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## **Pakistan: Displacement ongoing in a number of regions**

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*Military operations against armed opposition groups in Pakistan have displaced hundreds of thousands of people in recent months, according to the limited information available. While many of the internally displaced people (IDPs) have apparently been able to return to their areas of origin after an end to the fighting, others remain displaced with little access to humanitarian assistance.*

*In the North West Frontier Province's Swat Valley, conflict between an armed opposition group and the army led to Asia's biggest new displacement in 2007, with between 400,000 and 900,000 people forced to flee their homes towards the end of the year. Many people returned as soon as possible, but some of them found their homes and property damaged.*

*In North Waziristan, conflict between armed opposition groups and the army resumed in October 2007 after the collapse of a ceasefire agreement. At least 80,000 people are believed to have fled their homes to avoid being caught in the bombing and crossfire. There was intense fighting between government forces and the armed opposition groups, where helicopter gunships, fighter planes and heavy artillery were reportedly used. There were also clashes between the army and opposition forces in South Waziristan in early 2008, with both sides using heavy weapons, and the conflict forced thousands of civilians to flee the area.*

*In Balochistan, tens of thousands of people remained displaced as government forces fought some Baloch tribes. The government continued to deny humanitarian agencies access to the displaced in the name of security and safety.*

*The Pakistani army is accused of preventing people displaced from near the Line of Control dividing Pakistan and India from returning to their homes. The IDPs had first been displaced due to shelling at the border in 1999 and a second time as a result of the 2005 earthquake. In many cases IDPs' land has been occupied by the army.*

*There is no information available on the exact numbers of people displaced in Pakistan today, due to administrative restrictions on access to affected areas. However, conflicts have clearly displaced, and will continue to displace, civilians in urgent need of protection and humanitarian assistance. Therefore it is critical that donors and humanitarian agencies continue to press the government for access to displaced populations in the country.*

### Internal Displacement in Pakistan



More maps are available on <http://www.internal-displacement.org/>

## **Conflict and displacement in the Swat Valley**

The largest displacement in Pakistan in 2007 occurred in Swat Valley in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). The valley, with a population of 1.5 million people, was seized by pro-Taleban fighters in July 2007.

In 1992, fundamentalist cleric Maulana Sufi Muhammad launched the Movement for the Enforcement of Islamic Law (*Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi* or TNSM) in the Malakand region of NWFP. When US forces attacked the Taleban government in Afghanistan in 2001, the TNSM began recruiting people in Pakistan to fight in the neighbouring country. Most of the TNSM fighters were killed or arrested by Northern Alliance forces in Afghanistan, and Maulana Sufi Muhammad and several TSNM leaders were arrested by Pakistani security forces in January 2002. The TNSM regrouped as a pro-Taleban armed movement under Maulana Fazlullah, the son-in-law of Maulana Sufi Muhammad (The Media Line News Agency, 6 February 2008).

Maulana Fazlullah rose to power as a preacher, broadcasting fundamentalist sermons over pirate radio stations. By May 2007, he had attracted a core group of 5,000 militants (CSM, 26 February 2008). The central government did not initially take action so as not to alienate the country's religious political parties (Time Magazine, 22 November 2007). Following the army's storming of the Red Mosque in Islamabad in July, Maulana Fazlullah ordered his supporters to take up arms against the government. In Swat Valley, the militants attacked security forces and police stations. The

TNSM also began to send threatening messages and bombs to pro-government tribal leaders, government officials, music and video shops, internet cafes, aid agency offices and girls' schools in the Valley (PIPS, 24 November 2007).

By September, Fazlullah's forces had seized control of almost 60 towns throughout the Valley in an attempt to create an Islamic state (CSM, 26 February 2008). On 25 October, the army launched an attack on the militants and four days of intense fighting ensued, centred on Fazlullah's headquarters in Imam Dheri village. A ceasefire was agreed on 28 October and thousands of villagers took advantage to escape. Around 10,000 villagers left Salanda village alone (AFP, 28 October 2007). Fighting resumed between the army and Fazlullah's forces on 31 October, and a number of civilians were killed in bombardments.

Media sources reported that hundreds of thousands of people fled the fighting over the next few weeks. According to one report, some 400,000 people from the Valley's total population of 1.5 million were displaced (The Media Line News Agency, 6 February 2008). Another cited unnamed officials estimating that 500,000 people had left the area, a majority of them to Malakand, Mardan, Charsadda, Nowshera, Peshawar and Islamabad (Kashmir Herald, 3 December 2007). A third report suggested that 900,000 people or 60 per cent of the valley's entire population had fled (PIPS, 24 November 2007), with the displaced seeking refuge with relatives or in rented houses in Mardan, Buner, Peshawar, Rawalpindi and Karachi. Thousands of people also reportedly fled the Shangla district, which has a population of

600,000, when the fighting spread there (Newsvine, 17 November 2007).

By early December fighting died down with many of the militants' strongholds taken over by the army. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), more than 1,000 houses had been destroyed and there had been at least 400 civilian casualties. Much of the destruction is alleged to have been caused by the use of attack helicopters against villages believed by the army to be harbouring militants (IRIN, 17 December 2007). Three months after the army was sent to the Swat Valley, the militants remained in hiding in the mountains. While life in towns in the valley was returning to normal, bombings continued and Maulana Fazlullah remained at large (AP, 26 February 2008).

There is not much information available on the immediate and longer-term humanitarian and protection concerns of IDPs displaced from the Swat Valley. The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) established a camp in the town of Barikot which could accommodate 5,000 displaced families (IRIN, 1 November 2007). PRCS set up 100 tents, as well as a dispensary and reception area at the Barikot camp, but militants' threats to set fire to the camp kept IDPs away (IRIN, 6 November 2007). It was reported that 6,000 families had taken shelter in government schools in the city of Mingora (Swat Youth Front, December 2007). It is believed that many IDPs who returned soon after the fighting had died down faced curfews that had a severe impact on daily life, especially education, with over 2,000 schools reportedly closed down for varying periods (IRIN, 17 December 2007).

### **Internal displacement in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas**

The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) lie on the border with Afghanistan outside the four provinces of [Pakistan](#). They include seven "agencies" or districts of which two are North Waziristan and South Waziristan. The majority of the people in FATA are from the Pashtun ethnic group who live on both sides of the border. FATA is governed by the Frontier Crimes Regulation Ordinance, which the British implemented in 1901 based on tribal customs and a Pashtun code of ethics. Administration rests in the hands of a "political agent" of the central government, along with tribal elders.

After the US-led coalition ousted the Taleban government from Kabul in November 2001, armed opposition groups are believed to have regrouped in the historic Taleban powerbase: Afghanistan's predominantly ethnic Pashtun southern provinces and in Waziristan and Balochistan in Pakistan (HRW, April 2007, p.14). In Waziristan, the armed groups are believed to have received support, willing or otherwise, from local tribesmen who have long resisted central government authority. The area is also believed to act as a base for armed opposition groups fighting NATO forces in Afghanistan (Guardian, 10 October 2007).

The army has traditionally stayed out (USIP, 2006) and the government bars the access of foreign observers, journalists and aid organisations (McClatchy Newspapers, 20 March 2008). However, in 2001 and 2002, the

US enlisted the help of the Pakistani government to stop the Taleban and Al-Qaeda members fleeing across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and regrouping in Pakistan. In July 2002, the central government dispatched 80,000 troops to areas along the Afghan border in FATA (the first army operation in FATA since 1947) in search of Taleban and Al-Qaeda members. Almost immediately a violent resistance grew against the perceived incursion (Middle East Review, p. 24).

By 2006, fighting had led to civilian casualties and the displacement of tens of thousands of people in Waziristan. Army operations in March 2004 around the South Waziristan capital of Wana and in June 2004 in the Shakai area north-west of Wana led to civilian deaths and the demolition of hundreds of houses, and forced thousands from their homes. Thousands others fled fighting around the town of Miranshah in North Waziristan during March 2006 as a result of military operations. Many more people were allegedly displaced due to army operations by 2006, but there is little information available on them (IDMC, 10 October 2006). The conflict also displaced Afghan refugees living in camps. When the camps were closed in 2005 due to the fighting, many had no choice but to repatriate prematurely to Afghanistan, creating a humanitarian crisis there.

In the attempt to contain the conflict in North Waziristan, on 4 September 2006, the government and the tribes and militants agreed to the terms of the Waziristan Accord (Guardian, 10 October 2007). However, this was the third agreement between the parties since

2004, and both previous deals had failed to stem the violence and cross-border movement (Middle East Review, p. 25). The Accord led to a fall in attacks against Pakistani troops, but in following months attacks on US-led troops in eastern Afghanistan tripled. The Accord unravelled in July 2007 amid the surge in violence in north-west Pakistan which followed the Red Mosque operation. Militants in North Waziristan argued that the government had violated the ten-month peace deal by launching attacks and deploying more troops in the area. As the ceasefire collapsed, violence in North Waziristan intensified sharply (Reuters, 28 February 2008).

Fighting around the town of Mirali in North Waziristan in October 2007 led 80,000 people to flee their homes. The fighting started on 7 October after militants ambushed a military convoy near Mirali, and continued for ten days before a ceasefire took hold as a result of efforts by a tribal council from the Orakzai district in FATA (The News, 21 October 2007).

During the fighting the Pakistani army closed off roads leading into North Waziristan, effectively cutting off the area from the rest of the country. Villages believed by the army to be sheltering militants were reportedly bombed by fighter planes and helicopters, leading to civilian casualties and the destruction of homes and shops (IRIN, 21 October 2007). HRCP called upon the government and militants to put an immediate end to hostilities, the bombing of villages and the use of heavy weapons which endangered the lives of civilians (Dawn, 13 October 2007).

Large numbers of families left the villages of Ipi, Haiderkhel, Mosaki, Hurmaz, Hasukhel, Barokhel, Milagan, Zairaki and Esori on 10 October (Dawn, 11 October 2007). Most of the displaced went to the neighbouring Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan districts, while others headed to Peshawar, some 190 kilometres to the north. The people displaced fled in lorries, vans or on foot. The Jamaat-i-Islami, a religious political party, set up three camps in Bannu where about 200 displaced people were provided temporary shelter (Dawn, 11 October 2007). After a week of fighting the town of Mirali, with a normal population of 50,000, had become virtually empty, although many families left behind a single male member to watch over their homes and possessions. By 18 October some IDPs had started to return to recover belongings or to resume their lives. Trucks carrying goods, especially food items, had also begun reaching North Waziristan (IRIN, 21 October 2007).

In January 2008, heavy fighting between the army and militants broke out in South Waziristan. The army was targeting Baitulla Mehsud, a leader of Pakistani Taliban groups, who had been accused of involvement in the assassination of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto (VOA, 23 January 2008). Both sides used heavy weapons against each other in the areas of Jandola, Chaghmalai, and Spinkai-Raghzai (The Nation, 24 January 2008).

As a result of the conflict, large number of families from South Waziristan were displaced. According to one report the number of displaced people exceeded 60,000 (PIPS, 11 March 2008). Hundreds of displaced families, mostly women,

children and the elderly, fled to the neighbouring Tank district and North Waziristan. Some had to walk for two days to reach Tank over rough terrain, with little food and water along the way. There were unconfirmed reports of children dying due to the cold weather. After reaching Tank, many IDPs were reportedly living in parks and other open areas. The army set up a relief camp at Kari Wam in Tank for the displaced families. According to a government official, around 200 people who had reached Tank by 20 January had been given food and medicines. Over 100 displaced families from South Waziristan reached North Waziristan, where locals had set up relief centres in Miramshah, Mirali and Esha (Dawn, 29 January 2008). Some displaced families sought shelter with relatives outside Waziristan after areas of the region were sealed off by the army in January.

State authorities also set up a relief camp near Kot Azam in Bannu but failed to provide any visible relief to the IDPs. Officials in the Ministry of Defense announced an aid package of around \$300,000, but the camp lacked adequate facilities. Camp administrators asked for 5,000 tents but only received 250, and food, medicines and blankets were unavailable (PIPS, 11 March 2008).

In January 2008, the Pakistani government restarted peace negotiations with the armed opposition in North Waziristan. Even before the deal had been finalised, the army was withdrawing from some checkpoints in the region (Long War Journal, 29 January 2008). The following month the government announced a ceasefire in South Waziristan, that had been brokered by two Afghan commanders who persuaded Bai-

tulla Mehsud to stay in Afghanistan (Asia Times, 9 February 2008).

In April 2008, the army reopened some roads in South Waziristan to allow thousands of displaced persons to return home. A ration card scheme for over 10,000 displaced families was also started by the South Waziristan administration, to allow families to receive relief goods. Nevertheless, a number of displaced families from Waziristan and other conflict-affected areas chose not to return. (IRIN, 16 April 2008).

### **Internal displacement in Balochistan**

Balochistan is the largest of Pakistan's provinces and also the most sparsely populated. 55 per cent of the population are from Baloch tribes and 29 per cent from Pashtun tribes (IPCS, October 2006). The Baloch have longstanding grievances with the Punjabi-dominated central government, and faced with a slowing population growth, they fear losing their land and resources and their distinct identity. Major development projects in Balochistan have had limited benefit to the local population. Most of the gas from the Sui gas field is used in other provinces of Pakistan and only four of 26 districts in Balochistan are supplied with gas. The Baloch have only been able to play a small role in the construction of Gwadar naval base, which is under the control of the central government.

Since independence from Britain in 1947, the central government has come into conflict with the Baloch in 1948, 1958, 1962 and 1973. The conflict restarted in 2004 as three tribes, the Marri, Bugti and Mengal, rose up against the government and de-

manded political and economic autonomy (Carnegie, January 2006, p. 7-8).

The government's building of army barracks in three of Balochistan's most sensitive areas of Sui, Gwadar and Kohlu added to this perceived alienation of the Baloch (Carnegie, January 2006, p. 6). The army has stationed 35,000 paramilitary troops in Balochistan. In January 2005, they fought to suppress armed protests by tribal militias, and in December 2005 launched full-scale operations following a failed attempt on the life of President Musharraf, allegedly by Baloch rebels (ACHR, August 2007, p. 35).

Since then, tens of thousands of people have been displaced. From December 2005 onwards, at least 84,000 people, mostly from the Marri and Bugti tribes, were displaced in the districts of Dera Bugti and Kohlu alone. According to a humanitarian assessment in July and August 2006, the displaced people, including 26,000 women and 33,000 children, were living in makeshift camps without adequate shelter in Jafarabad, Naseerabad, Quetta, Sibi and Bolan districts. 28 per cent of children under five were acutely malnourished, and six per cent faced severe acute malnourishment and their survival depended on immediate medical attention. Over 80 per cent of the deaths among those surveyed were of children under five (ICG, 22 October 2007, p. 6).

Aid agencies were repeatedly denied access to the displaced, although supplies of food and medicines lay in warehouses in the provincial capital Quetta. Local officials helped the agencies monitor conditions, but more senior provincial and federal officials refused humanitarian

requests or blocked them with bureaucratic hurdles (CSM, 21 December 2006).

In December 2006, under pressure from foreign governments and humanitarian agencies, the government finally allowed the UN to deliver a \$1 million aid package to IDPs in Balochistan. The UN was allowed to set up 57 feeding centres there on various conditions, for example that no UN official would communicate with the press. A few days later, however, the UN's permission to assist the IDPs was revoked. The head of the local NGO Edhi Foundation was also told not to deliver any aid to the Baloch IDPs. Meanwhile, fear of army reprisals prevented locals from aiding the displaced (Newsline, June 2007).

Thousands of Baloch reportedly remained displaced and were living in miserable conditions in June 2007. Many had travelled to neighbouring towns and those with more resources to urban centres. Displaced families were living without clean drinking water or medicines. Women had died in childbirth and dozens of children had died due to malnutrition and diseases such as typhoid and hepatitis (Newsline, June 2007).

In May 2007, at a public meeting in Dera Bugti, President Musharraf said that 65,000 people out of 90,000 displaced from Dera Bugti had returned home. A regional human rights organisation believed that 200,000 people were still displaced (AHRC, 21 December 2006) while the head of the NGO Baloch Rights Council insisted that the IDP figures were much higher than reported, with 200,000 people displaced from Kohlu district alone (ICG, 22 October 2007, p. 6).

Other estimates put the number of Baloch IDPs at between 50,000 and 60,000 (Economist, 17 April 2008).

The central government has reportedly continued to impose control through force. The army's killing of the Baloch leader Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti in August 2006 was followed by the imprisonment of another leader, Sardar Akhtar Jan Mengal, who was held on terrorism-related charges without due process from December 2006 to May 2008. Law enforcement agencies have detained thousands of Baloch nationalists and many are believed to have disappeared. Many young activists are losing faith in the political process and see armed resistance as a viable way to secure their rights (ICG, 22 October 2007, p. 1).

The momentum of the Baloch insurgency declined in 2007, as some leaders fled Pakistan or were captured or killed by the state. The operational capacity of the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), the most prominent armed opposition group in the province, was considerably reduced in 2007 and the BLA's purported chief Nawabzada Balach Marri was killed in November 2007.

The conflict, however, continues to simmer, and there has been a steady stream of bomb and rocket attacks on gas pipelines, railway tracks, power transmission lines, bridges, and communications infrastructure, as well as on military establishments and government facilities. The tribal militias are still capable of carrying out acts of sabotage on a daily basis across the province, and a political solution to the conflict is nowhere in sight. Acts of violence are occurring in practi-

cally all districts, including Quetta (South Asian Terrorism Portal, 2008).

Displacement has occurred in Balochistan not only as a result of conflict but also due to floods in June and July 2007 that affected 2.5 million people and displaced 300,000.

### **Displacement from the Line of Control in Kashmir**

During the Kargil conflict in Kashmir between India and Pakistan in 1999, hundreds of families were forced to leave their homes along the Line of Control (LoC) to escape cross-border shelling. These families sought shelter in IDP camps or with relatives, and many were also affected by the October 2005 earthquake that killed 75,000 people and made 3.5 million homeless.

Although many earthquake-affected families have returned to their area of origin, helped by a government scheme to offer homeowners more than \$3,000 in building assistance, those displaced by the conflict have not received the same assistance. Consequently, almost a decade on, hundreds of families still live in IDP camps in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. In some cases the land has been occupied by the army and mined, and some IDPs have been refused permission to return to their land due to its proximity to the LoC (IRIN, 27 November 2007).

An estimated 17,000 displaced Kashmiris remain in refugee-like conditions on the Pakistani side of the LoC (USCRI, World Survey 2007). In August it was reported that the government was considering issuing identity cards similar to those issued to Afghan refugees to individuals

who had fled Indian-controlled Kashmir after 1990 (HRCP, 1 April 2008).

### **Humanitarian access and national and international response to IDPs**

The Pakistani government has no national policy on addressing conflict-induced displacement and there have been no reports of any systematic government assistance to these types of IDPs in the country, the majority of whom are displaced as a result of combat between the army and insurgent forces. Initiatives by provincial governments to aid the displaced have had varying degrees of success.

The HRCP has acted as a watchdog and undertaken fact-finding missions to areas where violence and displacement have occurred. The agency has publicised the actions of armed forces, such as indiscriminate bombing, that have led to death and displacement among the civilian population (IRIN, 2 February 2006).

In its 2007 yearbook the HRCP noted that there were 1.5 million people displaced in Pakistan during the year a result of natural disasters, development projects and military operations. The figure did not include those displaced by the 2005 earthquake. The HRCP stressed that government agencies had not only failed to prevent displacement caused by armed opposition groups, but that their operations against them had themselves displaced hundreds of thousands of people (HRCP, April 2008).

In March 2008, the HRCP underlined the dire situation of the 1.5 million displaced people in Pakistan and stated that the government must extend humanitarian

aid to all IDPs and seek for this the cooperation and assistance of UNHCR (HRCP, 31 March 2008).

The Government of Pakistan has denied humanitarian agencies access to areas with large internally displaced populations. In some conflict areas where aid agencies have been allowed in by the government, IDPs have been afraid to take advantage of assistance after receiving threats from armed opposition groups.

In Balochistan, efforts by international and national aid agencies to assist the IDPs have been rejected by authorities. Due to the unstable security situation in Waziristan, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has not been able to travel to areas most directly affected by the armed conflict, but ICRC has helped some wounded who have been able to reach more accessible areas.

During the conflict and displacement in the Swat Valley, ICRC and the Pakistan Red Crescent Society assisted the IDPs by providing blankets and soap to hundreds of families, and distributing medical kits and x-ray material to area hospitals (ICRC, January 2008). NGOs such as the International Relief and Development Foundation collaborated with local agencies to provide food packages to the Swat IDPs and other vulnerable groups.

After two recent natural disasters, the October 2005 earthquake in NWFP and Pakistan-administered Kashmir, and the June-July 2007 floods in Balochistan and Sindh provinces, the UN Cluster Approach was activated in Islamabad and in the affected areas. Clusters and working

groups remain active as of May 2008 to respond to natural disaster in Pakistan (FMR 29, p. 40). There is no such humanitarian response system in place for the estimated hundreds of thousands of people believed to be displaced by the country's conflicts.

It is unlikely that adequate humanitarian support will reach populations displaced by the conflicts in Pakistan unless international agencies continue to urge the government to increase access. At the same time, the country's principal donors and the main supporters of its "war on terror" campaign will also have to promote initiatives to get aid to displaced people and call upon the government to do more to protect civilians during military operations if the impacts of current and future conflicts are to be mitigated.

*Note: This is a summary of the IDMC's Internal Displacement profile. The full profile is available online [here](#).*

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## **About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre**

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, established in 1998 by the Norwegian Refugee Council, is the leading international body monitoring conflict-induced internal displacement worldwide.

Through its work, the Centre contributes to improving national and international capacities to protect and assist the millions of people around the globe who have been displaced within their own country as a result of conflicts or human rights violations.

At the request of the United Nations, the Geneva-based Centre runs an online database providing comprehensive information and analysis on internal displacement in some 50 countries.

Based on its monitoring and data collection activities, the Centre advocates for durable solutions to the plight of the internally displaced in line with international standards.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre also carries out training activities to enhance the capacity of local actors to respond to the needs of internally displaced people. In its work, the Centre cooperates with and provides support to local and national civil society initiatives.

For more information, visit the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website and the database at [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)

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