

## CHAPTER 2

# Security Landscape of Pakistan in 2020

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## 2.1 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa witnessed the highest number of terrorist attacks for any one region of Pakistan. A total of 79 terrorist attacks happened in the province, including 31 in the North Waziristan tribal district alone, which in all claimed 100 lives and inflicted injuries on another 206 people.

While a majority of these attacks (50) targeted security forces, as many as eight attacks hit civilians, and a combined eight attacks were directed against tribal elders and political leaders/workers. Shia religious community was hit in four attacks, and a single attack targeting a madrassa claimed eight lives. The TTP, Hizbul Ahrar, Jamaatul Ahrar, local Taliban, Lashkar-e-Islam and other groups with similar objectives perpetrated 75 of the total attacks reported from KP, while the other four attacks were sectarian-related.

As in 2019, North Waziristan remained a major flashpoint of insecurity and militant violence in the year 2020 where 31 terrorist attacks took place, or about 39 percent of the total reported attacks from KP, which killed 50 people and injured 55 others. Nine terrorist attacks happened in Bajaur tribal district claiming seven lives. Meanwhile, six (6) terrorist attacks happened in each of Peshawar and South Waziristan districts. Similarly, four attacks took place in DI Khan, and three (3) attacks were recorded in each of Khyber, Kurram and Kohat districts. In all, terrorist attacks were recorded in 19 districts of KP.

**Table 1: Terrorist Attacks in KP in 2020**

District	Attacks	Killed	Injured
Bajaur	9	7	4
Bannu	1	1	0
Buner	1	1	1
Charsadda	1	2	0
D.I Khan	4	2	2
Khyber	3	2	1
Kohat	3	4	0
Kurram	3	2	17
Lakki Marwat	2	2	2
Lower Dir	2	0	6
Mohmand	1	0	0
North Waziristan	31	50	55

District	Attacks	Killed	Injured
Nowshera	1	1	0
Orakzai	2	2	2
Peshawar	6	13	103
Shangla	1	1	0
South Waziristan	6	7	13
Swabi	1	2	0
Swat	1	1	0
Total	79	100	206

Over the past few years, the number of intensive or high-impact terrorist attacks has decreased in the province. Yet in 2020, there were recorded 10 such attacks in which three or more fatalities or deaths happened. These included an attack on Boya check-post in North Waziristan in April; attack on army patrolling party in North Waziristan in June that also killed Captain Sabih; targeted attack on FC soldiers in Peshawar in July; ambush of an army party in Kazkai region of Ladha (South Waziristan) in August; IED blast near a convoy of army troops in North Waziristan in September, which also martyred Lieutenant Nasir Hussain Khalid; October blast in Razmak, North Waziristan that claimed the lives of six soldiers including a captain; blast in a madrassa in Dir Colony, Peshawar in October; and two separate attacks on an FWO vehicle and tribal elders in North Waziristan in November.

Militants relied more on direct shootout or firing, employing this particular tactic in 37 attacks, besides carrying out 31 IED blasts, one suicide bombing, four hand grenade attacks and as many rocket attacks, and two acts of sabotage. Security forces, mainly police, as well as tribal elders were among the prime targets hit by militants using firing or targeted attacks.

Apart from 79 terrorist attacks cited earlier, 28 anti-militant operational strikes by the security forces and nine armed clashes/encounters between security forces and militants were also recorded in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Security forces also foiled 10 terror plots. As many as 10 cross-border attacks from Afghanistan also took place in bordering regions of the province, which were mainly perpetrated by Pakistani Taliban sheltered in Afghanistan. Furthermore, six incidents of faith-based violence, and three inter-militant clashes also took place in parts of KP. Similarly, 10 targeted attacks happened in the province, which were not certain if perpetrated by militants. On the whole, 155 reported incidents of violence of various types killed 253 people in the province and wounded 258 others.

Militants mainly targeted security forces and law enforcement personnel in their attacks. Over 63 percent of the total terrorist attacks reported from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2020 hit personnel, convoys and posts of the security and law enforcement agencies, which claimed in all 62 lives. However, compared to 25 in the year before, as many as eight attacks apparently targeted civilians in KP in the year 2020. Meanwhile, another five attacks hit tribal elders, and three attacks targeted political leaders and workers. Members of Shia religious community were targeted in four attacks. Other sporadic targets hit by the terrorist in KP in 2020 are given in the table below.

**Table 1a: Targets Hit by Militants in KP in 2020**

Targets	No. of attacks	Killed	Injured
Security forces/law enforcement personnel	50	62	91
Tribal elders	5	9	0
Civilians	8	6	11
CD/other shops/private property	1	0	0
Shia religious scholars/community	4	5	14
Worship places/shrines/madrassas	1	8	90
Sunni religious leaders/community	1	1	0
Haqqani Network	1	1	0
Political leaders/workers	3	0	0
Media/journalists	1	1	0
Health/polio workers, security escorts	2	3	0
Development, exploration projects, companies, workers	1	4	0
NATO/US supply vehicles	1	0	0
Total	79	100	206

Some frequently hit targets in KP in 2020 are described below.

### **2.1.1 Attacks on Security Forces/Law Enforcement Agencies**

Compared to 69 such attacks in 2019, as many as 50 terrorist attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa hit security and law enforcement agencies in 2020, including 24 in North Waziristan alone. These attacks killed 62 people including 49 personnel of security and law enforcement agencies (30 army soldiers, 15 policemen, 3 FC men, and one Levies), nine

militants and four civilians, and wounded 91 others including 71 security personnel, 10 civilians and as many militants.

The TTP, its former splinters Hizbul Ahrar and Jamaatul Ahrar that rejoined it in August 2020, local Taliban groups as well as Khyber-based Lashkar-e-Islam were mainly found involved in these attacks.

North Waziristan, South Waziristan and DI Khan witnessed a combined total of 33 attacks hitting security and law enforcement personnel. Meanwhile, three such attacks happened in Peshawar, and 2 attacks each in Bajaur, Khyber, and Lakki Marwat. In 8 other KP districts, at least one attack targeted security personnel.

Out of the total 50 reported attacks against security forces in KP, as many as 25 were either incidents of targeted killing or direct [targeted] shootout mainly against policemen including in merged tribal districts where establishment of police stations continued in the year 2020.

Some of the attacks against security forces and law enforcers reported from KP in 2020 are narrated below:

- January 14: Nine people, including two policemen and five women, were injured in an explosion near the Karkhano police check-post located at the border of **Peshawar** and Khyber districts. According to police, the explosion happened due to a hand grenade the militants lobbed near the check-post.<sup>47</sup> One of the injured succumbed to his injuries on January 15th.<sup>48</sup>
- March 19: Jamaatul Ahrar militants attacked a police station in the Arghunja area of **Orakzai** with heavy weapons causing death of two policemen, who were identified as Constable Yahya and Constable Akhtar Janan.<sup>49</sup>
- April 19: One army soldier, havaldar Akbar, embraced martyrdom while three others, Saeed, Yasir and Shafqat, received injuries when militants assaulted the Boya check-post in **North Waziristan** with heavy weapons. The security forces repulsed the attack and killed at least 5 of the invading terrorists.<sup>50</sup>
- May 7: Two soldiers were martyred when a rocket, fired from an unknown direction, slammed into a checkpoint in Edek village, near Mirali town of **North Waziristan**. The martyred soldiers were identified as Hawaldar Zafar and Sepoy Asif.<sup>51</sup> Later in the month, on May 18 to be precise, security forces were patrolling the same area when a remote-controlled device went off near their vehicle close to Nizameia Mosque. One soldier, Amir, was martyred and three others were wounded in the blast.<sup>52</sup>

- June 21: Terrorists opened fire at a security forces patrolling party near Ghariom, a secluded area in **North Waziristan** adjacent to the South Waziristan tribal district. Pakistan Army Captain, Sabih, and Sepoy Naveed were martyred, while two soldiers received injuries during the ensuing encounter. One terrorist was also killed.<sup>53</sup> In another attack reported from the district on the same day, a remote-controlled device exploded close to a military vehicle near Mirali. However, no casualty was reported in the blast.<sup>54</sup>
- August 30: Three soldiers of a patrolling party were martyred and four others got bullet injuries in a terrorist attack in Kazkai region of Ladha tehsil in **South Waziristan**. The martyred personnel were identified as Subedar Nadeem, Lance Naik Musawar and Sepoy Saleem.<sup>55</sup>
- September 3: The terrorists detonated a roadside IED near a convoy of troops providing protection to road construction teams working on Ghariom section of Shaga-Nishpa road in **North Waziristan**. As a result, Lieutenant Nasir Hussain Khalid and two other soldiers embraced martyrdom. Four soldiers were injured.<sup>56</sup> Later in September, another three army officials lost their lives including Captain Abdullah Zafar in three separate attacks reported from twin Waziristan districts.
- October 15: Militants targeted a military convoy with remote controlled blast in Razmak area of **North Waziristan**. As a result, six army soldiers including a captain were martyred.<sup>57</sup>

### 2.1.2 Attacks on Civilians

Marking a significant decline from previous year's 25 attacks, civilians in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa faced apparently eight terrorist attacks in 2020. Reported from five districts of the province, these attacks claimed the lives of six civilians and inflicted injuries on 11 others. Local Taliban and some unknown militants were involved in these attacks.

Highest attacks against civilians for any one region of KP were reported from North Waziristan (3 attacks), followed by Bajaur (2 attacks). Meanwhile one attack hit civilians in each of Lower Dir, Orakzai and South Waziristan districts. With the exception of one targeted shootout, all other attacks targeting civilians employed low-intensity IEDs of different types.

As noted earlier, most of the attacks against civilians were of low intensity, as indicated by relatively fewer consequent fatalities. Indeed half of reported attacks against civilians in KP caused no death. Seven children were injured in three landmine explosions in North and South Waziristan and Orakzai districts. Similarly, another three children were injured in a toy bomb blast in Lower Dir.

Separately, three people, including a senior civil servant, Zubaidullah Khan, were shot dead in an act of targeted killing in Mir Ali, North Waziristan. All the three victims belonged to the Dawar tribe. According to North Waziristan police, initial investigations revealed the incident was a terror attack.<sup>58</sup>

### **2.1.3 Attacks on Tribal Elders and Political Leaders/Workers**

A combined total of eight attacks in KP targeted tribal elders and political leaders and workers, which claimed nine lives. Tribal elders came under five attacks in North Waziristan and Bajaur causing all nine fatalities cited earlier. Political leaders and workers were targeted in terrorist attacks in Bajaur and Peshawar but these attacks did not cause any casualty. The TTP, Hizbul Ahrar and some unknown groups perpetrated these attacks.

At least seven tribal elders were target killed in North Waziristan in three recorded attacks against them. On January 18, militants shot dead two tribal elders, Zakauallah and Wali Khan, and managed to escape.<sup>59</sup> On November 30, four tribal elders were assassinated by assailants in a vehicle of tinted glass in North Waziristan tribal district. According to police, the elders were victims of targeted killing because they had no family feud.<sup>60</sup> Another elder, Malik Maulla Khan, was shot dead in a targeted attack in Miramshah area of the North Waziristan tribal district on December 1.

Separately in Bajaur, a tribal elder Malik Abdur Rasheed, 65, was on way to home in his Khooor Chai village when unknown persons opened fire on him. The elder was critically wounded and taken to the district hospital, Khar, but he did not survive.<sup>61</sup> It could not be verified if some militant groups was involved.

Attacks on political leaders and workers included a hand grenade attack on the house of a Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader and member of the National Assembly Gul Zafar Khan in Mamond tehsil of Bajaur, another grenade attack on the house of PTI leader Zubair Afridi in Hayatabad area of Peshawar, and a rocket attack on the residence of ruling PTI MNA Gul Dad Khan in North Waziristan. As cited earlier, no casualty was recorded in these three attacks.

### **2.1.4 Attacks on Polio/Health Workers and Development Workers**

As many as seven people lost their lives in three terrorist attacks that targeted polio vaccinators and their security escorts as well as development workers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2020. Two of these attacks targeted polio workers in Swabi and Bajaur districts, while one attack hit workers of FWO in North Waziristan. The TTP and local Taliban groups were allegedly involved in these attacks, which are described below:



- January 29: Two lady health workers were killed when motorcyclists attacked them in Razaar tehsil soon after commencement of a three-day immunization drive in Swabi district. Reportedly, the polio workers were not accompanied by any law enforcement personnel.<sup>62</sup>
- May 21: Unknown gunmen killed a health worker of Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) in Sharif Khana area of Bajaur tribal district. EPI technician Abdul Wahab was sitting in a shop along with villagers when the assailants, who had covered faces, opened fire on him with automatic rifles.<sup>63</sup>
- In another targeted attack reported from North Waziristan, four daily wagers working for the Frontier Works Organisation, a military engineering organisation, were killed when gunmen opened fire on a vehicle near Mirali town in North Waziristan tribal district.<sup>64</sup>

### **2.1.5 Incidence of Sectarian and Communal Violence in KP**

On the whole, 10 incidents of communal and sectarian related violence or targeted attacks took place in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2020, which claimed nine lives and injured 14 others. Four of these incidents were sectarian-related terrorist attacks in which militants of violent Sunni sectarian groups targeted Shia community members in Kurram and Kohat districts. Meanwhile, six incidents of faith-based violence were reported from KP including five from the provincial capital Peshawar; four of these attacks killed members of Ahmadi community, another attack target killed a blasphemy accused, while in another attack a Hindu shrine was vandalized.

With the exception of two sectarian-related IED blasts in Kurram and two acts of sabotage in Karak and Peshawar, all other incidents of sectarian and communal violence employed firing as attack tactics. In Kurram, these sectarian-related attacks included an IED blast in an Imambargah in the Shorko area of Lower Kurram in May, which killed one person, and a blast in Turi Bazaar of Parachinar in July, which killed one injured 14 people. The other two sectarian-related attacks happened in Kohat in September, when sectarian tensions were high in the country; Three Shia Muslims Qaisar Abbas, Irtaza Hassan and Syed Mir Hassan lost their lives in these targeted attacks.

Meanwhile, faith-based violence reported from Peshawar claimed lives of four members of Ahmadi community including Tahir Ahmad Naseem, an under-trial prisoner arrested over two years ago on a charge of committing blasphemy; a 61-year-old man Miraj Ahmed; a professor belonging to Ahmadi community, Dr. Naeemuddin Khattak; and a 75-year-old Mahboob Khan. Late in December, a mob vandalized the Samadhi (shrine) of a Hindu saint and subsequently set it on fire in the Karak district.

These incidents indicated that while on the one hand communal violence entailing individuals and mobs was apparently increasing in parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on the other hand sectarian tensions had also been flaring up. However, the incidents of sectarian violence had relatively wider than local context. On the whole, the country has been in sectarian tension since the month of Moharram when Shia and Sunni clerics indulged in sectarian-related hate speech. Sectarian groups and organizations also took out rallies to protest and show their strength. Such rallies have been observed in KP also. While Kurram has a history of sectarian tensions, Kohat also lies on a belt of sectarian sensitivity, which stretches to its west traversing through Hangu, Orakzai and Kurram districts. These four horizontally adjoined districts have in the past seen sectarian-related tensions and violence, apart from the western DI Khan district of the province.

Nonetheless, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in the past fared well, comparing to other provinces, in incidents of communal or faith-based violence including against minorities, though militant or terrorist violence against minorities had been more frequent there. But these incidents of individual or mob violence on the basis of faith or sectarian basis have apparently increased recently. That suggests that the negative processes of ideological radicalism or religious extremism are underway in the province, which eventually feed into terrorism. Such incidents though don't entail militants but some individuals or mobs are involved. That also indicates a growing intolerance towards minority faiths and sects in the province.

#### **2.1.6 Other Sporadic Targets Hit in KP**

Militants carried out a major terrorist attack in Peshawar, inside a madrassa where over 1,000 students are recruited. At least eight people were killed including children and over 90 were injured when a powerful bomb ripped through the madrassa Jamia Zubairia in Dir Colony locality near the Ring Road, Peshawar. The bomb was reportedly placed in a bag and detonated by a remote control when a senior teacher Rahimullah Haqqani was delivering his lecture, which was also being shown live on social media.<sup>65</sup> While no one claimed the attack, the TTP condemned it. According to some accounts, Islamic State group or some of its local affiliates could be involved in the attack on sectarian grounds. Rahimullah Haqqani reportedly remained member of the Afghan Taliban in eastern Afghanistan and has been a staunch critic of the Daesh as well as Salafist ideology. In the past he also escaped one attack. More than 100 Afghan students also studied in the madrassa.

Separately, militants shot dead renowned religious scholar Maulana Shah Jahan Malang in Peshawar on January 15 after he came out of mosque after offering the morning prayers. The deceased was the local head of Shabab Ahle Sunnat.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, a member of Ishaq group of Haqqani Network Nek Amanullah was killed in a remote control bomb blast in Bannu.<sup>67</sup>

Meanwhile, three people, including a senior civil servant Zubaidullah Khan, were shot dead in an act of targeted killing in Mir Ali, North Waziristan. All the three victims belonged to the Dawar tribe. According to North Waziristan police, initial investigations revealed the incident was a terror attack.<sup>68</sup>

In another attack, reported from Khyber district, armed men torched NATO's four Humvee military trucks along with two trailers in Bara tehsil. Three men riding motorcycles intercepted the trailers at gun point and asked the drivers to disembark from their trailers before they sprinkled the vehicles with petrol and put them on fire.<sup>69</sup>

## 2.2 Balochistan

After Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan province was most affected by terrorism in 2020 where 95 people were killed and 216 others were injured in 42 reported attacks. Different Baloch insurgents groups, mainly the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF), BRAS – a newly established alliance of Baloch insurgent groups mainly including BLA, BLF and Baloch Republican Guard (BRG) – Lashkar-e-Balochistan, Baloch Republican Army (BRA), and United Baloch Army (UBA) etc., perpetrated 32 attacks killing 59 people and wounding 123 others. These attacks included at least four major attacks that targeted security forces in Kech, Bolan, Gwadar (Ormara) and Harnai.

Meanwhile, religiously inspired militant groups such as the TTP, Hizbul Ahrar, ISIS-affiliates and some other similar unknown militants were reportedly involved in as many as 10 attacks in Balochistan that caused death to 36 people and injuries to another 93 people. Attacks by religiously inspired militants also included few major ones including two suicide blasts in Quetta – one of these suicide blasts was perpetrated by the Islamic State group against the mosque attached to a madrassa – and a vehicle-borne blast in Chaman (Qilla Abdullah).

On the whole, terrorist attacks happened in 14 districts of Balochistan including nine attacks each from Kech and Quetta, four from each of Qilla Abdullah and Harnai districts, and three attacks from Mastung. Meanwhile, Bolan, Dera Bugti, Kalat, and Panjgur faced two attacks each, while one attack took place in each of Gwadar, Nasirabad, Nushki, Sibi and Sohbatput districts.

**Table 2: Terrorist Attacks in Balochistan in 2020**

District	Attacks	Killed	Injured
Bolan	2	7	0
Dera Bugti	2	1	4

District	Attacks	Killed	Injured
Gwadar	1	14	0
Harnai	4	9	19
Kalat	2	1	16
Kech	9	19	26
Mastung	3	0	8
Nasirabad	1	0	1
Nushki	1	0	0
Panjgur	2	5	16
Qilla Abdullah	4	8	33
Quetta	9	31	87
Sibi	1	0	3
Sohbatpur	1	0	3
Total	42	95	216

In addition to the terrorist attacks listed at Table 2, multiple violent incidents of other types also took place in Balochistan in 2020. These included 15 operational strikes against militants, three clashes/encounters between security forces and militants, two incidents of armed clashes between security forces and protestors, and two foiled terror bids, among others. On the whole, 65 incidents of violence of different types happened in the province, which claimed 52 lives and injured 255 others.

Though the reported 42 terrorist attacks in Balochistan hit diverse targets, most of them (24 or 57 percent) targeted security forces and law enforcement agencies. As many as 12 attacks apparently targeted civilians, and another two attacks each hit workshop places and railways tracks. One attack each targeted tribal elders and Sunni religious community. (See Table 2a)

**Table 2a: Targets Hit by Terrorists in Balochistan in 2020**

Targets	No. of Attacks	Killed	Injured
Security forces/law enforcement	24	61	114
Tribal elders	1	0	2

<b>Targets</b>	<b>No. of Attacks</b>	<b>Killed</b>	<b>Injured</b>
Civilians	12	9	58
Worship places/shrines/imambargahs	2	16	22
Sunni religious leaders/community	1	9	20
Railway tracks / trains	2	0	0
Total	42	95	216

### **2.2.1 Attacks by Baloch Insurgents**

The Baloch insurgents perpetrated 32 terrorist attacks in the province, compared to 51 in the year before. Spread over 12 districts of Balochistan, these attacks killed 59 people – compared to 71 in 2019 – and injured 123 others; those killed included 41 security personnel (29 FC men, 11 army soldiers and one Levies) and 18 civilians.

Baloch insurgents continued to place their operational focus on southern Kech district where they perpetrated nine terrorist attacks in 2020 causing 19 deaths and injuries to 26 others. Meanwhile, they hit the provincial capital Quetta with five attacks and Mastung with three attacks. Two attacks by Baloch insurgents happened in each of Bolan, Dera Bugti, Kalat and Panjgur districts, and one attack in each of Gwadar, Nasirabad, Nushki, and Sohbatput districts. The single reported attack from Gwadar’s Ormara neighbourhood claimed 14 lives.

The attack tactics employed by the Baloch insurgents included 18 IEDs blasts, mainly including landmines and vehicle-borne IEDs, 10 incidents of firing or targeted killing, and four hand grenade attacks.

As noted earlier, the attacks by Baloch insurgents caused significant fatalities among security forces and law enforcement personnel (41 deaths). That was mainly due to the fact that out of total 32 attacks perpetrated by Baloch insurgents in the province, as many as 19, or over 59 percent, targeted security and law-enforcement personnel, their convoys and check-posts. These attacks (against security forces) were reported from eight districts of Balochistan with 8 such attacks from Kech alone.

Worst of these Baloch insurgents’ attacks against security forces was recorded from Ormara, near Gwadar. Baloch Raaji Aajoi Sangar (BRAS), an alliance of Baloch insurgent groups mainly including BLA, BLF and BRG, claimed that its fighters were behind the attack.<sup>70</sup> It also stated that companies such as OGDCL along with China were at the forefront in exploiting natural resources of Balochistan. The incident was similar to several

previous attacks by the Baloch groups. In April 2019, the Baloch insurgents had pulled off 14 personnel of the Navy and Coast Guards vehicles and shot them dead on the same coastal highway. BRAS had later claimed responsibility for the attack. Such high-impact attacks – including the BLA attack on Karachi Stock Exchange in June 2020 – are also meant to get international attention and news space. Apparently, the Baloch groups are trying to transform the low-scale Baloch conflict into a flashpoint of violence, which is able to draw the world attention.

Some relatively more intense attacks by the Baloch insurgents against security forces in the year 2020 are listed below:

- February 18: The BLA militants used heavy weapons in their assault on a security post in the Balangor area Turbat in **Kech** district, about 30 kilometers from the Iranian border on a key highway. Five FC soldiers were martyred and three injured in the assault; three militants were also killed in retaliatory fire by security forces.<sup>71</sup>
- May 8: According to ISPR, a vehicle of armed forces hit a locally made landmine in Buleda area of **Kech** district. As a result of the blast, Major Nadeem and five other army officials lost their lives. The security officials were engaged in fencing the Afghan border when they hit the landmine.<sup>72</sup> BLA was reportedly involved in the attack.
- May 19: According to a statement by ISPR, the military's media wing, six FC soldiers including a Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) and a civilian driver embraced martyrdom in an IED attack in Pir Ghaib, Mach (**Bolan** district), on FC vehicle returning to base camp after routine patrolling duty. The United Baloch Army claimed responsibility saying it targeted the soldiers assigned to protect engineers of an oil and gas facility.<sup>73</sup>
- July 14: The suspected BLA terrorists opened fire on a patrolling party of security personnel near Gichak valley of **Panjgur**. According to the ISPR statement, three soldiers were martyred and eight others, including an officer, received injuries in the attack.<sup>74</sup>
- August 13: According to initial reports, a young student from Turbat was killed and three FC men suffered injuries in a remote controlled roadside blast targeting FC convoy in Turbat area of **Kech** district. Later, the brother of the deceased student claimed his brother was killed when FC opened fire after the blast. BBC Urdu quoted SSP Turbat to claim that the police had taken the FC official into custody who reportedly opened fire in haste on the student working in a nearby garden.<sup>75</sup>
- October 15: Security forces were escorting a convoy of OGDCL from Gwadar to Karachi when insurgents attacked it on Coastal Highway near **Ormara**. As a result of ensuing encounter, 7 FC soldiers and 7 private security guards were martyred. BRAS, an alliance of Baloch insurgent groups, claimed the attack.<sup>76</sup>

- December 27: At least seven security personnel were martyred and six others injured in an attack by terrorists on a Frontier Corps check post in the areas of Sharag coal mines in Balochistan's **Harnai** district. According to ISPR, heavy exchange of fire took place between FC personnel and terrorists and the latter were repulsed. According to BBC Urdu BLA claimed the attack.<sup>77</sup>

Meanwhile, 11 attacks by Baloch insurgents apparently targeted civilians, which claimed nine lives and wounded 68 others. These were mostly low-scale IED blasts, largely carried out by BLA and BRA. A relatively more lethal of these attacks happened in Quetta in October. Reportedly, three people were killed and ten others injured in the bomb blast in the Hazarganji area on the outskirts of the provincial capital. A car and several motorcycles caught fire after the blast. A nearby shop was also damaged.<sup>78</sup> Meanwhile BLA militants perpetrated two attacks against railways tracks in Bolan and Mastung districts, which though partially damaged the parts of tracks but did not cause any casualty.

### **2.2.2 Attacks by Religiously-inspired Militants**

The TTP, its former splinter Hizbul Ahrar that re-joined it in August 2020, the Islamic State group, and some other militants with similar objectives perpetrated 10 attacks in Balochistan, compared to 26 attacks by them in the year before. These attacks killed 36 people, compared to 69 killed in such attacks in 2019, and injured 93 others. Most of these attacks by so-called religiously inspired groups concentrated in areas with larger Pashtun populations including four attacks each in Quetta and Qilla Abdulla's Chaman area bordering on Afghanistan as well as one attack in each of Harnai and Sibi districts.

At least three of these were high-impact or major attacks including two suicide blasts in Quetta, targeting a mosque adjacent to a madrassa and a religious rally, and one in Chaman against law enforcement personnel.

Half of the attacks by the religiously inspired militant groups targeted security forces and law enforcement agencies, another two attacks targeted worship places, while one attack each hit tribal elders, civilians and a rally of a religious organization.

Attacks against security and law enforcement personnel were reported from Qilla Abdullah, Harnai and Quetta districts, some of which are narrated below:

- January 7: At least two people were killed and 14 others, including children and security personnel, wounded in a motorcycle bomb blast near a hospital in the Mecongi road shopping area of **Quetta**. Police said the bomb was detonated to target an FC vehicle patrolling the busy market place. Hizbul Ahrar claimed the attack.<sup>79</sup>

- April 10: Two Pakistan Army soldiers were martyred and two others injured in Toba Achakzai area of **Qila Abdullah** when an improvised explosive device blast targeted their vehicle. The incident took place early in the morning when security personnel were clearing the area for fencing the border.<sup>80</sup>
- August 10: At least six people were killed and 21 others, including three soldiers of the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), injured in a bomb blast in the border town of **Chaman**. The blast happened when IED planted in a parked motorcycle exploded, targeting a vehicle of ANF.<sup>81</sup>

Meanwhile in January, militants once again hit hard the provincial capital Quetta with a dastardly **suicide** bombing. The blast inside a mosque adjacent to a madrassa claimed 15 lives, including that of a deputy superintendent of police, and left 19 others wounded in the Satellite Town area of **Quetta**. The prayer leader Sheikh Hakimullah was seriously injured in the attack but survived. The AFP citing the SITE intelligence group said the **Islamic State** (IS) group had claimed the attack.<sup>82</sup> While some speculated the killed police officer was the apparent target of the attack, others claimed the madrassa-mosque complex used to host the Afghan Taliban, who could be the target of the blast claimed by their rival group in Afghanistan, i.e. IS. Few months back, similar attacks against a worship place and a Sunni religious leader had happened in the Quetta's neighborhood.

Another **suicide** attack hit the provincial capital in February, when eight people were martyred, including two policemen and a Levies, and over 20 others injured in suicide blast near **Quetta** district courts and press club. The suicide bomber had attempted to break through a police barrier and enter a rally organized by Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat, but blew himself up on facing resistance from security personnel. The rally was held to mark the death anniversary of Hazrat Abu Bakr.<sup>83</sup>

## 2.3 Sindh

As many as 18 terrorist attacks happened in Sindh province – 15 in Karachi and 3 in interior Sindh – which killed a total of 20 people and injured 66 others.

Eleven of these attacks were perpetrated by nationalist insurgents, including 10 attacks by Sindhi nationalist groups Sindhudesh Revolution Army (SDRA) and Sindhudesh Liberation Army (SDLA), and one attack was carried out by a Baloch insurgent group, BLA, against the Karachi Stock Exchange. These attacks by Sindhi and Baloch insurgent groups claimed 12 lives and wounded 66 others.

Religiously inspired militants including the TTP perpetrated four attacks, which claimed as many lives.



Meanwhile, three attacks reported from Sindh were sectarian-related targeted killings, two of which targeted Sunni leaders and community members, and another targeted a policeman who subscribed to Shia sect of Islam.

Half of the attacks reported from Sindh targeted security and law enforcement personnel (including one attack that had sectarian motivation), another four targeted civilians, and two attacks hit Sunni community members. Meanwhile one attack targeted, as cited earlier, Karachi Stock Exchange and another attack hit a rally held by Jamaat-e-Islami. Yet another attack targeted a Chinese national, though without causing any casualty.

**Table 3: Terrorist Attacks in Sindh in 2020**

Types of Attacks	No. of Attacks	Killed	Injured
By nationalist insurgents	11	12	66
By Taliban and similar militants	4	4	0
Terrorist attacks [sectarian-related]	3	4	0
Total	18	20	66

Regional distribution of terrorist attacks in Sindh in the year 2020 is given at Table 3a.

**Table 3a: Regional Distribution of Terrorist Attacks in Sindh**

Location	No. of Attacks	Killed	Injured
Ghotki	1	3	0
Karachi	15	17	65
Larkana	2	0	1
Total	18	20	66

### 2.3.1 Karachi

**Nationalist insurgents** stepped up terrorist violence in Karachi carrying out eight attacks in the city in the year 2020. While the Baloch insurgent group BLA perpetrated one of these attacks, all others were low-intensity attacks that were carried out by Sindhi insurgent groups, mainly the SDRA, as cited earlier.

In June, the BLA perpetrated a major attack against Karachi Stock Exchange, which was though averted by timely and brisk response by the law enforcers, yet the group achieved which it apparently aspired out of it; i.e. an international highlight and focus. Reportedly, four BLA-Majeed Brigade attackers, armed with grenades and automatic rifles, launched

the attack and attempted to enter the stock exchange compound. The police and Rangers intercepted the attackers and killed all four of them. One sub-inspector and three security guards were martyred in the attack, and seven others were injured including three policemen.<sup>84</sup>

Seven reported attacks by Sindhi nationalists in Karachi claimed one life and injured 58 people. Three of these attacks targeted police and Rangers (injuring 4 security personnel and two civilians), another two hit civilians, while one attack each was targeted against the rally of a religious-political party and a Chinese national. On June 19, a hand grenade attack near an Ehsaas Programme centre, near Anjuman-e-Islamia School, Liquatabad, Karachi, killed one civilian and wounded eight others including a Rangers officer.<sup>85</sup> On August 5, at least 39 people were injured in a grenade attack on a Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) rally held to condemn Indian atrocities and show solidarity with the people of Kashmir in Gulshan-i-Iqbal, Karachi. The banned Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army claimed responsibility for the attack.<sup>86</sup>

**Religiously inspired militants** including TTP perpetrated four attacks in Karachi including three targeted killings of policemen and one hand grenade blast that targeted civilians. The policemen who lost their lives in these targeted attacks included sub-inspector Mohammad Yar, policeman Arif Khan and a head constable.

Meanwhile three **sectarian-related attacks** took place in Karachi. In a heinous attack in October, which was condemned from all quarters, Maulana Dr Adil Khan, head of a prominent seminary Jamia Farooqia in Shah Faisal Colony and the son of the late founder of the seminary Maulana Saleemullah Khan, was shot dead along with his driver in the city.<sup>87</sup> No one claimed the attack. While some said some rival sectarian group could be involved, others saw an external hand that sought to add to sectarian discord in the country.

Earlier in January, an activist of the banned Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ), Mohammed Zahid, 30, was shot dead in the Baloch Colony area.<sup>88</sup> Later, on August 14th, a police Head Constable Syed Muhammad Ali Rizvi was shot dead on what police suspected to be sectarian grounds in Karimabad area of Karachi. Majlis Wahdatul Muslimeem secretary general Allama Sadiq Jaffary condemned the target killing adding weight to police's suspicion.<sup>89</sup>

### **2.3.2 Interior Sindh**

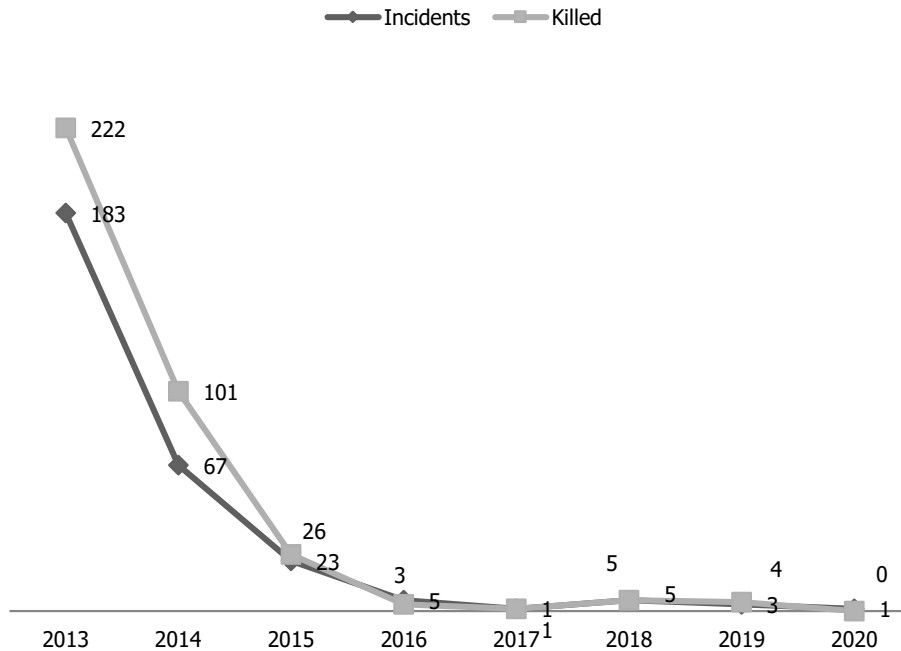
Sindhi nationalist insurgents perpetrated three attacks in interior Sindh, including two in Larkana and one Ghotki. Sindhudesh Liberation Army and Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army were involved in these attacks. Details are as under:

- January 1: A locally made explosive device fitted in a bicycle went off at Mirokhan Chowk, Larkana, but no damages or loss of life was reported. According to another account, the bicycle was parked near an ice factory and the explosive material packed in a tin of ghee was placed on it.<sup>90</sup>
- June 19: One Rangers official was injured when militants riding a motorcycle hurled a cracker at a security checkpoint of Rangers Public School on VIP Road Larkana.<sup>91</sup>
- June 19: At least two Rangers personnel and one civilian lost their lives when a blast took place near a security forces vehicle in Sindh’s Ghotki. Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army was reportedly involved.<sup>92</sup>

### 2.3.3 Ethno-political Violence in Sindh

The downturn in the incidents of ethnic/political violence in Karachi that started in 2013, when the Rangers-led security operation started there, sustained in 2020. One such incident happened in the year under review, compared to four in the year before. Five men suffered injuries when workers of Pakistan Peoples Party and Grand Democratic Alliance clashed ahead of a scheduled political gathering of PPP at Masurji Wah near Moro town in Naushahro Feroze district. The activists used sticks in the fight.<sup>93</sup>

**Chart 1: Trends of Ethno-political Violence in Karachi (2013-20)**



## 2.4 Punjab

In all, seven (7) terrorist attacks took place in Punjab in the year 2020, two more than the previous year, which claimed five lives and injured 59 people. With the exception of one attack, which was perpetrated by the Baloch insurgent group BLA in Sadiqabad tehsil of south Punjab's Rahim Yar Khan district, all other attacks concentrated in Rawalpindi and were perpetrated by Pakistani Taliban including the TTP and its splinters Jamaatul Ahrar and Hizbul Ahrar, which rejoined the former in August 2020. While five of these attacks in Punjab targeted, apparently, civilians, one attack targeted the police and another targeted a gas pipeline.

Militants employed IEDs of different types in five of these attacks and used firing and hand grenades in the other two attacks.

**Table 4: Terrorist Attacks in Punjab in 2020**

District	Attacks	Killed	Injured
Rahim Yar Khan	1	0	0
Rawalpindi	6	5	59
Total	7	5	59

As cited earlier, Pakistani Taliban militants perpetrated six attacks in Rawalpindi. On December 14, police arrested 3 suspects belonging to TTP who confessed their involvement in carrying out 4 attacks in the city starting from the January 2020.<sup>94</sup> The city faced two attacks in January. First, on January 7, an armed militant opened firing on policemen manning a check-post in Cantonment area of Rawalpindi, killing two officials Saeed and Muhammad Ali and injuring three others including a policeman and a woman. A formation of Dolphin Force chased the attacker and killed him. The police later identified him as a native of Pasrur, Sialkot and a member of Jamaatul Ahrar.<sup>95</sup> Few days later, two unknown motorcyclists threw a cracker (IED) outside a bank on Adiala Road that blew out injuring three persons critically. The motorcyclists took a U-turn from Mani CNG and lobbed another cracker outside a car rent showroom injuring another person. The attackers sped away towards Chungi Number 20.<sup>96</sup> Hizbul was believed to be involved in the attack.

On March 12, an explosion in a scrap market in Rawalpindi Cantonment area injured five people. The explosion happened due to an IED planted in a motorcycle.<sup>97</sup> In another attack reported from the city on June 12, one person was killed and 15 others were injured, including three children, when an explosive device, believed to be planted close to an electric pole, went off in the busy Kola Centre of Kabari Bazaar, Saddar. The deceased was

identified by police as Arfeen Akram, a resident of Allama Iqbal Colony.<sup>98</sup>

The TTP launched two more attacks in Rawalpindi in December. On December 4, an IED placed in a rickshaw went off outside a general store in the Pirwadhai area of Rawalpindi, leaving one person dead and seven others injured.<sup>99</sup> Later, on December 13, over two dozen people including women and children were injured in a blast in the busy Ganj Mandi area of Rawalpindi. Eyewitnesses said two motorcyclists hurled a hand grenade at passers-by and those gathered around a shoe vendor before speeding away.<sup>100</sup>

Separately in southern Punjab, militants of Baloch nationalist insurgent group BLA blew up a 36 inch diameter gas pipeline in Nawazabad area of Sadiqabad tehsil of Rahim Yar Khan district. About 10kg explosives were used and the blast destroyed a large area of standing crops.<sup>101</sup>

## 2.5 Suicide Attacks

Compared to four (4) suicide attacks in 2019, as many as three (3) such attacks happened in 2020 – two in Balochistan and one in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These attacks claimed 26 lives – compared to 55 in 2019 – and injured 43 others.

The TTP was involved in one of these attacks, which targeted security forces in South Waziristan (KP) inflicting injuries on four people including an army brigadier. The Islamic State (IS) terrorist group claimed one apparently sectarian-related suicide attack that targeted a masjid-madrassa complex in Quetta killing 16 people, including the bomber, and wounding 19 others. Meanwhile no one had claimed the third reported suicide blast that apparently targeted a rally of a religious organization in Quetta killing nine people including the bomber and injured 20 others.

Those killed in suicide attacks in 2020 included 19 civilians, four security personnel (3 policemen and one Levies), as well as three suicide bombers. Those injured included 39 civilians, and four army soldiers.

**Table 5: Suicide Attacks in Pakistan in 2020**

District	Attacks	Killed	Injured
Quetta	2	25	39
<i>Balochistan Total</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>39</i>
South Waziristan	1	1	4
<i>KP Total</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>4</i>
Pakistan Total	3	26	43

These suicide blasts are re-narrated below, despite their description in respective sections on regional security landscapes.

- January 10: A suicide bombing inside a mosque adjacent to a madrassa claimed 15 lives, including that of a deputy superintendent of police, and left 19 others wounded in the Satellite Town area of Quetta. The prayer leader Sheikh Hakimullah was seriously injured in the attack but survived. The AFP citing the SITE intelligence group said the Islamic State (IS) group had claimed the attack.<sup>102</sup>
- February 17: Eight people were martyred, including two policemen and a Levies, and over 20 others injured in a suicide attack near Quetta district courts and press club. The suicide bomber had attempted to break through a police barrier and enter a rally organized by Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat, but blew himself up on facing resistance from security personnel. The rally was held to mark the death anniversary of Hazrat Abu Bakr.<sup>103</sup>
- August 11: An army brigadier, the officer of 24 Mechanised Brigade, was going to Wana when a suicide bomber blew himself up close to his vehicle near Badar bridge, Ladham leaving the brigadier and three soldiers wounded.<sup>104</sup>

## 2.6 Sectarian Violence

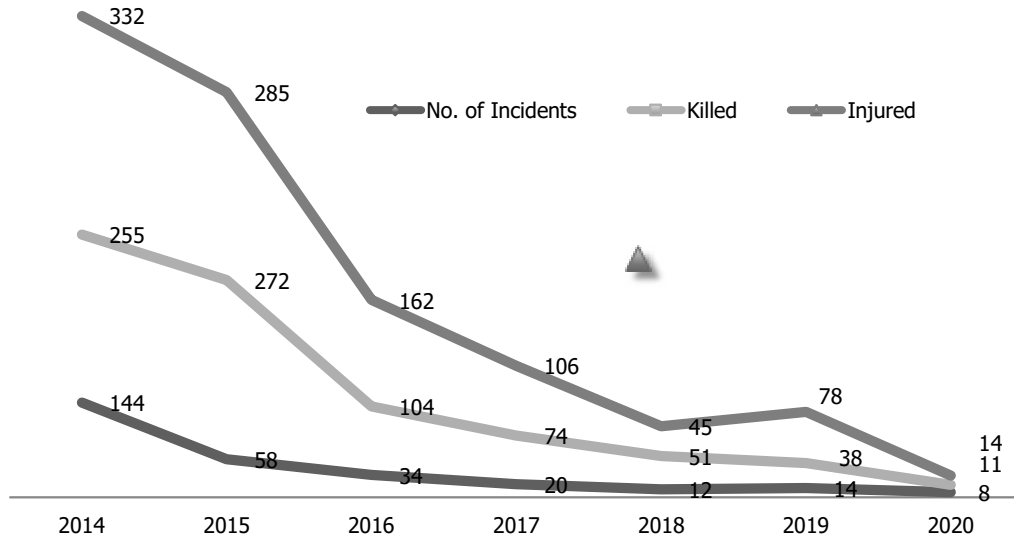
Posting a decrease of 50 percent from previous year, seven (7) sectarian-related terrorist attacks took place in 2020. These attacks killed nine people, compared to 38 in 2019, and injured another 14 people.

Rival Sunni and Shia violent sectarian groups were involved in perpetrating these attacks. Out of total seven such attacks, as many as four targeted Shia religious community killing five and injuring 14 others. A policeman subscribing to Shia sect of Islam was also target killed reportedly on sectarian grounds in Karachi. Meanwhile, two attacks targeted Sunni scholars causing three deaths. While three sectarian-related terrorist attacks happened in Karachi, another two attacks took place in each of Kohat and Kurram districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Apart from these attacks, one violent sectarian clash also took place in Rahim Yar Khan (Punjab) that claimed two lives.

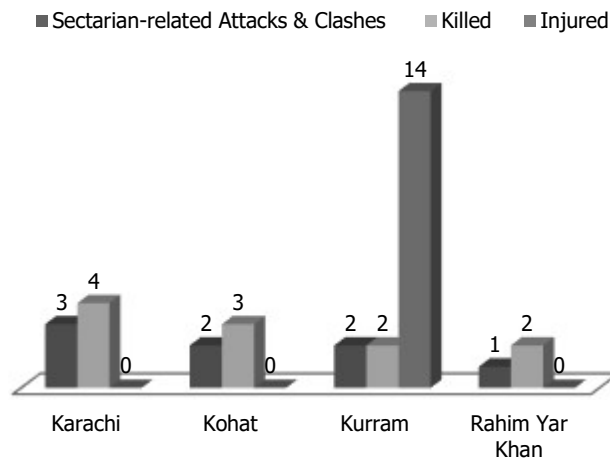
Thus on the whole, eight incidents of sectarian violence - including 7 sectarian-related terrorist attacks and one armed sectarian clash – claimed 11 lives and wounded 14 people.

**Chart 2: Trends of Sectarian Violence (attacks and clashes) (2014-2020)**



Incidents of sectarian violence were reported from four districts including Kohat and Kurram in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Karachi in Sindh and Rahim Yar Khan in Punjab. (See Chart 3)

**Chart 3: Geographical Spread of Sectarian Violence in 2020**



With the exception of two bomb blasts, all other incidents of violence employed firing or target killing.

**Karachi** faced the highest number of incidents of sectarian violence for any one region of the country, where three such attacks claimed four lives. On January 15, an activist of the banned Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ), Mohammed Zahid, 30, was shot dead in the Baloch Colony area which police and party officials said was a suspected sectarian attack.<sup>105</sup> On August 14, a police Head Constable Syed Muhammad Ali Rizvi was shot dead on what police suspected to be sectarian grounds in Karimabad area of Karachi. Majlis Wahdatul Muslimeem secretary general Allama Sadiq Jaffary condemned the target killing adding weight to police's suspicion.<sup>106</sup> Later in October, Maulana Dr Adil Khan, head of a prominent seminary, Jamia Farooqia in Shah Faisal Colony and the son of the late founder of the seminary, Maulana Saleemullah Khan, was shot dead along with his driver in a suspected targeted attack in Karachi.<sup>107</sup>

Two sectarian-related attacks happened in each of **Kurram** and Kohat districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In Kurram, on May 4, explosives planted at the wall of an Imambargah in the Shorko area of Lower Kurram near the Afghan border went off badly damaging the building of the Imambargah. The blast critically injured the caretaker who died few days after.<sup>108</sup> Again in July, an IED blast in Turi Bazaar of Parachinar (Kurram) injured 15 people including two seriously. The blast happened due to an IED planted in a fruit and vegetables hand cart. One of the injured, Rajab Ali, 16 years old, succumbed to his injuries on August 21; locals said being poor he could not afford proper treatment.<sup>109</sup>

Meanwhile, the two reported sectarian-related attacks in **Kohat** happened in the month of September when sectarian tensions were on the rise in the country. First, on September 7, a Shia Muslim Qaisar Abbas was shot dead at his shop in Kohat, according to the spokesman of Shia political-religious organization Tehreek-e-Nifaz Fiqqa Jaafria.<sup>110</sup> A week later, on September 15 to be precise, two men belonging to the Shia community were shot dead inside a medical store at the Peshawar square in Kohat. Protests broke out in different parts of the city following the firing incident. The victims were identified as Irtaza Hassan and Syed Mir Hassan.<sup>111</sup>

Meanwhile on November 29 a sectarian clash took place in Rahim Yar Khan. Reportedly, two persons were killed in firing during a dispute between two suspected sectarian groups allegedly during a quarrel at Chak No 36-P over possession of a mosque, in the limits of Sahja police station in Rahim Yar Khan district.<sup>112</sup>

## 2.7 Faith-based Violence

While no such incident had happened in 2019, as many as eight (8) incidents of communal or faith-based violence were recorded in Pakistan in 2020, which in all claimed six lives and injured three others.



Six of these attacks took place in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including five in Peshawar and one in Karak, and one incident each happened in Nankana Sahib and Khushab districts of Punjab.

In five incidents of faith-based violence, members of Ahmadi community were targeted, and in another two incidents persons accused of blasphemy were shot dead. Meanwhile in one incident of faith-based mob violence, the shrine (Samadhi) of a Hindu saint was vandalized and torched in Karak.

**Table 6: Incidents of Faith-based Violence in Pakistan in 2020**

District	Attacks	Killed	Injured	Damages\ Target
Khushab	1	1	0	Blasphemy accused
Nankana Sahib	1	1	3	Ahmedi community
Peshawar	5	4	0	Ahmedi community; blasphemy accused
Karak	1	0	0	A Hindu shrine
Total	8	6	3	

Details on these incidents are narrated below in chronological order:

- July 29: An under-trial prisoner arrested over two years ago on a charge of committing blasphemy was shot dead by a teenage boy inside a courtroom at the Peshawar Judicial Complex. The deceased, Tahir Ahmad Naseem, 57, was seated in the court of an additional sessions judge after arguments in his case, awaiting to be shifted to prison, when he was shot dead at point-blank range by 19-year-old Faisal, who was arrested on the spot.<sup>113</sup>
- August 13: Unidentified assailants shot dead the owner of a medical store, Miraj Ahmed, 61, belonging to Ahmadi community, in Dabagari area of Peshawar. A spokesperson for the Ahmadi community said the family was facing a hate campaign against it on social media; even the employees had refused to work at victim's shop.<sup>114</sup>
- September 10: An Ahmadi family was rescued by police after a mob surrounded their house over an argument about a public event. A large contingent of police was sent to the scene which rescued the five-member family and shifted them to an unknown location.<sup>115</sup>
- October 5: Peshawar police said that a professor belonging to Ahmadi community, Dr. Naeemuddin Khattak, was assassinated on Kohat road Peshawar. According to one account, he was apparently killed by his colleagues after an argument over religion a day earlier.<sup>116</sup>

- November 4: A bank manager was shot dead by its security guard allegedly over blasphemy allegations in Punjab's Khushab district. District Police Officer retired Capt Tariq Wilayat said police were investigating the incident. Quoting initial reports, he said the security guard and the manager had been quarrelling for some time.<sup>117</sup>
- November 8: An elderly man Mahboob Khan, 75, belonging to a religious minority was gunned down by an unidentified attacker at a bus stop in Peshawar. A spokesperson for the Ahmadiya community claimed that the murder was a direct result of an ongoing hate campaign against the community which remained vulnerable to such attacks.<sup>118</sup>
- November 20: A man belonging to the Ahmadi community was shot dead while three members of his family were injured in an ambush at Mauza Marrh Balochan in Nankana Sahib. Dr Tahir Ahmad along with his father, uncle and a cousin was going home after performing their religious rites at their worship place when Hammad Cheema opened fire on them. Dr Tahir died on the spot while others were injured.<sup>119</sup>
- December 30: More than a thousand people led by some local elders of a religious party held a protest and demanded the removal of the Hindu place of worship. After delivering speeches, they moved towards and attacked the shrine.<sup>120</sup>

## 2.8 Border Attacks

Two less from the year before, a total of 125 cross-border attacks took place in the year 2020 from across Pakistan's borders with Afghanistan (11 attacks) and India (114). As many as 62 people lost their lives in these attacks, a decrease of about 34 percent from the year before; another 222 were also injured.

Those 62 Pakistani citizens killed in cross-border attacks included 42 civilians, 18 army officials, and two FC personnel.

As in the year before, the situation at Pakistan's borders with India – mainly along the Line of Control (LoC) in Azad Kashmir – remained relatively more volatile, where though the number of cross-border attacks posted a slight decline from previous year yet a significant number of attacks, i.e. 114, took place. Out of these 114 cross-border attacks perpetrated by Indian BSF, 113 concentrated along the LoC in more than nine districts of AJK and one attack happened in Sialkot along the Working Boundary with India. Kotli (37 attacks), Bhimber (21), Poonch (17), Haveli (13), Hattian Bala (9) and Neelum (8) were the AJK districts most affected by Indian cross-border attacks.

Meanwhile compared to four (4) cross-border attacks reported from Afghanistan in 2019, as many as 11 such attacks took place in 2020 in Bajaur, Khyber and Upper Dir districts of KP and Zhob district of Balochistan. Similarly compared to six (6) in the year before, cross-

border attacks from Afghanistan claimed 17 lives in 2020 including of 12 civilians, two FC men and three army soldiers. With the exception of two attacks that were reportedly launched by Afghan security forces, all other cross-border attacks from Afghanistan were perpetrated by Pakistani Taliban militants sheltered there mainly the TTP.

**Table 7: Border Attacks/Clashes in 2020**

Nature of Attack	No. of Attacks	Killed	Injured
Pak-Afghan border	11	17	18
Pak-India border	114	45	204
Total	125	62	222

### 2.8.1 Pak-Afghan

As cited earlier, posting a significant increase from previous year as many as 11 cross-border attacks from Afghanistan took place in 2020, which claimed 17 lives – 12 civilians and five security personnel. About 73 percent of these attacks (8 out of the total 11) concentrated in Bajaur tribal district alone. Meanwhile one such attack happened in each of Khyber and Upper Dir districts of KP and another attack took place in Zhob district of Balochistan province bordering on Afghanistan.

In February, seven members of a family were killed when a mortar shell fired from the Kunar province of Afghanistan hit a house in Bajaur district. The mortar shell was reportedly fired by the militants and hit the house of one Fazal Ghani, destroying it.<sup>121</sup> As cited earlier, Bajaur, which was once hub of Pakistani Taliban mainly the Jamaatul Ahrar group, witnessed growing cross-border violence in 2020. The district shares border with Afghanistan's Kunar province, where Pakistani Taliban groups have been hiding for several years now, among other regions of Afghanistan. Nonetheless, a media report in February quoted the government officials as terming the Operation Raddul Fasaad as a "successful model" for fighting extremism and terrorism including from across the border.<sup>122</sup> The report said: "border fencing with Afghanistan for preventing unauthorised cross-border movement by terrorists and other criminals was initiated in mid-2017 as a crucial ingredient of the strategy for ending terrorism. [According to the officials], so far [until February] 1,450km of the 2,611km-long porous border with Afghanistan ha[d] been fenced. A total of 843 border forts were planned out of which 343 ha[d] been completed and another 161 [we]re under construction," the report claimed.<sup>123</sup>

In May, a man was killed and a girl suffered injuries when two mortar shells fired from Afghanistan's Kunar province landed in the Gardao border area of Salarzai tehsil in Bajaur.

While no militant group claimed the attack, the Bajaur tribesmen blamed the attack on the Afghan National Army.<sup>124</sup> In the month of June, four labourers were wounded when militants from Afghanistan's Kunar province attacked a border locality of Bajaur tribal district.<sup>125</sup>

In July, two cross-border attacks from Afghanistan took place in Bajaur and Dir districts. On July 17, three civilians were killed and seven others were injured, including two army soldiers, in firing from across the Afghan-Pakistani border in bordering areas of Bajaur tribal district.<sup>126</sup> Later, on July 29, Pakistani Taliban terrorists from Afghanistan targeted a security post situated in a Pakistani-Afghan border area. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Lance Naik Samiullah was martyred in the attack. He belonged to Upper Dir district.<sup>127</sup>

From August to December 2020, at least one attack from across the Pak-Afghan border happened in each of the five months. Details are listed below:

- In August, Afghan border security forces opened fire on security check-posts in an area of Dir killing one FC soldier and injuring two others.<sup>128</sup>
- In September, the TTP terrorists from Afghanistan side attacked the post of security personnel located in the border area in Bajaur. As a result a soldier, Sabir Shah, 24, was martyred.<sup>129</sup>
- In October, Pakistani Taliban militants sheltered in Afghanistan opened fire on an army post at the border in Bajaur tribal district. As a result, *havaladar* Tanveer embraced martyrdom while one soldier got injured.<sup>130</sup>
- In November, a Frontier Corps soldier embraced martyrdom while two others suffered injuries when terrorists fired on a security forces' post from across the border with Afghanistan in Manzaikai sector in the Zhob area of Balochistan.<sup>131</sup>
- In December, militants from Afghanistan fired mortar shells in Laittay Bando area of Bajaur district. As a result, a shell hit two shepherds who were grazing their sheep in the mountainous area. Sherin Khan was killed on the spot and Kashmir Khan got injuries.<sup>132</sup>

Toward the end of November, the situation at the Chaman border remained tense amid reports of protests and clashes between protestor and security forces. For one, on November 29, a man was killed and six others were injured in a clash between traders and security personnel at the Friendship Gate. One child who was injured in the clash died next day.<sup>133</sup>

According to a December 2020 report by the Voice of America, Pakistan's military has said it will have fenced off the country's 2,600 kilometer border with Afghanistan within next

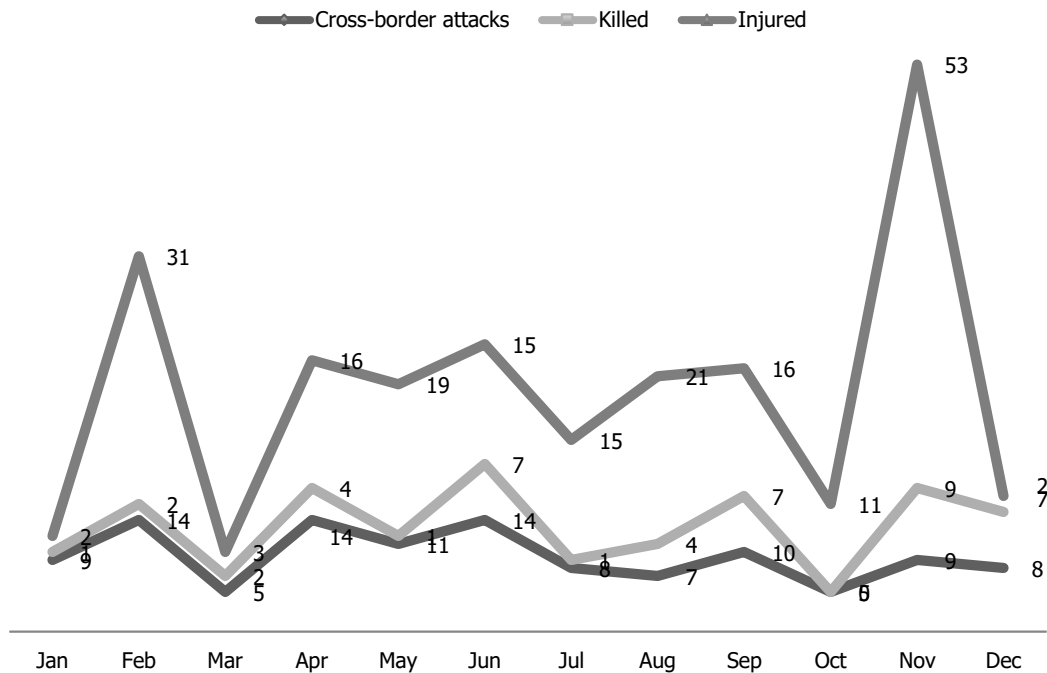
two months. The fencing was launched in 2017 to block militant infiltration from either side as well as smuggling and other illegal crossings on the Pak-Afghan border, and according to ISPR, as quoted by the VoA report, about 83 percent of the border has been fenced. Similarly, the report claimed, Pakistan army has already fenced off about 30 percent of the country's frontier with Iran and the project is expected to be finished by the end of 2021.<sup>134</sup>

### 2.8.2 Pak-India

On the whole, 114 cross-border attacks by Indian BSF claimed 45 lives besides inflicting injuries on another 204 people. Over 76 percent of these attacks concentrated in four AJK districts of Kotli, Bhimber, Poonch and Haveli.

Among those 45 Pakistani citizens killed in cross-border violence from India, 30 were civilians and 15 Pakistan army soldiers.

**Chart 4: Trends of Cross-border Attacks from India in 2020**



In January, nine cross-border attacks happened from India, claiming one life and wounding two others. These attacks concentrated in three districts of AJK including Kotli, Poonch and Haveli. On January 11, a 24-year-old man, Chaudhry Ishtiaq, lost his life in cross-border firing by Indian BSF at Nidhi Sohana village of Khuiratta subdivision in Kotli district. He was

killed after a shell landed in their courtyard and its splinters pierced through the wooden door of his room and hit him in the abdomen.<sup>135</sup>

In February, 14 cross-border attacks from India were recorded that spread across 5 districts of AJK including Kotli (6 attacks), Haveli (3), Hattian (2), Poonch (2), and Neelum (one attack). On February 8, one civilian Mir Muhammad was killed and a woman was injured in Indian shelling in Kakuta village of Chirikot sector.<sup>136</sup> Three days later, Indian troops fired at a motor rally, which was heading towards Dhar Bazaar to participate in a function held to mark the 36th death anniversary of Maqbool Butt, a pioneer Kashmiri guerrilla leader.<sup>137</sup>

Down by about 64 percent from the previous month, five attacks happened in March 2020 in AJK from across the LoC, claiming 2 lives and wounding 3 others. The reported cross-border attacks from India spread across 4 districts with 2 attacks reported from Kotli and one attack from each of Bhimber, Neelum and Poonch districts. During an armed border clash on March 11, a Pakistani army soldier Abdul Basit was martyred in Abbaspur (Poonch district) when a bullet fired from across the LoC hit him on the chest.<sup>138</sup> About a week later, another soldier of Pakistan Army, Wajid Ali, aged 20 years, embraced martyrdom in the firing of Indian forces in Shakhkot Sector.<sup>139</sup>

The situation at the Pakistan's border with India remained tense throughout the month of April, when 13 cross-border attacks from India claimed four lives (including a four-year-old boy Hussain Mir; a 2-year-old boy Muhammad Haseeb; a woman Tasmeen Bibi; and a soldier) and injured 16 others. Pakistani security forces also downed an Indian spy drone along the Line of Control on April 9. It was apparently due to India's growing cross-border violations that Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa visited the forward locations along the restive LoC on April 29 and termed India's provocative actions a threat to regional peace and stability.<sup>140</sup> Earlier, on April 13th, Pakistan had condemned the latest Indian ceasefire violations along the LoC as "senseless acts" aimed at distracting attention from the aggravating humanitarian situation in occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Indian Charge d'Affaires Gaurav Ahluwalia was summoned by Director General (South Asia & Saarc) Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri to lodge protest over the ceasefire breaches.<sup>141</sup>

The situation at the LoC remained tense in May and Pakistani security forces downed another two Indian spy drones. On the whole, 11 cross-border attacks were reported in Pakistan from across Pak-Indian border that claimed one life and injured 19 others. Most attacks along the LoC happened in Kotli district of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (4 attacks), followed by two attacks each in Bhimber and Haveli districts. On May 10, Indian troops shelled Abbaspur sector, using light and heavy arms and targeting civilian population. One of the shells landed in the kitchen of a house in Polas Kakota village killing Shazia Bibi, a

schoolteacher by profession, who was preparing meals for Iftar, or end of the fasting day.<sup>142</sup>

In June, Pakistani security forces downed another two Indian spy drones along the Line of Control, which took the number to five since the start of April. On the whole, situation at the LoC remained tense, where 14 cross-border attacks by Indian border security forces claimed seven lives and injured 15 others. Half of the reported attacks from India concentrated in two AJK districts Kotli and Bhimber. Another two attacks each happened in Hattian and Haveli districts, while one attack was reported from each of Neelum, Poonch and an unspecified district along the LoC. June 17 was the worst day of the month when at least three people died in Indian shelling in different areas.

Down by 43 percent from June, eight cross-border attacks were recorded along the LoC in July 2020 in five districts of Azad Jammu and Kashmir that killed one and injured 15 people: two attacks happened in each of Bhimber, Haveli and Kotli districts; and one attack each took place in Hattian Bala and Poonch districts. On July 26, Pakistan Army shot down an Indian spying quadcopter in Pandu sector along the LoC. The ISPR stated the quadcopter had intruded 200 metres on Pakistani side of the LoC in Hattian Bala district. It further said it was 10th Indian drone shot down this year.<sup>143</sup>

Posting a further slight decline, seven cross-border attacks happened along the LoC in August that concentrated in four districts of Azad Jammu and Kashmir including Bhimber, Poonch, Kotli and Hattian Bala. Indian troops resorted to extensive shelling in different villages of Leepa valley, using mortars and medium-range artillery. The shelling also hit Reshian, a village considered safe as it is situated 25 kilometres away from vulnerable Leepa valley. The shelling left one woman Attiq Bibi dead and two others wounded. Disaster management authority sources said they had unofficially also received names of five wounded persons belonging to different villages of Leepa valley. Meanwhile two civilians were injured in Kai Ban in Indian shelling.

Taking again an upward turn, 10 cross-border attacks took place from across the LoC in September, which spread over five districts of AJK; four attacks happened in Bhimber alone. On September 23, two soldiers of the Pakistan Army, Noor ul Hassan and Waseem Ali, embraced martyrdom during intense exchange of fire with Indian BSF in Dewa sector (Bhimber) along the LoC. Pakistan army reportedly also targeted Indian posts destroying three of them.<sup>144</sup> Earlier, on September 11, a young girl was killed and her elder sibling and grandmother and another civilian were injured in Battal sector in Hajira tehsil of Poonch district in firing and shelling by the Indian army from across the Line of Control.<sup>145</sup> Later, on September 29, Indian troops opened fire across the de facto border in the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir, killing a soldier Sepoy Shafique and a 15-year-old boy, and wounding four others.<sup>146</sup>

In October, five attacks were perpetrated by the Indian BSF in three districts of AJK including Bhimber, Haveli and Kotli. These attacks killed one person and injured 12 others.

In November, once again the situation at the LoC became relatively more tense and volatile adding to insecurity among the people living along the border. The reported nine attacks from across the LoC in the month represented an 80 percent increase from such attacks in previous month. These attacks from Indian side happened in six districts of AJK with most of the casualties being reported from Neelum district. On November 13, Indian BSF resorted to firing and shelling in at least four districts along the LoC, killing in all six and injuring 37 people. Earlier, on November 1, Indian army resorted to ceasefire violations using small and heavy arms in Rakhchikri sector in Haveli district for three hours. Mohammad Sarwar, 55, and his wife Gulab Jan, 47, were hit by the splinters of a mortar shell; the former died on the spot.<sup>147</sup> At least 10 cattle heads were also hit. On November 22, several participants of a wedding ceremony, mostly women and children, were injured after one of the mortar shells fired by Indian army from across the Line of Control landed in a house in Kotli district of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.<sup>148</sup> Three days after this incident, a villager Chaudhry Ansar Mahmood, in his mid-thirties, lost his life after an Indian BSF sniper shot at him from across the Line of Control while he was heading home on a motorbike in Gohra Mehri hamlet in Bhimber district.<sup>149</sup>

During the last month of the year 2020, eight cross-border attacks from India killed seven people – including six Pakistan army soldiers – and injured another two in Kotli, Bhimber and Poonch districts. On December 9, Two Pakistan army soldiers, Lance Naik Tariq and Sepoy Zarooof, were martyred in Indian BSF firing in Khuiratta sector of Kotli district.<sup>150</sup> About a week later, two more Pakistani soldiers embraced martyrdom as Indian troops violated ceasefire in the Bagsar Sector along the Line of Control in Bhimber district. According to ISPR, during the intense exchange of fire, Naik Shahjahan, 35, and Sepoy Hameed, 21, embraced martyrdom.<sup>151</sup>

On December 22, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa warned the Indian army that it would always get a befitting response to any “misadventure or aggression” from across the divide. The “note of caution” by Gen Bajwa came during his visit to the army positions in unspecified snowbound forward areas along the LoC hours after a woman was killed and two other civilians, including a minor boy, were injured as a result of ceasefire violations by the Indian army.<sup>152</sup> Earlier, Indian BSF troops had reportedly targeted a vehicle of the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan along the LoC, and Pakistan had taken up the “reprehensible attack on the UNMOGIP with the UN, urging it to initiate a transparent investigation into the incident.”<sup>153</sup>



### 2.8.3 Pak-Iran

No cross-border attack took place from Iranian side in the year 2020.

Officials from Pakistan and Iran discussed border matters during a stand-up meeting at the Taftan crossing of the Pakistani-Iranian border on April 11. Called on the request of Iran, the meeting took up the issue of bamboo poles that the Iranian authorities said were placed very close to the zero line near the Taftan town on the border. Pakistani officials apprised their Iranian counterparts that the bamboo poles were temporarily placed so that the laborers working on permanent fencing of the border between the two countries could not go beyond it.<sup>154</sup> Pakistan is conducting border fencing to check cross-border movements of militants from either side. Later, on April 20, the IG FC South Maj Gen Sarfaraz Ali paid a visit to the Pak-Iran bordering town of Mand and stated that the FC was taking all possible measures to maintain peace in the area with the help and cooperation of local people. He further said that once the fencing is completed, a mechanism will be developed to ensure the business safety. "The security forces have eliminated all terrorists' networks in Balochistan but still we need local support in order to fully wipe out people spoiling peace in the province," he reiterated.<sup>155</sup>

**Table 8: Regional Distribution of Cross-border Attacks**

Border	District	Attacks	Killed	Injured
Pak - Afghan	Bajaur (KP)	8	15	14
	Khyber (KP)	1	0	0
	Upper Dir (KP)	1	1	2
	Zhob (Balochistn)	1	1	2
	<i>Total</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>18</i>
Pak - India	Bagh (LoC)	1	0	1
	Bhimber (LoC)	21	9	30
	Hattian (LoC)	9	3	15
	Haveli (LoC)	13	4	21
	Kotli (LoC)	36	11	66
	LoC (Unspecified)	6	5	9
	Muzaffarabad (LoC)	1	0	5
	Neelum (LoC)	8	8	38