the ambition of helping media professionals getting their rights as well as their training to improve journalism standard in the country. In this regard, we arrange workshops and discussion sessions for journalists with country’s top media professionals and foreign trainers. We also intend to be a watchdog of media outlets in the country, keeping an eye on journalism standards and practices they follow, and pointing out the areas where they failed to follow ethics and laws.

CONTACT:

4-A/1, Race View, Jail Road, Lahore.

Phone: 042-35408403

info@mediafoundation360.org

www.mediafoundation360.org

Training Workshop & Forum

Media Foundation 360 holds “Training of Trainers” in Islamabad



Media Foundation 360 in collaboration with Near Media LLC conducted a ‘Training of Trainers’ from January 31 to February 3, 2017 in Islamabad on “Bridging the Information Gap: Access and Professionalism in Investigative Reporting”. The training focused on Right to Information Laws (RTIs), focus statement of a story, data journalism, sources, follow up questions and interview techniques. Participants were also given assignments to apply the techniques in each session. There were four learning steps in each segment that included explanation, demonstration, application and evaluation.

As many as 13 senior journalists from print and electronic outlets from different parts of Pakistan attended the training. Since RTI laws are not uniform in Pakistan, the workshop offered unique opportunity to learn about the Federal and Provincial RTI laws. The workshop participants learnt about importance and effectiveness of RTI laws, the difference between RTI laws and Freedom of Information Act, and their use to report in-depth and investigative stories for improved governance public officials’ accountability.

Speaking to the participants via Skype from Atlanta, USA, President NearMedia LLC Lisa Schnellinger said, “RTI laws are currently in the process of evolution in Pakistan. And their use by journalists and general public will make them more effective and stronger over a period of time.”

Senior Journalists Mubasher Bukhari, Auranzaib Khan and Fatima Ali led the rest of the sessions as trainers.

The participants went through rigorous exercise of understanding and using RTI laws which included participants understanding what kind of information comes under the category of ‘public information’ available with various public bodies; the method of drafting and submitting RTI request with federal, provincial and other public bodies; and how to make an appeal in case of an RTI request being declined. Exercises on focus statement, follow up questions and interview techniques were also held to help participants learn and practice the tools.

The workshop also focused on equipping journalists with larger set of skills that included various tools to find and investigate in-depth stories. During these exercises each participant came up with story ideas that was discussed and critiqued by the instructors and fellow participants to achieve more clarity and depth



Day 1: Right to Information Laws (RTI) & Focus Statement



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Day 1: Right to Information Laws (RTI) & Focus Statement



Day 1: Right to Information Laws (RTI) & Focus Statement



Day 1: Right to Information Laws (RTI) & Focus Statement



Day 2: Data journalism & Sources



Day 2: Data journalism & Sources



Day 2: Data journalism & Sources



Day 2: Data journalism & Sources



Day 2: Data journalism & Sources



Day 2: Data journalism & Sources



Day 3: Interviewing Skills



Day 3: Interviewing Skills



Day 3: Interviewing Skills



Day 2: Data journalism & Sources



Day 2: Data journalism & Sources



Day 2: Data journalism & Sources



Day 2: Data journalism & Sources



Day 4: Follow-up Questions



Day 4: Follow-up Questions



Day 4: Follow-up Questions



Day 4: Follow-up Questions



Day 4: Follow-up Questions



Day 5: Story Plan



Day 5: Story Plan



Day 5: Story Plan



Day 5: Story Plan



Day 5: Story Plan



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