

4.2.1. Balochistan

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○ (a) General description of the province

Balochistan is the largest of Pakistan’s provinces, making up 43.6 % of the country’s total landmass with a size of 347 190 square kilometres.618 It is situated in the southwest of the country. To the north and east, Balochistan borders the provinces of KP, Punjab and Sindh. To the south, it has a coastline along the Arabian Sea and to the southwest and northwest, it shares international borders with Iran and Afghanistan. The province’s capital city is Quetta.619 In terms of administrative units, Balochistan is divided into eight divisions (Quetta, Kalat, Makran, Nasirabad, Sibi, Zhob, Loralai, and Rakhshan), which are further subdivided into 36 districts.620

Balochistan province had a population of 14 894 402, according to the 7th Population & Housing Census of Pakistan of 2023.621 While being the largest it is also the least densely populated province of Pakistan.622 The province’s main ethnic groups include the Baloch623 and Pashtuns;624 the main languages in terms of mother-tongue spoken are Baloch (39.9 %), Pashto (also Pushto) (34 %) and Brahvi (17.2 %). Smaller language groups include Sindhi, Saraiki, and others.625

The province’s main economic sectors include minor crops such as fruits and vegetables, mining and quarrying, and electricity and gas.626 Balochistan is rich in natural resources, including gold, diamonds, copper, silver, chromite, and lithium in more than 1 600 mines, such as the Saindaku gold-and-copper-mine, leased to a Chinese company until 2035.627 Moreover, more than 58 % of Pakistan’s coal production takes place in Balochistan.628 Pakistan is part of the Chinese-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a project of China’s Belt and Road Initiative, which includes infrastructure projects such as the Gwadar deep sea port.629 On the other hand, according to the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), quoted by the Pakistani newspaper The Nation in a May 2024 article, 70 % of Balochistan’s population

is ‘multidimensionally poor’, the highest rate across the country.630 Separatist and insurgent movements have emerged as a result of the local population’s perceptions of ongoing marginalisation and external economic exploitation.631 Attacks against foreign workers, including Chinese nationals, have increased, with China being perceived as a ‘colonial usurper of local resources’,632 and projects like CPEC as further sidelining the local population economically and politically.633

○ (b) Presence and general activities of the armed actors

The federal government responded to the insurgency with military force, without, however, addressing the underlying grievances.634 Increased militarisation of the region, reports on human rights violations such as enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings,635 and the detention of critics without due process, rather deepened the population’s resentment and increased resistance.636 Moreover, the authorities’ repression also extended to peacefully protesting and politically dissenting groups and individuals,637 such as the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (Balochistan Unity Committee, BYC), a Baloch rights movement,638 whose leader, Mahrang Baloch, has been imprisoned since March 2025.639 ACLED documented a ‘sharp rise’ in the reported deaths of ethnic Baloch people at the hands of security forces related to anti-militancy operations in 2025, the majority of whom had previously become victims of enforced disappearance.640

The authorities also accused neighbouring countries of supporting insurgent groups, including Afghanistan,641 and, particularly, India.642 In May 2025, the government officially labelled all armed groups operating in Balochistan ‘Fitna al Hindustan’, claiming that this denomination reflected the groups’ links to India and their actions as ‘detrimental to Pakistan’s sovereignty, Islamic values, and traditional norms’.643

The Pakistani research institute Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) noted in its security report for 2025 that Balochistan and the southern and tribal districts of KP remained ‘the epicentres of insecurity’, with Baloch insurgent groups appearing ‘as a particularly lethal and strategically disruptive threat’.644

Similarly, the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS) pointed to an increase in the intensity of operations and the ‘evolving tactics’ of Baloch insurgent groups, noting that Balochistan was the province with the highest number of casualties recorded in 2025.645 Already in 2024, both organisations had observed an increase in the number of attacks and casualties in the province, mainly due to the activities of

Baloch insurgent groups, including the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) and the Baloch Liberation Front (BLF), and to religiously motivated Muslim armed groups such as Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP).646 The two sources differed in terms of the Islamic State group: while PICSS pointed to activities attributed to the Islamic State Pakistan Province (ISPP) in Balochistan,647 PIPS referred to Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) activities.648 Other Baloch insurgent groups included the Baloch Republican Guards (BRG) (also part of BRAS, see section 3.2.13. Balochistan nationalist groups) and the Baloch Republican Army (BRA).649.

According to researcher Neeraj Singh Manhas, CPEC had become a 'prime target' for Baloch insurgent and religiously motivated armed groups, particularly since 2021.650 During the reference period, Baloch insurgent groups also intensified attacks on security forces651 and individuals, apparently particularly targeting those of Punjabi origin,652 and officials accused of collaborating with the state, according to PIPS.653

The groups' main areas of activity comprised the central, southern and southwestern regions,654 including Kech, Quetta, Kalat, Mastung, Nushki, Khuzdar, Panjgur, Gwadar, and other districts.655 In its 2025 security report, however, PIPS observed a 'widening geographic footprint', with violent activity extending also to northwestern districts such as Washuk, Kharan, Kachhi, and others and into neighbouring provinces. Other trends identified by PIPS included more coordinated high-profile operations (temporarily taking control of territory, disrupting key economic lines), an expansion of methods of attack (seizing and burning government facilities, roadblocks, sieges, suicide attacks, and information operations), and changes in recruitment, resulting in increasing levels of support among Balochistan's middle-classes.656 The BLA particularly gained support from middle-class communities along the Makran coast and in poorer areas around Kohlu and Sibi in the province's central and eastern districts.657 Moreover, the group was able to gain increased support from Baloch women, including women willing to join BLA's suicide unit,658 the Majeed Brigade.659

During the reference period, the TTP was mainly active in Balochistan's northern districts with a majority Pashtun population,660 such as Quetta and Zhob districts.661 In 2025, however, the group's operations extended also to other areas such as Makran, Pishin, Qila Saifullah and Kalat – not necessarily because Balochistan had turned into one of its 'primary theatres', according to PICSS, but rather because of TTP's desire to demonstrate nationwide reach.662 In May 2025, TTP reportedly claimed responsibility for an attack in Khuzdar district.663

PICSS recorded a total of eight attacks attributed to ISPP in 2024, including in Quetta, Pishin, Kuchlak, Sibi, and Qila Saifullah districts,664 and six attacks in 2025, in Quetta, Kalat, Mastung, Pishin, Noshki districts.665 PIPS recorded operations of ISKP in Kalat, Pishin, Qillah Abdullah, Qilla Saifullah, Quetta, and Sibi districts in 2024,666 and in Kalat, Mastung and Quetta districts in 2025, including two major suicide attacks on

political gatherings in the latter two districts.667 In May 2025, ISKP released a video and a document declaring war against Baloch ethno-national insurgent groups and Baloch rights groups, such as the BYC and its female leader Mahrang Baloch, calling them un-Islamic, and accusing BLA of killing its fighters in Mastung district, ISKP's main foothold in the province.668

○ (c) Recent security incidents and impact on the civilian population and infrastructure

Security incidents

According to the Pakistani Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), 386 incidents of violence669 were recorded in Balochistan province in 2025, resulting in 956 fatalities and 717 injuries and thus marking a 22 % increase in fatalities compared to 2024, when 787 fatalities were recorded.670

PIPS recorded 225 attacks by Baloch insurgent groups in 2025, causing 338 fatalities and injuring 462 people across 27 of Balochistan's districts. Religiously motivated Muslim armed groups, including TTP and ISKP carried out 28 attacks, half of them in Quetta and Qilla Abdullah, killing 80 people and injuring 141.671 PIPS recorded eight suicide attacks in Balochistan province in 2025, claimed by TTP (one), ISKP (two), the BLA (four) and the BLF (one).672 The latter two groups also used female suicide attackers.673

Recent security incidents included attacks on 'pro-government' tribesmen in Panjgur city, killing at least five civilians in March 2026,674 and a series of gun and bomb attacks in Quetta and other towns and cities across the province in January 2026, killing at least 31 civilians and 17 security personnel.675 BLA claimed responsibility for the attacks, which reportedly targeted civilian infrastructure and security installations, according to government officials.676 Official reporting on the final number of fatalities, however, was inconsistent, according to the CRSS.677 Subsequent security operations included house raids, assaults on women and children, mass detentions and other abuses, according to the Human Rights Council of Balochistan (HRCB). Moreover, the organisation mentioned the enforced disappearances of 100 individuals detained as 'suspects' in the context of these security operations.678

At least 15 people were killed and more than 30 injured in a suicide attack on a rally of the Balochistan National Party (BNP) in Quetta in September 2025.679 ISPP claimed responsibility for the attack,680 stating that the BNP's 'nationalist and democratic style of politics', violated Islamic law.681 The bomb reportedly detonated in a parking area

after the end of the rally when people were leaving the area.682

In March 2025, the BLA hijacked the Jaffar Express train with more than 400 passengers, including at least 100 members of the security forces, on board, travelling from Quetta to Peshawar. After bombing the tracks, armed men entered the rain and took the passengers hostage, demanding the release of Baloch political prisoners or otherwise killing the hostages. The siege ended after more than 30 hours with 300 hostages released and 21 civilians, 4 soldiers and 33 insurgents killed. There remained, however, some uncertainty about the remaining passengers and the unfolding of the attack.683

At least four children attending a military-run school, and two adults were killed in a suicide bomb attack on a school bus in Khuzdar district in May 2025. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.684

From 1 November 2024 to 24 April 2026, ACLED reported 2 755 security incidents in Balochistan: 853 were coded as battles, 607 as explosions/remote violence and 1 295 as incidents of violence against civilians. Kech district registered the highest number of security incidents, in particular violence against civilians (329).685

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Figure 3: Evolution of security events coded ‘battles’, ‘explosions/remote violence’ and ‘violence against civilians’ in Balochistan province between 1 November 2024 and 24 April 2026, based on ACLED data686

Fatalities

From 1 November 2024 to 24 April 2026 ACLED reported 3 391 fatalities.687

Civilian casualties

PICSS recorded 254 civilian deaths and 433 injured in 2025.688 The source noted a significant increase in targeted killings (80, compared to 44 in 2024), particularly directed against civilians, tribal elders, political actors and persons related to the state or economic activity.689

On the other hand, according to an expert quoted by Al Jazeera, the government frequently responded to insurgents’ attack with military force, thereby often targeting innocent civilians without evidence that they had links to armed groups.690

Impact on infrastructure

Assaults by Baloch insurgent groups included the seizing and burning of government buildings, roadblocks and sieges, and the destruction of civil registration infrastructure such as National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) offices.691 Baloch

insurgent groups also targeted CPEC-related infrastructure projects.692 Dawn and Arab News reported on repeated attacks on railway infrastructure, including the Jaffar Express train.693 A major gas pipeline running through the outskirts of Quetta was blown up in March 2026, leading to the suspension of gas supplies to the city and other parts of the province.694 BLA later claimed responsibility for the attack.695 Security forces demolished houses and property owned by political figures and civilians during military operations across Balochistan in February 2026, according to HRCB.696 The Balochistan Post reported that houses, fields and infrastructure were destroyed or damaged by security forces in the context of military operations in the Zehri area in September 2025.697

Displacement and return

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