

# Country Analysis Report

Edition 51

Special Edition | Commemorating International Mine Awareness Day

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# Executive Summary

Pakistan continues to face a critical landmine crisis, particularly in conflict-affected border areas. Although state authorities claim no new mines have been deployed, civilian casualties—especially among children—persist due to leftover explosives from past conflicts and the actions of non-state armed groups. The report emphasizes the urgent need for Pakistan to join the Mine Ban Treaty and establish a dedicated national mine action center.

In the power sector, seven Independent Power Producers (IPPs) have proposed a tariff reduction contingent upon the withdrawal of ongoing legal proceedings. While the offer promises consumer relief and potential savings, it also raises serious concerns about accountability and regulatory integrity. The evolving negotiation reflects broader tensions in balancing economic efficiency with governance oversight. Concurrently, the illegal influx of Iranian high-speed diesel has re-emerged as a significant economic drain, costing the exchequer Rs1.5 billion daily. This undercuts anti-smuggling gains and disrupts the domestic petroleum market, compelling urgent reform in enforcement and trade controls.

On the fiscal front, Pakistan reached a staff-level agreement with the IMF for a \$1.3 billion disbursement under a new climate resilience program. This agreement—complemented by improved macroeconomic indicators such as a notable drop in inflation—offers cautious optimism. However, the IMF has warned of lingering risks, especially from global economic volatility. The economic review further notes modest GDP growth of 1.73% in Q2 FY2024-25, propelled by services and agriculture, despite continued contraction in industrial output. However, political decisions—such as the Prime Minister’s Eid-time power tariff reduction—have prompted scrutiny over fiscal sustainability and transparency in policy implementation.

Politically, PTI’s overtures toward dialogue signal a potential recalibration of opposition strategy amid systemic instability. Meanwhile, controversies surrounding constitutional legitimacy—exemplified by legal challenges to the Deputy Prime Minister’s post—highlight ongoing institutional strains.

Balochistan remains a focal point of both security and human rights crises. The arrest of activist Dr. Mahrang Baloch, coupled with targeted killings of laborers and law enforcement, illustrates the state’s coercive posture and the volatility of regional dissent. Parallel to this, the Federal Shariat Court’s ruling affirming women’s inheritance rights represents a significant, albeit enforcement-dependent, judicial development. On the diplomatic front, Pakistan finds itself under heightened international scrutiny. The U.S. has imposed new export restrictions and proposed religious freedom-related sanctions, exacerbating Islamabad’s strategic balancing act between global and regional powers. Additionally, journalist arrests under newly amended cybercrime laws signal growing repression in the digital media space, raising serious concerns regarding press freedom.

# The Hidden Killers

Raising Awareness on International Mine Awareness Day

On International Mine Awareness Day, the world turns its attention to a silent but deadly threat—landmines. These indiscriminate weapons continue to claim lives long after conflicts end, leaving behind a legacy of devastation. In Pakistan, the situation remains critical, with landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) endangering civilians, especially children, in border regions like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

Pakistan recorded 135 landmine casualties in 2017—the highest in the world, accounting for [28% of global landmine deaths](#). The contamination stems from past wars with India, the Soviet-Afghan conflict, and ongoing insurgencies. Despite official claims that no new mines have been laid by the military since 2002, regions such as [South Waziristan and North Waziristan remain heavily affected](#). The lack of a formal mine action center exacerbates the crisis, as independent de-mining operations are restricted, and civilian casualties continue to rise. In [recent years](#), the use of landmines in Pakistan has primarily been attributed to non-state armed groups (NSAGs), particularly in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. While the Pakistan Army maintains that it has not laid new mines since the early 2000s and uses them only for defense purposes along the India border, incidents involving landmine casualties—especially among civilians—continue to rise. Media reports and civil society organizations have documented a significant increase in landmine-related incidents, with many resulting from devices laid by NSAGs. Despite public outcry and demonstrations by victims, calls for systematic mine clearance and victim support have yet to yield substantial government action.

[Ten-year-old Uzair Khan](#) was herding goats when he stepped on a landmine near the Afghan border. The explosion cost him an eye and most of his fingers. His father, Sultan Khan, devastated by the incident, received financial aid for initial treatment but worries about the lifelong care his son will need. Similarly, 12-year-old Raheela Bibi lost both hands in a mine blast while playing outside. Her family, unable to afford prosthetics, urges the government to take responsibility for victims. Pakistan is not a signatory to the [Mine Ban Treaty](#), yet international [humanitarian law prohibits the use of weapons that cause indiscriminate harm](#). While military demining teams are operational, there is little transparency about their efforts. [UNICEF](#) and local activists continue to raise alarms, emphasizing that children constitute more than half of landmine victims.

Pakistan must prioritize acceding to the Mine Ban Treaty, establish a national mine action center, and launch large-scale demining operations. Public awareness campaigns, risk education in schools, and victim rehabilitation programs are essential. Every unexploded mine represents a potential tragedy—one that can be prevented through collective action and international cooperation. No child should mistake an explosive for a toy, and no family should suffer due to these hidden killers so let's amplify the voices of survivors and push for a landmine-free Pakistan.

# Economic Outlook

## Seven IPPs Offer Tariff Reduction and Rs 11 Billion Waiver in Exchange for Legal Case Withdrawals:

In a significant development for Pakistan's power sector, seven independent power producers (IPPs) have proposed a reduction of up to **50 paisa per unit** in electricity tariffs and a waiver of **Rs11 billion** in late payment surcharges. However, this offer comes with a crucial condition: the government must withdraw all ongoing legal cases and investigations into alleged excessive profits. The proposal, presented before the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA), reflects a broader negotiation effort between the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) and IPPs to restructure power agreements, ensuring long-term savings for consumers. NEPRA had initiated suo motu proceedings to examine the financial dealings of these IPPs, prompting a legal battle that saw multiple challenges filed in the Islamabad High Court.

The CPPA, supporting the IPPs' petition, has assured that savings from fuel and operation & maintenance (O&M) cost recoveries will be shared with the government to provide relief to consumers. Notably, negotiations with **29 IPPs** have so far yielded financial benefits worth **Rs950 billion** over the lifetime of the power plants. This ongoing renegotiation process aims to address longstanding concerns about high-capacity payments and expensive power purchase agreements that have burdened Pakistan's electricity consumers. However, the transparency of these agreements remains a critical issue, with some IPPs, such as Halmore Power, opting not to participate in the revised tariff discussions. Discussions during NEPRA's hearing also covered exchange rate adjustments, the 'take-and-pay' mechanism, and insurance caps, all crucial aspects of Pakistan's power sector reforms.

This latest development highlights the complex interplay between regulatory oversight, legal disputes, and economic imperatives in Pakistan's power sector. While a reduction in electricity tariffs offers potential relief to consumers facing skyrocketing energy bills, the conditionality of the IPPs' offer raises concerns about accountability and governance. The ultimate decision by NEPRA will set a precedent for future negotiations, determining whether financial concessions can be achieved without compromising regulatory integrity. As Pakistan grapples with energy sector inefficiencies and circular debt exceeding **Rs2.6 trillion**, the resolution of such disputes will be instrumental in ensuring sustainable and affordable electricity for the nation.



Source: The News



## Smuggled High-Speed Diesel Costs Pakistan Rs1.5 Billion Daily:

Despite stringent anti-smuggling measures, Pakistan is witnessing a resurgence of illegally imported Iranian high-speed diesel, resulting in an estimated daily loss of **Rs1.5 billion** in potential tax revenue. The government's crackdown, which included joint checkpoints, digital petrol pump monitoring, and a seafront task force, initially resulted in a **340% surge in legal trade**. However, the Oil Companies Advisory Council (OCAC) has raised concerns over renewed smuggling, citing a 6% decline in diesel sales and a projected 5% drop in motor spirit sales in March 2025. Illicit fuel, including adulterated motor spirit sold at Rs160 per litre—far below the official Rs255.63 per litre price—is further disrupting the domestic petroleum market.

The OCAC has urged the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to intensify efforts against illegal fuel trade by shutting down unlicensed retail sites and strengthening border controls. The smuggling of Iranian diesel not only undermines legal businesses but also reduces official fuel demand during the peak agricultural season, impacting national revenue. Additionally, the unchecked import of white spirit, commonly used to dilute diesel, is exacerbating the crisis. Addressing these challenges could potentially restore 4,000-8,000 metric tons of fuel sales daily, helping to stabilize the energy sector and curb financial losses.



Source: Profit Pakistan

## IMF Reaches Staff-Level Deal with Pakistan for \$1.3 Billion Disbursement:

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has reached a staff-level agreement with Pakistan, unlocking a fresh **\$1.3 billion loan** under a new climate resilience program spanning 28 months. This deal, pending IMF board approval, also marks the first review of the country's ongoing \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) bailout, allowing Pakistan to access an additional \$1 billion, bringing total disbursements under the program to \$2 billion. The agreement comes at a critical time as Islamabad prepares for its annual budget in June, signaling continued IMF support for Pakistan's economic recovery.

Pakistan's economic outlook has improved in recent months, with inflation dropping to 1.5% in February 2025—its lowest level in nearly a decade—after **reaching 40% in May 2023**. The IMF credited Pakistan's macroeconomic stabilization efforts, citing improved financial conditions, narrowing sovereign spreads, and stronger external balances.

However, the lender also warned of "elevated downside risks," including geopolitical shocks, global financial tightening, and rising protectionism, which could threaten the country's fragile economic gains.

## **Pakistan's Economy Sees Modest Growth Despite Industrial Challenges:**

Pakistan's GDP grew by **1.73%** in the second quarter (October-December) of FY2024-25, driven primarily by the services and agriculture sectors, despite a slight contraction in industry, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). The services sector expanded by **2.57%**, benefiting from a slowdown in inflation, which positively impacted finance, insurance, and public administration.

Agriculture posted a modest **1.1% growth**, though the crops sector saw a notable contraction of 5.38% due to sharp declines in cotton, maize, rice, and sugarcane production. The industrial sector, though still in decline, showed signs of improvement compared to the previous year, contracting by only 0.18%.

The National Accounts Committee (NAC) also revised the GDP growth for Q1 FY2023-24, increasing it from **0.92% to 1.34%**, reflecting upward adjustments in the services and industrial sectors. In Q2 FY 2024-25, large-scale manufacturing (LSM) declined by 2.86%, with industries like sugar, cement, and iron and steel contributing to the downturn. Mining and quarrying activities also contracted by 3.29% due to lower production levels.

However, the slowdown in consumer price index-based inflation provided some relief to key service industries. The mixed economic performance highlights the need for targeted policy interventions to support industrial growth while sustaining gains in the services and agriculture sectors.

## **PM Shehbaz's "Eid Gift" Power Tariff Cut:**

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's announcement of a **Rs7.41 per unit** cut in electricity tariffs may appear as a generous relief measure, but it raises serious concerns about long-term sustainability and economic prudence. The timing of the announcement – just before Eid and following intense pressure to meet IMF conditions – suggests a politically motivated move designed to pacify public frustration rather than implement genuine structural reform.

Despite claims of successful negotiations with the IMF and Independent Power Producers, there remains a troubling lack of transparency and independent verification, casting doubt on the actual economic impact and feasibility of these measures.

Moreover, the government's decision to withhold a significant petroleum price reduction and instead shift the financial impact onto electricity subsidies reflects a misalignment of priorities – potentially benefiting higher consumption users over low-income households.

The repeated promises of cracking down on power theft and reforming DISCOs echo years of unfulfilled pledges, making this announcement feel more like repackaged rhetoric than a concrete shift in policy. Without addressing the root causes of inefficiency and corruption in the power sector, this relief package may provide temporary comfort but risks deepening the already dire circular debt crisis in the long run.

# Political Updates

## A Pragmatic Turn: PTI Signals Openness for Dialogue:

In a significant political development, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has expressed its willingness to engage in dialogue with the country's establishment, underlining a pragmatic approach amid Pakistan's deepening political and economic instability. PTI Secretary General [Salman Akram Raja](#) made it clear that while the party is open to talks, it will do so without compromising on its principles or offering an apology for the events of May 9, 2023. By stating that they are ready to negotiate with "those blocking democracy and the Constitution," PTI repositions itself as a party seeking to stabilize the national situation through dialogue rather than confrontation. Their insistence that any negotiation will ultimately be guided by Imran Khan further reinforces the centrality of the party's agenda.

Azam Swati's renewed public messaging reiterates that PTI's readiness for talks is not a sign of capitulation but a commitment to national interest. By clarifying that engagement should not be mistaken for a backdoor deal, Swati positions the party as both firm in its ideological stance and flexible in its methods.

## LHC Reserves Verdict on Ishaq Dar's Controversial Appointment as Deputy PM:

In a development stirring legal and constitutional debate, the Lahore High Court (LHC) has reserved its verdict on a petition challenging the appointment of Ishaq Dar as Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister. [Filed by citizen Ashba Kamran](#), the petition contends that the position of Deputy Prime Minister does not exist in the Constitution of Pakistan and that Dar's appointment—while he continues to serve as a senator—is therefore invalid. The case, heard by a two-member bench led by Justice Chaudhry Iqbal, centers on concerns over the legality of creating powerful, unelected offices that may bypass constitutional frameworks.

While the federal government, through the Additional Attorney General, defended the prime minister's prerogative to appoint a deputy, critics argue this sets a dangerous precedent by normalizing extra-constitutional positions. The challenge has drawn attention from across the political spectrum, with PTI leader Sher Afzal Marwat also filing a similar petition in the Islamabad High Court. The outcome of this case could significantly influence how political power is structured in future administrations and may reaffirm—or reshape—the constitutional limits of executive authority in Pakistan.



Source: ARY News

### **Dr. Abdul Malik Urges Nawaz Sharif to Step Up for Balochistan:**

Former Balochistan Chief Minister Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch met with PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif in Lahore on Wednesday, calling on him to [play an active role](#) in addressing the province's deep-rooted political and economic challenges. Speaking to the media alongside Khawaja Saad Rafique, Dr. Malik said he had urged Nawaz Sharif to spend time in Balochistan and engage directly with its political leadership. Stressing that the province's issues are political in nature, Dr. Malik reiterated the need for dialogue over force, and highlighted how Balochistan continues to be sidelined in national priorities.

While PML-N leaders assured support, many in Balochistan remain skeptical of such promises translating into action. Historically, mainstream political parties have failed to meaningfully engage with the province beyond statements and symbolic visits.

Dr. Malik's outreach reflects a growing urgency among Baloch leaders for genuine political inclusion and development, but whether this call will be answered with seriousness or used for political optics remains to be seen.



Source: ARY News

## **Social and Humanitarian Focus**

### **WHO and Pakistan Urge Urgent Investment to End Tuberculosis:**

On World Tuberculosis (TB) Day 2025, the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) and the Government of Pakistan called for immediate investment to eradicate TB, a disease affecting over 686,000 people and causing 47,000 deaths annually in Pakistan. The country bears 73% of the TB burden in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, making it the fifth most affected nation globally.

Under the theme "Yes, We Can End TB – Commit, Invest, Deliver," officials emphasized the importance of expanding diagnosis, treatment, and prevention efforts. Special Secretary for the Ministry of National Health Services, Mirza Nasir-ud-Din Mashud, highlighted the government's commitment through [1,900 diagnostic centers](#), free treatment services, and a National Strategic Plan aimed at accelerating progress towards a TB-free Pakistan.

Pakistan has made notable progress in TB treatment coverage, reaching 490,000 patients in 2024 compared to 331,800 in 2015. The country has expanded WHO-recommended rapid molecular diagnostics, with over [530 GeneXpert sites](#) improving early detection.



Efforts also include updating the National TB Guidelines, integrating TB services with mental health and maternal health programs, and strengthening the healthcare workforce. WHO Representative Dr. Dapeng Luo reaffirmed WHO's support, stressing that "Tuberculosis is curable and preventable, and together we can end it." WHO and the Pakistani government urge collective action from individuals, communities, and international partners to sustain progress, prevent setbacks, and safeguard public health security.



Source: Pexels

### **Journalist Farhan Mallick's Arrest Raises Press Freedom Concerns:**

The recent [arrest of journalist Farhan Mallick](#), founder of Raftar TV and former news director of Samaa TV, has ignited concerns over press freedom in Pakistan. Detained by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) under the [Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act \(Peca\)](#) and defamation laws, Mallick faces allegations of disseminating "anti-state" content through his YouTube channel. His remand for four days, granted by a Karachi court, follows accusations that his platform ran a campaign against state institutions. However, legal experts argue that the case lacks specificity, as no clear evidence, such as URLs or timestamps, has been provided to substantiate the charges. The application of [Section 26A—added to Peca](#) in January 2025—also raises questions, as the initial inquiry against Mallick reportedly began before the amendment was enacted.

This development is part of a broader pattern of shrinking media freedoms in Pakistan, where journalists frequently face legal action, intimidation, or even disappearances for their reporting. Mallick's arrest has been widely condemned by human rights organizations and media watchdogs, including the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, which urged authorities to curb the overreach of investigative agencies. Pakistan ranks 152nd in the [global press freedom index](#), reflecting the increasing restrictions on independent journalism. With digital platforms becoming the last frontier for critical reporting, the use of cybercrime laws to target dissenting voices signals a worrying trend.

If laws are retroactively applied without clear evidence, it sets a dangerous precedent for other journalists operating in Pakistan's already fragile media landscape.

Rights groups continue to call for Mallick's fair trial and the protection of journalistic freedoms, urging the government to uphold its commitments to free speech and independent media.



Source: GEO TV

### **Landmark FSC Ruling Declares Deprivation of Women's Inheritance as 'Un-Islamic'**

In a historic verdict, the [Federal Shariat Court \(FSC\)](#) of Pakistan has ruled that any custom depriving women of their inheritance rights is illegal and un-Islamic. The decision, authored by Justice Dr. Syed Muhammad Anwar and endorsed by a four-member bench, specifically addressed the widespread practices such as 'Chaddar' or 'Parchi' in Bannu district, where women were either denied their rightful share or coerced into accepting a lesser portion through jirgas. This ruling reinforces the constitutional and religious obligation to protect women's property rights, urging provincial authorities to take criminal action under Section 498-A of the Pakistan Penal Code against violators.

Despite legal provisions such as the [Muslim Family Laws Ordinance \(1961\)](#) and the [Criminal Law \(Third Amendment\) Act \(2011\)](#), reports indicate that nearly 80% of women in Pakistan face barriers in claiming their inheritance. The core issue lies in deeply ingrained patriarchal traditions, including 'Haq Bakhshwana,' where women are pressured to forfeit their property rights in favor of male relatives.

This ruling serves as a crucial step toward dismantling such practices, but effective enforcement remains a challenge due to weak legal awareness, social resistance, and bureaucratic inefficiencies. Experts emphasize the need for stronger advocacy, widespread legal education, and active judicial oversight to translate this judgment into tangible societal change.

By criminalizing the deprivation of women's inheritance, the FSC has reaffirmed the Quranic mandate that ensures equitable property distribution. However, real progress will depend on rigorous implementation, community awareness campaigns, and strict legal action against offenders.

Organizations working on gender justice, including grassroots initiatives, must now leverage this ruling to empower women with knowledge and legal recourse. If enforced effectively, this decision could mark a turning point in the struggle for women's economic rights, setting a precedent for broader reforms in gender equality across Pakistan.

# Security and Governance

## Escalating State Repression in Balochistan: A Crisis at a Breaking Point

The arrest of [Dr. Mahrang Baloch](#), a leading voice for Baloch rights and head of the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC), has intensified the long-standing conflict between the Pakistani state and the Baloch people. On March 22, in a [violent pre-dawn raid](#), security forces detained Dr. Baloch alongside other activists, falsely charging them with terrorism and murder. The crackdown followed mass protests in Quetta demanding justice for enforced disappearances, during which police opened fire, killing at least three demonstrators, including a 12-year-old boy.

[The state's response](#)—a sweeping communication blackout, mass arrests, and the use of excessive force—has drawn sharp criticism from human rights organizations. However, this is not an isolated event but part of a systemic campaign of repression in Balochistan, where thousands have been forcibly disappeared over the years. With protests now erupting across the province and spilling into Karachi and Islamabad, the situation underscores the Pakistani state's growing reliance on violence to suppress dissent, rather than addressing the deep-seated grievances of the Baloch people.

The latest state-led violence mirrors past efforts to stifle Baloch nationalism through force, but history has repeatedly shown that repression breeds resistance. As international organizations such as [Amnesty International](#) condemn the violence, calls for accountability are mounting.

Yet, without sustained global pressure—through sanctions, independent investigations, and diplomatic action—Pakistan is unlikely to change course. If left unchecked, the crisis risks escalating into a full-scale insurgency, with devastating consequences for both Balochistan and the broader region.

The Pakistani government faces a choice: continue its path of militarization and oppression or engage in genuine dialogue to resolve the long-standing conflict. The coming weeks will determine whether Balochistan remains a site of unchecked state brutality or if a new chapter of political reckoning and justice can begin.



Source: The Diplomat



## Rising Violence in Balochistan: Labourers and Policemen Targeted in Separate Attacks

Balochistan witnessed another wave of deadly violence as [four labourers from Punjab and four policemen](#) were brutally gunned down in separate incidents in Kalat and Noshki districts. Officials reported that unidentified attackers shot the labourers, who were borewell drillers from Sadiqabad, in the Malangzai area of Kalat. Meanwhile, in Noshki, assailants on motorcycles opened fire on a patrolling police vehicle, killing four officers on the spot. These attacks come amidst an escalating security crisis in the province, where targeted killings of labourers and security personnel have become alarmingly frequent.

Ethnically motivated violence has plagued Balochistan for years, with Punjabi workers increasingly becoming targets. Over the past decade, several incidents have seen workers and travelers executed after being identified by their ethnic backgrounds. In 2024 alone, at least [30 labourers and travelers from Punjab](#) were killed in separate attacks across the province. The pattern of violence underscores a broader challenge, as militant groups continue to exploit grievances, targeting non-Baloch individuals and security forces. Despite strong condemnations from top officials, including President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the cycle of violence persists, with limited success in curbing such incidents.

The recurring attacks raise pressing questions about the effectiveness of counterterrorism efforts and the security of vulnerable communities in Balochistan. While government leaders have vowed to bring perpetrators to justice, lasting peace remains elusive. Experts argue that addressing the root causes—ranging from political grievances to economic disparities—is crucial to preventing further bloodshed. As tensions mount, ensuring the safety of labourers and law enforcement officers must be prioritized, requiring a holistic approach that combines intelligence-driven operations with long-term reconciliation efforts.

# Diplomatic Landscape

## Trump's Trade Tsunami: 29% Tariff on Pakistan Sparks Economic and Diplomatic Alarm

In a dramatic escalation of his "America First" trade policy, US President Donald Trump has slapped a punishing [29% tariff on Pakistani imports](#), claiming Islamabad levies a 58% duty on US goods. Unveiled in the White House Rose Garden, Trump's sweeping tariff order also introduced a baseline 10% levy on all imports and significantly higher duties on key partners, including a staggering 34% on China.

The move, dubbed a "declaration of independence" by Trump, has jolted global markets, sending Asian stocks tumbling and prompting warnings of a global recession. Economists say the effective US import tax has now soared to rates not seen since 1910, while critics argue the tariffs will raise living costs and hurt working-class Americans the most.

Pakistan, now caught in the crosshairs of both diplomatic and economic pressure from Washington – including religious freedom-related sanctions proposed by a US panel earlier this week – faces compounded challenges. The timing of Trump’s tariff surge appears strategic, intensifying scrutiny on Pakistan’s domestic policies while leveraging economic coercion. Analysts note that these measures could have long-term ramifications for South Asia’s trade dynamics and US influence in the region, especially as China and India recalibrate their economic alliances. Amid global dismay and congressional pushback, Trump remains adamant that protectionist policies will revitalize American manufacturing – even as critics warn of deepening global instability.

### **US Religious Freedom Panel Urges Sanctions on Pakistan and India’s RAW Over Minority Rights Abuses:**

In a stark indictment of religious freedom violations in South Asia, the [United States Commission on International Religious Freedom \(USCIRF\)](#) has recommended targeted sanctions against Pakistani officials and India’s Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) for egregious abuses. [The commission’s 2024 report](#) outlines worsening conditions in both countries, highlighting systematic persecution of minorities in Pakistan – particularly Christians, Hindus, Ahmadis, and Shias – through harsh blasphemy laws, mob violence, and forced conversions, with minimal legal accountability. It calls for the US to redesignate Pakistan as a “Country of Particular Concern” and enter a binding agreement to implement critical reforms, including repealing discriminatory laws and ensuring justice for victims of religiously motivated crimes.

India, while not officially designated a CPC in the past year, also faces serious criticism in the report for rising violence, state-backed hate speech, and discriminatory policies targeting Muslims and Christians. The panel cited Hindu nationalist rhetoric propagated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP, alongside troubling incidents such as forced conversions and the revocation of Kashmir’s special status. USCIRF’s unprecedented call for sanctions against RAW – accused of plotting assassinations of Sikh separatists abroad – underscores growing concerns about India’s extraterritorial suppression tactics. However, analysts remain skeptical about the implementation of these recommendations, given Washington’s strategic partnership with New Delhi and its geopolitical calculus in the Indo-Pacific region.

### **US Lawmakers Introduce Bill Seeking Sanctions on Pakistani Officials:**

A bipartisan bill, [the Pakistan Democracy Act](#), has been introduced in the US House of Representatives, calling for sanctions on Pakistani officials over alleged human rights violations, including the treatment of former Prime Minister Imran Khan. Spearheaded by Republican Joe Wilson and Democrat Jimmy Panetta, the bill seeks to impose restrictions under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, which allows the US to sanction individuals accused of human rights abuses.

If passed, the legislation would require the Trump administration to impose sanctions on Pakistan's army chief within 180 days unless significant steps are taken to improve the country's human rights record. This move reflects the growing influence of Pakistani diaspora activism in US politics. Since Khan's removal in 2022, PTI supporters in the US have lobbied lawmakers, organized protests, and urged intervention. In 2024, a resolution urging Pakistan to uphold democratic norms passed in the House with 98% bipartisan support, though the Biden administration did not act on it. Despite Pakistan's strategic importance in counterterrorism and regional security, the bill highlights Washington's increasing scrutiny of Islamabad's governance and military influence. Analysts suggest that the bill's passage remains uncertain, as the US values Pakistan as a key security ally, particularly after Islamabad's cooperation in countering threats like IS-K.

While the bill is unlikely to be swiftly enacted, it signals Washington's shifting tone on democracy and human rights in Pakistan. If similar pressure continues, Islamabad may have to engage in diplomatic maneuvers to defuse tensions. Pakistan's leadership must carefully navigate these concerns, balancing its relationship with Washington while addressing democratic concerns at home. The bill's introduction underscores a broader trend—US lawmakers increasingly linking foreign aid and partnerships with human rights benchmarks, making it crucial for Pakistan to respond proactively.

### **Pakistan Added to US Export Blacklist Amid Rising Tech Restrictions:**

In a significant move, the United States has placed Pakistan on its export blacklist, alongside [80 other entities](#), primarily from China, Taiwan, Iran, South Africa, and the UAE. The US Commerce Department's decision targets companies engaged in high-performance computing, AI, and quantum technologies, which Washington believes could bolster military capabilities. [Over 50 of the blacklisted entities are from China](#), including subsidiaries of Inspur Group, a leading cloud computing firm already under US restrictions since 2023. The US alleges that these firms contribute to China's development of hypersonic weapons, advanced AI, and supercomputers. Howard Lutnick, US Commerce Secretary, emphasized that American technology should not be exploited to "threaten national security." With Pakistan's inclusion, the move signals a heightened US focus on monitoring Islamabad's technological partnerships, particularly those with Beijing.

This development could strain Pakistan's access to critical technologies, impacting sectors like defense, telecommunications, and industrial computing. Historically, US blacklisted firms struggle to secure advanced semiconductors, cloud computing resources, and AI-based solutions due to strict licensing requirements. For instance, Huawei and Sugon, both previously added to the Entity List, faced severe supply chain disruptions and US sanctions. Meanwhile, China has condemned the move, labeling it an attempt to politicize and weaponize global technology trade. With US-Pakistan relations already in flux, this decision may force Islamabad to diversify its tech alliances, possibly leaning further toward Chinese or alternative global suppliers to mitigate economic and technological risks.



# Reading Recommendations

- The Fight for Transparent Access to Information in Pakistan ([Click Here](#))
- Life without Autonomy: Understanding Our Culture of Dependency ([Click Here](#))
- Prioritizing Citizens Beyond the Ballot ([Click Here](#))
- Solving the corruption challenge: The key may lie with the citizens. ([Click Here](#))
- Citizens' Inclusion and Accountability is the Key to Improved Governance and Efficient Public Sector Institutions ([Click Here](#))
- Digital Community Policing ([Click Here](#))
- Privatization of Schools in Punjab ([Click Here](#))
- Water Governance Challenges in Pakistan ([Click Here](#))
- Consumer Protection in Pakistan ([Click Here](#))

