

P a k i s t a n

Following are some excerpts:
* The extrajudicial killing of criminal suspects, often in the form of deaths in police custody or staged encounters in which police shoot and kill the suspects, is common. During the year, 143 persons were killed in 72 encounters. Suspected criminals were killed by the police to prevent them from implicating police in crimes during court proceedings.

* *Politically motivated violence remained a problem in Karachi, despite the presence within the ruling coalition in Sindh province for much of the year of the Muttehida Qaumi Movement (MQM).*

* Violence among the rival MQM factions, especially between the Muttehida Qaumi Movement (MQM-Altaf) and the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM-Haqiqi), continued in waves. The fighting intensified in June, resulting in more than 171 persons killed.

* *Although expressly forbidden by the Constitution and the Penal Code, torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment by police remained common. Police routinely use force to elicit confessions. While no figures are available on reports of torture by security forces, there were fewer reports of torture in the press. Human rights observers suggest that because of the widespread use of physical torture by the police, suspects usually confess to crimes regardless of their guilt or innocence; the courts subsequently throw out many such confessions.*

* On October 30, the prime minister invoked Article 232 of the Constitution to suspend the Sindh Assembly and imposed Governor's Rule in the province after the October 17 killing of former Sindh governor Hakim Mohammad Saeed.

* *During the first week after the imposition of Governor's Rule in Sindh on October 30, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) received nearly 100 complaints of illegal arrests, harassment of women by police*

and security forces, and torture in custody. Most of those detained after the imposition of Governor's Rule were MQM-Altaf members or their relatives.

* It is commonly accepted, and high-ranking government officials have stated publicly, that police stations are sold – meaning that police officials pay bribes to politicians and senior officials in the department in order to get posted to the police stations of their choice. The police then recoup their investment by extorting money from the citizenry.

* *Even when actions are taken to address police abuses, the results are often mixed. In urban Sindh, the operation of citizen-police liaison committees helped to curb some police excesses, but there are still many complaints of police abuse.*

* According to the government's own Commission of Inquiry for Women, the stations do not function independently or fulfill their purpose. Despite court orders and regulations requiring that female suspects be interrogated only by female police officers, women continued to be detained overnight at regular police stations and abused by male officers. In a study of Lahore newspapers from January to July 1997, the Commission of Inquiry for Women found 52 cases of violence or torture of women while in police custody.

* *Police may arrest individuals on the basis of a First Incident Report (FIR) filed by a complainant. The police have been known to file FIR's without supporting evidence. FIR's thus frequently are used to harass or intimidate individuals. Charges against an individual also may be based on a "blind" FIR, which lists the perpetrators as "person or persons unknown." If the case is not solved, the FIR is placed in the inactive file. When needed, a FIR is reactivated and taken to a magistrate by the police, who then name a suspect and ask that the suspect be remanded for 14 days while they investigate further. After 14 days, the case is dropped for lack of evidence, but*

another FIR is then activated and brought against the accused. In this manner, rolling charges can be used to hold a suspect in continuous custody.

* Police are not required to notify anyone when an arrest is made and often hold detainees without charge until a court challenges them. The police sometimes detain individuals arbitrarily without charge, or on false charges, in order to extort payment for their release. Human rights monitors report that a number of police stations have secret detention cells in which individuals are kept while the police bargain for a higher price for their release.

* *The government sometimes uses mass arrests to quell civil unrest. Sectarian violence in the Punjab prompted the government on several occasions to round up hundreds of members of extremist groups and students at religious schools believed to be terrorist recruiting centres and training grounds. Police also arrested demonstrators, including members of religious minorities and political parties.*

* The opposition PPP compiled a list of 91 cases in which the government had subjected its supporters to harassment, police raids, or threats. The total also includes party workers killed in personal vendettas or in Karachi's political violence.

* *Persons in jail awaiting trial sometimes are held for periods longer than the sentence they would receive if convicted. Court officials report that each judge reviews between 70 and 80 cases per day, but that action is taken on only 3 or 4 each week. Eighty thousand criminal cases were reported pending in Sindh at the end of 1997, 67,800 of which were in Karachi.*

* The government maintains several domestic intelligence services that monitor politicians, political activists, suspected terrorists, and suspected foreign intelligence agents. Credible reports indicate that the authorities