

6.1.9. Trafficking in Human Beings (THB)

In August 2024, the Director of Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Lahore, Sarfraz Khan Virk, announced a comprehensive renovation of the national system, declaring severe measures against perpetrators of human trafficking among other crimes.[1900] The announcement was followed by the changes to the national laws related to human trafficking and smuggling. In February 2025, the senate passed amendments to three already existing laws, specifically on Prevention of Trafficking in Persons, Prevention of Smuggling of Migrants, and Emigration.[1901] Some amendments to the above-mentioned legislation include *inter alia*:

1. The amended Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act:[1902]

- expands the definition of trafficking to include organised begging;
- increases penalties for traffickers - raising prison sentences from a minimum of three years to up to 14 years for offenses involving women and children. Fines for trafficking crimes now range from Rs 1 million (3 075 EUR) to Rs 2 million (7 150 EUR);[1903]
- increases sentences for traffickers from 3-5 years to 7 years, with fines rising from Rs. 0.5 million [around 1 538 EUR] to Rs. 3 million [around 9 225 EUR] and Rs. 5 million [around 15 376 EUR]. Repeat offenders will face 10-14 years of imprisonment, with fines increased from Rs. 1 million [3 075 EUR] to Rs. 10 million [30 752 EUR], along with the confiscation of property.[1904]

2. The amended Prevention of Smuggling of Migrants Bill:[1905]

- increases penalties for offenders, raising the maximum prison term from five years to 10 years and raising fines from Rs1 million (3 075 EUR) to Rs 10 million (30 750 EUR);
- targets individuals who harbour undocumented foreigners in Pakistan, increasing their prison term from three years to five years and doubling fines to Rs 2 million (7 150 EUR). [1906]

3. The amended Emigration Bill:1907

- courts will have fines and jail sentences at their disposal as forms of punishments for offenders.1908
- Trafficking in Human Beings is ‘deeply entrenched in Pakistan’1909 as the country serves as a source, transit route, and destination for trafficked victims.1910 The most prevalent form of trafficking is bonded labour,1911 specifically in the agriculture, brick kiln and textile industry.1912 People are also trafficked for forced labour, sexual exploitation, and drug industry.1913 Children, refugees, and stateless persons are particularly vulnerable to trafficking.1914

Pakistan is considered a country of a high prevalence of modern slavery according to Walk Free, an international human rights group focused on the elimination of modern slavery. The number of people in modern slavery in Pakistan is estimated at of 2.3 million.1915

In 2024, USDOS reported that the Pakistani government had not taken adequate action against officials allegedly involved in trafficking crimes. According to the same source, in Sindh province, local officials were allegedly engaged in bonded labour, specifically in brick kilns and agriculture. 1916

In the period between 2025 and 2026, local media reported on a number of arrests in cases of trafficking and smuggling of people:

- On 6 February 2025, the Gujrat (Punjab) FIA reportedly claimed having arrested two human traffickers, who were accused of migrant smuggling.1917
- On 13 April 2025, FIA arrested two Pakistani nationals accused of being involved in human smuggling and for a case of a boat sinking off the coast of Libya in 2023. Media reported that, upon their arrival in Libya, the migrants were subjected to detention, torture, and inhumane treatment in secret locations.1918
- On 24 November 2025, the FIA Faisalabad reportedly arrested two suspects with one of them allegedly linked to a human trafficking and forced beggary network.1919
- On 2 January 2026, FIA imposed penalty on 214 officials over corruption and human trafficking. The punishment included dismissal, demotion, and firing.1920
- On 4 January 2026, the FIA Islamabad arrested a visa fraud agent involved in human smuggling and overseas employment scams.1921

- On 18 January 2026, the FIA arrested four suspects in two separate operations for attempting to travel abroad through unlawful means, including the use of forged documents, fake residency cards and other migrant-smuggling channels.1922

- On 19 January 2026, FIA arrested six suspects involved in human smuggling.1923
- In September 2025, the UN launched a migration network with the aim to strengthen migration management and governance, including combatting human trafficking and migrant smuggling 'with a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.'1924

In January 2026, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi reiterated actions against organised criminal groups involved in human trafficking and illegal immigration and emphasised a zero-tolerance policy against people exploiting vulnerable individuals.1925

Observers reported that victims of trafficking often do not file complaints due to fear of retaliation and some are disinclined to participate in the criminal procedures due to the length of the process. Victims expressed reluctance to testify against traffickers due to threats of violence against them and their families.1926 The provincial governments allocated funding to provide free legal aid for victims; however, there were no reports of victims receiving this assistance. 1927

The Pakistan's Social Welfare Departments provided lawyers to assist victims at women shelters with free legal assistance; 5 031 victims received legal services, but the government did not specify if any were trafficking victims.1928

Based on the 2026 Global Organized Crime Index developed by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, victim support services in Pakistan, specifically for survivors of human trafficking, are inadequate. Moreover, shelters for trafficking victims are underfunded, and witness protection programmes remain largely ineffective due to security concerns. Victims often refuse to testify against traffickers for fear of retaliation. The limited availability of protection services leaves many at risk of re-victimisation, and, in some cases, drives them back into exploitative situations.1929

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