

POLICY BRIEF



The Compliance Curve

Measuring Institutional Adaptation to Human Rights
Standards in Pakistan

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 3

Context and Current State of Compliance with International Human Rights Standards and National Laws 4

Reporting to UN: Treaty Bodies, Universal Periodic Review, Special Rapporteurs & Individual Complaints 11

Human Rights Protection Framework in Pakistan 18

Challenges and Opportunities for Institutional Integration of Human Rights 20

Recommendations for Strengthening Compliance and Institutional Integration 20

Bibliography..... 22

Executive Summary

Pakistan has formally aligned its legal and institutional frameworks with international human rights standards, but its compliance trajectory reflects a gap between commitment and delivery. The country has ratified or acceded to seven of the nine core United Nations (UN) human rights treaties including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).

Pakistan also benefits from preferential trade access to the European Union (EU) under the Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+), which further obliges implementation of 27 human rights, labor, governance, and environmental conventions. The Constitution provides a strong normative basis, with Articles 8–28 enshrining fundamental rights, and successive legislative reforms such as the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act, 2022, the Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act, 2021, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018, and provincial child and women protection laws signal formal progress. Yet, these gains are undercut by uneven enforcement, weak institutions, and cultural and political resistance.

Pakistan’s reporting record to international mechanisms illustrates partial alignment. The country has submitted periodic reports to most treaty bodies, including ICCPR (reviewed in 2024), ICESCR (pending review), ICERD (reviewed in 2024), CEDAW (last reviewed in 2020), and CRC (review pending). However, delays, under-resourced mechanisms such as the Treaty Implementation Cell (TIC), fragmented data systems, and poor provincial coordination undermine credibility. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR), where Pakistan completed four cycles including in 2023, reflects consistent participation and acceptance of many recommendations, but limited follow-through and action planning. Engagement with UN Special Rapporteurs (SRs) remains selective as communications are acknowledged but visit requests on sensitive areas such as freedom of religion, peaceful assembly, and enforced disappearances are stalled, highlighting a defensive posture. Moreover, Pakistan has not accepted any treaty-based individual complaint mechanisms, limiting avenues for international redress.

The EU’s GSP+ monitoring frames Pakistan’s compliance as a mix of strong legislative activity and weak practical outcomes. Brussels acknowledges reforms in areas such as gender-based violence, child protection, torture prevention, and climate governance. However, concerns persist over enforced disappearances, misuse of blasphemy laws, fair trial guarantees, civic space restrictions, and labor rights enforcement. The upcoming GSP+ review in 2025 places significant pressure on Pakistan to demonstrate measurable improvements, not just legal enactments.

Domestically, Pakistan has established National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) including the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), and provincial commissions, alongside parliamentary committees and judicial innovations such as gender desks and child-friendly courts. However, frequent leadership gaps, politicized appointments, budgetary shortfalls, and limited autonomy compromise effectiveness. While the NCHR’s 2024 “A-status” accreditation from the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) marks progress, most commissions remain underperforming, particularly on minority and child rights. Civil society organizations (CSOs) play a vital role in shadow reporting and advocacy but face shrinking civic space, fragmented coordination, and tokenistic state engagement.

The overall compliance curve places Pakistan in an intermediate zone, which is not one of complete compliance or outright defiance, but of partial adaptation where normative frameworks exist without full enforcement. To move towards substantive compliance, Pakistan must establish a permanent national reporting and data system integrating treaty obligations, UPR follow-up, and GSP+ monitoring. Harmonization of domestic laws with

international standards must be matched by credible enforcement, especially on torture, gender-based violence, enforced disappearances, and misuse of blasphemy laws. Strengthening the independence and capacity of NHRIs, embedding CSO participation, and protecting media and civic freedoms are essential for accountability.

Pakistan's challenge is less about absence of laws and more about the credibility of their implementation. Bridging this compliance gap requires political will, institutional capacity, and an adaptive framework that transforms treaty ratifications and legislative reforms into tangible protections for all citizens. Sustained reform in this direction will not only reinforce Pakistan's international credibility but also strengthen its democratic and developmental trajectory.

Context and Current State of Compliance with International Human Rights Standards and National Laws

1.1 International Obligations

UN treaties: Pakistan has formally committed to institutionalizing international human rights standards through its ratification or accession to seven of the nine core UN human rights treaties. By doing so, the country has accepted the obligation to align its national legal and institutional frameworks with globally recognized human rights norms.

Pakistan has ratified four of the core treaties i.e. ICCPR, ICESCR, CRC, and the CRPD¹ (UN OHCHR, n.d.). According to UN database, the country has also ratified two optional protocols to the CRC. Ratification means that Pakistan initially signed these treaties when they were open for signature and later gave them formal approval. From the date of ratification, the treaties became legally binding on Pakistan.

Table 1: Treaties Ratified by Pakistan

Sr. No.	Treaty	Treaty Year	Signed On	Ratified On
1	ICCPR – International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	1966	April 17, 2008	June 23, 2010
2	ICESCR – International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	1966	November 3, 2004	April 17, 2008
3	CRC – Convention on the Rights of the Child	1989	September 20, 1990	November 12, 1990
3.1	CRC Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict	2000	September 26, 2001	November 17, 2016
3.2	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	2000	September 26, 2001	July 5, 2011
4	CRPD – Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	2006	September 25, 2008	July 5, 2011

¹ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=131&Lang=EN

In addition to ratification, Pakistan has also acceded to three other core treaties that it did not sign when they were originally open for signature i.e. CEDAW, CAT, and ICERD² (UN OHCHR, n.d.). Accession means Pakistan did not sign these treaties when they were first opened for signature but later accepted them and became a party.

Table 2: Treaties Pakistan acceded to

Sr. No.	Treaty	Treaty Year	Accession Date
1	CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	1979	March 12, 1996
2	CAT – Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	1984	June 23, 2010
3	ICERD – International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	1965	September 21, 1996

While these ratifications and accessions are significant, they came late. Pakistan signed ICCPR and ICESCR decades after their adoption, reflecting the state's tendency to turn to international law during moments of democratic transition. For instance, Pakistan re-engaged with international human rights law after the end of military rule in 1988, and again after the return of civilian government in 2008.

Pakistan has not signed two of the nine core treaties i.e. the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED) and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW)³ (UN OHCHR, n.d.).

Table 3: Treaties Pakistan has not signed

Sr. No.	Treaty	Treaty Year
1	CED – International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance	2006
2	CMW – International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	1990

Besides general reservations on certain articles of almost all ratified or acceded treaties, Pakistan is not party to many optional protocols or sub-treaties of treaties that Pakistan has otherwise ratified or acceded to. Some of the important optional protocols that the country has not agreed to become a party to are following:

Table 4: Optional Protocols signed by Pakistan

Sr. No.	Main Treaty	Optional Protocol	Optional Protocol Year
1	CAT	Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (CAT-OP)	2002

² ibid

³ ibid

2	ICCPR	First Optional Protocol – Individual Complaints Mechanism	1966
3	ICCPR	Second Optional Protocol – Aiming at the Abolition of the Death Penalty	1989
4	CAT	Interstate Communication Procedure (Article 21)	1984

GSP+: Another significant dimension of Pakistan’s international human rights obligations stems from its preferential trade access to EU under GSP+, granted in 2014. This arrangement requires Pakistan to demonstrate concrete progress in implementing 27 international conventions, including those on human rights, labor rights, environmental protection, and good governance. GSP+ thus serves as both an incentive and an external accountability framework reinforcing Pakistan’s treaty commitments. Under the GSP+ framework, Pakistan is obligated to demonstrate tangible progress in implementing the 27 international conventions, including those related to human rights, labor rights, environmental protection, and good governance⁴ (European Commission, n.d.).

Table 5: List of GSP+ conventions

#	Convention	Common Short Name	Sector
1	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	ICCPR	Human rights
2	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	ICESCR	Human rights
3	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	CERD	Human rights
4	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	CEDAW	Human rights
5	Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	CAT	Human rights
6	Convention on the Rights of the Child	CRC	Human rights
7	Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide	Genocide Convention	Human rights
8	International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid	Apartheid Convention	Human rights
9	Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)	ILO 87	Labour
10	Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)	ILO 98	Labour

⁴ https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/pakistan_en

#	Convention	Common Short Name	Sector
11	Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)	ILO 29	Labour
12	Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)	ILO 105	Labour
13	Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)	ILO 100	Labour
14	Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)	ILO 111	Labour
15	Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)	ILO 138	Labour
16	Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)	ILO 182	Labour
17	Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer	Montreal Protocol	Environment
18	Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal	Basel Convention	Environment
19	Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants	Stockholm POPs	Environment
20	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora	CITES	Environment
21	Convention on Biological Diversity	CBD	Environment
22	Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity	Cartagena Protocol	Environment
23	Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	Kyoto Protocol	Environment
24	Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961	1961 Drugs Convention	Good governance (drug control)
25	Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971	1971 Psychotropics	Good governance (drug control)
26	United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988	1988 Illicit Traffic	Good governance (drug control)
27	United Nations Convention against Corruption	UNCAC	Good governance

1.2 National legal and constitutional framework and its alignment with international obligations

Pakistan's legal framework reflects a dual commitment to human rights, one rooted in its constitutional order and the other in its international obligations. The Constitution of Pakistan provides a strong domestic foundation through Articles 8–28, which enshrine a wide spectrum of fundamental rights. These include equality before law, non-discrimination, freedoms of speech, religion, and assembly, as well as due process and protection from

arbitrary detention. Collectively, these provisions align closely with the core principles of international human rights law.

In parallel, as noted above, Pakistan has ratified seven of nine core UN treaties. As a state party, Pakistan is obligated to harmonize its national legal and institutional frameworks with the standards prescribed by these instruments. While constitutional guarantees provide the overarching framework, legislative and policy measures have been introduced to reflect treaty commitments.

In line with its ratification of key human rights treaties, Pakistan has introduced a series of legislative and policy measures to strengthen domestic protections. For instance, following its obligations under the CEDAW, Pakistan enacted the Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2016 to prohibit harmful practices against women, and the Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act, 2021. These reforms complement constitutional guarantees of equality and dignity under Articles 25 and 34⁵ (UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2023).

Similarly, Pakistan's commitment to the CRC is reflected in laws such as the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2013, the Punjab Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2014 to implement Article 25A of the Constitution, and the Juvenile Justice System Act, 2018, which strengthens juvenile protections in line with international standards⁶ (Alternative Report by NCHR, 2025).

In response to the CRPD, Pakistan passed the ICT Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2020 and corresponding provincial laws, ensuring accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities as required under Articles 25 and 37 of the Constitution⁷ (Humanity & Inclusion, 2022).

To meet its obligations under the ICCPR and the CAT, Pakistan enacted the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act, 2022, criminalizing torture by public officials. Pakistan's commendable efforts to clean and complete its electoral rolls through a legislative measure is another example of compliance with ICCPR.

Labour protections under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) are reflected in laws such as the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1992, the Employment of Children Act, 1991, and minimum wage legislation across provinces after the 18th Amendment. These complement constitutional safeguards in Articles 11, 17, and 18.

Pakistan has also taken steps to address issues of equality and non-discrimination in line with ICERD and ICCPR. The National Commission for Human Rights Act, 2012 established a statutory body for human rights oversight, while the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018 expanded protections to marginalized communities. Federal and provincial legislations creating Commissions on the Status of Women have initiated the institutionalization of gender equality mechanisms, while the Sindh Human Rights Commission Act, 2015 established a dedicated provincial body. More recently, the passage of a federal law to establish a Commission on Minority Rights illustrates country's efforts to address systemic discrimination.

Overall, Pakistan's constitutional guarantees provide a strong normative basis for human rights, and ratification of major international treaties reinforces this framework. However, meaningful realization of these rights depends on sustained legislative reforms, effective implementation, and removal of contradictions between domestic laws and

⁵ https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4011840/files/CEDAW_C_PAK_FCO_5-EN.pdf

⁶ <https://nchr.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/NCHR-Submission-on-CRC-2025.pdf>

⁷ https://www.hi-us.org/sn_uploads/country/Country-Card-Pakistan-Internal-2022.pdf

international standards. The country's progress in aligning its legal system with international obligations, while visible, remains incomplete and requires stronger political will and institutional commitment.

Many of the above-mentioned legislations and reforms are also interpreted as part of Pakistan's compliance with the requirements of the EU's GSP+ framework. Table 6 lists Pakistan's legislative progress vis-à-vis compliance with GSP+.

Table 6: Post-GSP+ legislations

Law / Regulation	Level	Most relevant GSP+ convention area(s)
Torture & Custodial Death (Prevention & Punishment) Act, 2022	Federal	CAT, ICCPR (fair trial, humane treatment)
Anti-Rape (Investigation & Trial) Act, 2021	Federal	CEDAW, ICCPR (access to justice, due process)
Criminal Law (Amend.) (Offences in the Name or on Pretext of Honour) Act, 2016	Federal	CEDAW, ICCPR (right to life, non-discrimination)
Criminal Law (Amend.) (Offences Relating to Rape) Act, 2016	Federal	CEDAW, ICCPR
Right of Access to Information Act, 2017	Federal	UNCAC (prevention/transparency), ICCPR (freedom of information)
Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018	Federal	ICCPR, ICESCR, CEDAW-related equality aims, CRPD spirit (non-discrimination)
Hindu Marriage Act, 2017	Federal	ICCPR (family rights), CEDAW (women's marriage/family equality), minority rights
Punjab Sikh Anand Karaj Marriage Act, 2018	Provincial (Punjab)	ICCPR (family & minority rights), CEDAW
Zainab Alert, Response & Recovery Act, 2020	Federal	CRC, ILO C182 (worst forms of child labour—sexual exploitation)
Juvenile Justice System Act, 2018	Federal	CRC, ICCPR (fair trial for children)
National Commission on the Rights of Child Act, 2017	Federal	CRC (institutional framework)
ICT Prohibition of Corporal Punishment Act, 2021	Federal (ICT)	CRC (protection from violence)
Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace (Amendment) Act, 2022	Federal	CEDAW, ILO C111/C100 (non-discrimination/equal remuneration)
Enforcement of Women's Property Rights Act, 2020	Federal	CEDAW, ICCPR/ICESCR (property & equality)

Law / Regulation	Level	Most relevant GSP+ convention area(s)
Punjab Enforcement of Women's Property Rights Act, 2021	Provincial (Punjab)	CEDAW, ICCPR/ICESCR
Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act, 2018	Federal	UNTOC Trafficking Protocol, ILO C29/C105, ICCPR
Prevention of Smuggling of Migrants Act, 2018	Federal	UNTOC Smuggling of Migrants Protocol
Mutual Legal Assistance (Criminal Matters) Act, 2020	Federal	UNCAC, UNTOC (international cooperation)
Anti-Money Laundering (Amendment) Act, 2020	Federal	UNCAC (asset recovery, AML)
Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA), 2016	Federal	ICCPR (expression/privacy—rights framework & limitations)
Pakistan Climate Change Act, 2017	Federal	UNFCCC/Paris, ICESCR (healthy environment link)
Pak-EPA Ban on Polythene Bags Regulations (ICT), 2019	Federal (ICT)	Basel, Stockholm (waste & POPs management policy relevance)
Single-Use Plastics (Prohibition) Regulations (ICT), 2023	Federal (ICT)	Basel/Stockholm (waste & chemicals governance)
National Hazardous Waste Management Policy, 2022	Federal (policy)	Basel (national framework for hazardous waste)
Sindh Home-Based Workers Act, 2018	Provincial (Sindh)	ILO C87/C98 (association/CB for homeworkers), C100/C111
Punjab Bonded Labour System (Abolition) (Amendment) Act, 2018	Provincial (Punjab)	ILO C29/C105 (forced/bonded labour)
Sindh Occupational Safety & Health Act, 2017	Provincial (Sindh)	Labour governance (supports ILO decent-work agenda)
Punjab Occupational Safety & Health Act, 2019	Provincial (Punjab)	Labour governance (supports ILO decent-work agenda)
Sindh Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act, 2017	Provincial (Sindh)	ILO C87/C98 (FOA & collective bargaining)
Punjab Industrial Relations (Amendments), 2019	Provincial (Punjab)	ILO C87/C98
ICT Child Protection Act, 2018	Federal (ICT)	CRC (child protection systems)
ICT Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2020	Federal (ICT)	CRPD

Reporting to UN: Treaty Bodies, Universal Periodic Review, Special Rapporteurs & Individual Complaints

2.1 Periodic reporting to Treaty Bodies

Pakistan's reporting record before UN treaty bodies presents a mixed picture. It submitted reports to CERD in October 2021, with concluding observations issued in September 2024. Its second CESCRR report was filed in May 2023 and is awaiting concluding observations. The second periodic report to the Human Rights Committee for ICCPR was submitted in June 2022 and reviewed, with concluding observations adopted in November 2024. Under CEDAW, Pakistan submitted its sixth periodic report in October 2018, leading to concluding observations in February 2020. The seventh report became due in 2024 that is pending submission. The second report under CAT was filed in 2022 and remains pending consideration. For the CRC, the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports were submitted in 2024 and are pending consideration. Under CRPD, the initial report submitted in 2019 is still pending review. Overall, while some arrears have been cleared, pending reviews and overdue items (e.g., CEDAW's seventh report) continue to reflect gaps in timely compliance with treaty-monitoring obligations.

Treaty Reporting Frequency

Treaty	Initial Report Due	Frequency of Periodic Reports
ICERD (Racial Discrimination)	Within 1 year of ratification	Every 2 years
ICESCR (Economic, Social & Cultural Rights)	Within 2 years	Every 5 years
ICCPR (Civil & Political Rights)	Within 1 year	Every 4 years
CEDAW (Women's Rights)	Within 1 year	Every 4 years
CAT (Torture)	Within 1 year	Every 4 years
CRC (Child Rights)	Within 2 years	Every 5 years
CRPD (Persons with Disabilities)	Within 2 years	Every 4 years

Table 7: Pakistan's reporting status to UN Treaty Bodies

Treaty Body	Last Report Submitted	Concluding Observations	Reporting Status
CERD (Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination)	October 2021 (Cycle XXIV-XXVI)	September 2024	Reported and reviewed
CESCR (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights)	May 2023 (Cycle II)	Pending	Reported awaiting concluding observations
HRC (Human Rights Committee)	June 2022 (2nd Periodic Review)	November 2024	Reported and reviewed
CEDAW (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women)	October 2018 (6th report)	February 2020	Reported and reviewed (7th report became due in 2024)
CAT (Committee against Torture)	2022 (2nd report)	Pending	Report pending consideration

Treaty Body	Last Report Submitted	Concluding Observations	Reporting Status
CRC (Committee on the Rights of the Child)	2024 (6th and 7th Reports)	Pending	Reported pending consideration
CRPD (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities)	2019 (initial report)	Pending	Reported pending consideration

2.1.1 Process of reporting

Treaty reporting is not a formality. It is a state's commitment to transparency and accountability in implementing human rights obligations. While the Treaty Implementation Cell (TIC) was created to streamline reporting, it remains under-resourced and poorly coordinated with provincial authorities. Pakistan's reporting is timely on some instruments like CRC and CEDAW but delayed on ICESCR and CAT.

The existing reporting mechanism is overly dependent on ad hoc inter-ministerial correspondence and lacks sustained political ownership. Without empowered reporting cells in provinces and stronger links with the Bureau of Statistics, treaty compliance will remain inconsistent. Data is the backbone of credible reporting, but Pakistan's system is fragmented, outdated, and resistant to disaggregation. Ministries and provinces often provide figures without harmonization (Pakistan Common Country Analyses by UN, 2020-2024). The absence of reliable data on women, minorities, and marginalized groups is particularly damaging, as it perpetuates invisibility of those most in need of protection. While the TIC circulates templates for inputs, responses are often delayed and anecdotal.

Devolution after the 18th Amendment has further complicated matters, leaving provincial departments underprepared for international obligations. A reliance on surveys rather than integrated administrative records limits the quality of reporting. Donor-supported initiatives have helped digitalize certain data flows, but there is no national framework for human rights statistics. Apart from police department, digitization process is annoyingly slow. The result is a selective narrative that favors the state's position while ignoring ground realities.

2.2 Universal Periodic Review

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a peer-review human rights mechanism conducted under the UN Human Rights Council. Every UN Member State undergoes a comprehensive review of its human rights record approximately every 4.5 years, ensuring universal coverage and equal treatment. The process includes preparation of three key background documents i.e. a National Report by the state, a UN compilation prepared by Organization for Coordination of Humanitarian Relief (OHCHR), and a stakeholder summary reflecting input from NGOs and national institutions⁸ (FIDH, n.d.). During the UPR session, a three-and-a-half-hour interactive dialogue takes place before a Working Group composed of UN Member States, followed by adoption of an Outcome Document in the Council containing recommendations, which the state can either accept or note.

2.2.1 Pakistan's UPR reporting

Pakistan has participated in four UPR cycles—2008, 2012, 2017, and most recently in January 2023. Pakistan has met all UPR reporting timelines across these cycles. Overall, Pakistan received approximately 847

⁸ <https://corporateaccountability.fidh.org/the-guide/intergovernmental-mechanisms/the-united-nations-system-for-the-promotion-and-protection-of-human-rights/the-charter-based-mechanisms/the-universal-periodic-review-upr/>

recommendations. In the 2023 review, a significant number of them were accepted, reflecting active engagement, although precise figures were not publicly detailed⁹ (The Knowledge Forum, n.d.). Constructive feedback during the 2023 session praised Pakistan's efforts on women's rights, minority protections, and progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals, even as concerns were raised about tightened blasphemy laws and limited political space¹⁰ (UN Geneva, 2023).

2.3 Reporting by Special Rapporteurs

Special Rapporteurs (SRs) are independent experts chosen by the UN Human Rights Council. First, people (often lawyers, academics, or rights defenders) apply or are nominated. Then, a UN committee screens them for expertise, independence, and regional balance. Finally, the Human Rights Council appoints them for a limited term (usually 3 years, renewable once). They are unpaid and work in their personal capacity — not as UN staff.

SRs are not country-specific jobs (except in a few cases like Myanmar or North Korea). Instead, most SRs work on themes such as freedom of religion, torture, education, health, or minority rights. They monitor all countries, including Pakistan. Pakistan does not currently have its own national who is serving as an SR. However, Pakistan is subject to their monitoring. For example, SRs on minority rights, religious freedom, or enforced disappearances have repeatedly raised concerns about Pakistan. Sometimes they request to visit Pakistan, but such visits need the government's invitation or consent — and Pakistan has been hesitant in recent years.

2.4 Mechanism for individual complaints

Some UN human rights treaties allow individuals (or groups) to complain if their rights under that treaty have been violated by a state. But this is only possible if the state has accepted the complaint mechanism (through an "Optional Protocol" or a special declaration). Pakistan has not accepted any of the individual complaints mechanisms. This means individuals in Pakistan cannot directly take cases to UN treaty bodies if their rights are violated. They can only rely on domestic courts or raise issues through NGOs, shadow reports, or Special Rapporteurs.

2.5 Shadow reports and CSO contributions to Treaty Body reporting, UPR and SR work in Pakistan

Shadow Reports by civil society organizations (CSOs) are the most credible counterbalance to official narratives. In Pakistan, CSO participation in UPR and treaty body reporting has grown. For example, Aurat Foundation and Legal Aid Society jointly submitted a detailed alternate report on CEDAW implementation for Treaty Body reporting in 2020¹¹ (Aurat Foundation, 2020). Similarly, Association of Women for Awareness and Motivation compiled a mid-term assessment on behalf of CSOs for the last UPR¹² (UPR Info, 2021). Although CSO reporting has been a norm in Pakistan but it remains fragmented, largely underfunded, and vulnerable to state restrictions.

The government's engagement with CSOs is largely tokenistic — consultations are convened but rarely influence report content. As a result, alternative reports become the primary channel through which the realities of religious minorities, women, and other vulnerable groups reach the international stage. Yet, shadow reports are uneven in coverage and lack sustained follow-up. Without structured coordination, CSOs risk duplication and dilution of advocacy. This undermines the potential impact of their submissions on both UPR outcomes and Special Rapporteurs' thematic work.

⁹ <https://www.theknowledgeforum.org/pakistans-4th-upr-labour-issues-implementation-of-recommendations/>

¹⁰ <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/news-media/meeting-summary/2023/07/le-conseil-des-droits-de-lhomme-adopte-les-documents-finals-0>

¹¹ <https://www.af.org.pk/Reports/Civil%20Society%20Alternative%20Report%20on%20CEDAW%20Pakistan%202020.pdf>

¹² https://upr-info.org/sites/default/files/documents/2021-03/stakeholders_mid-term_upr_report_pakistan.pdf

2.6 General challenges for Pakistan in Treaty reporting and UPR

Pakistan's treaty reporting faces systemic challenges that include bureaucratic inertia, poor inter-ministerial coordination, and weak provincial integration. Devolution under the 18th Amendment has added complexity without creating mechanisms to manage shared responsibilities. The lack of reliable and disaggregated data is the single largest obstacle. Without credible figures, especially on marginalized populations, reports remain descriptive and defensive rather than analytical. Political sensitivities further distort reporting, as the state downplays controversial issues like enforced disappearances or misuse of blasphemy laws. Resource constraints compound the problem. Treaty reporting is treated as a one-off exercise rather than a routine state obligation, leaving the TIC overstretched and dependent on external support. This perpetuates cycles of delay and superficial compliance.

2.7 How GSP+ compliance is measured and reported?

Government mechanism to implement and measure GSP+ is almost similar to what is adopted for treaty reporting and UPR. The review of Pakistan's GSP+ status for coming years is due in November 2025. The TIC established in 2014 that is responsible for Treaty reporting and UPR undertakes efforts for aligning national laws with the mandatory UN Conventions and coordinate with stakeholders at National and Provincial levels. However, given the nature of Pakistan's commitments under GSP+, various ministries are given mandate to oversee and implement GSP+. The Ministry of Commerce is the primary government entity handling Pakistan's GSP+ status and related trade arrangements. Other Ministries are given responsibilities as per relevant International Convention cluster¹³ (Ministry of Commerce, n.d.). Prime responsibility lies with Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce, coordinating with the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis & Human Resource Development, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Compliance Component	Responsible Entity
Diplomatic & Trade Diplomacy 1. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Labour & Human Rights Compliance	Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis & HR Development (ILS Unit)
Economic Impact & Reporting	Ministry of Finance
Advocacy & Stakeholder Input	Chambers of Commerce and Industry, civil society, trade unions

2.7.1 Reporting and monitoring mechanism under GSP+

The EU regularly sends monitoring missions to assess Pakistan's implementation of these conventions. These missions involve officials from bodies such as the EU External Action Service, European Commission's Directorate-General for Trade, and DG for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion. Pakistan has undergone multiple biennial reviews (e.g., in 2016, 2018, 2020), with upcoming reports presented to the EU Parliament and Council¹⁴ (Dawn,

¹³ https://www.commerce.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/pdf/List_of_Ministries_with_the_relevant_UN_Core_Convention_Cluster.pdf

¹⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1696145>

2022). The EU relies on information from UN agencies (e.g., ILO), and other international bodies that monitor the conventions. Civil society, trade unions, and private sector groups are included as observers or participants in the monitoring process to enhance transparency and responsiveness. EU periodically publishes mid-term and full evaluation reports, offering feedback and recommending further legislative or institutional reforms where gaps persist. In its fourth biennial review covering 2020–2022, the EU acknowledged that Pakistan had taken notable legislative steps including laws preventing torture, protecting journalists, and tackling gender-based violence.

2.8 Qualitative assessment of compliance with international obligations

Pakistan has made notable strides in strengthening its human rights framework, particularly through ratification of core international treaties and the enactment of rights-based legislation. These steps demonstrate a formal commitment to align domestic laws with global standards and to project credibility in international forums. At the same time, the country's compliance trajectory reflects an uneven balance between commitment and delivery. Legal provisions often remain underutilized due to institutional constraints, limited enforcement, and competing political and cultural pressures. As a result, the practical realization of rights continues to lag behind the normative framework that Pakistan has put in place.

International monitoring mechanisms have consistently acknowledged Pakistan's progress while also underscoring persistent challenges. Reporting obligations are regularly met, and new laws are often introduced in response to external and internal commitments. However, gaps in implementation, overlapping jurisdictions, and weak institutional capacity mean that compliance outcomes remain mixed. Pakistan therefore occupies an intermediate position i.e. not one of non-compliance, but of partial alignment where progress is visible yet incomplete. Sustaining credibility in this gray zone requires not only legislative action but also demonstrable improvements in enforcement, accountability, and protection of civic space.

2.8.1 Compliance with UN Conventions

ICCPR: Pakistan's second ICCPR periodic review took place in October 2024. The Human Rights Committee issued concluding observations in November 2024, flagging a persistent gap between legal guarantees and actual implementation. The delegation largely reiterated constitutional provisions, but offered little on enforcement or outcomes¹⁵(ICJ, 2023). The Committee raised deep concerns over *enforced disappearances*, especially in Balochistan, the ambiguous role of military courts over civilians, and blasphemy laws that have become flashpoints for violence and abuse. The delegation failed to adequately demonstrate progress. Key recommendations include criminalization of enforced disappearances, judicial independence, repeal or revision of blasphemy laws, and protection for journalists and dissenters¹⁶(ICJ, 2023).

CEDAW: While Pakistan has enacted notable legislation (harassment, anti-rape reforms, transgender rights), implementation gaps continue to persist. Civil society sources like Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) and others, as well as global indices, point to persistently poor outcomes. Pakistan ranked 148th out of 148 countries in the 2025 Global Gender Gap Report, placing it at the very bottom of the index with an overall gender parity score of 56.7 percent, down from 57 percent in the previous year¹⁷ (WEF, 2025). Thus, while formal commitments under CEDAW appear present, tangible implementation and social change remain weak, and lack of recent treaty-body critique makes independent assessment difficult.

CRC: Pakistan submitted its combined 6th and 7th periodic report in February 2024. The CRC Committee adopted a List of Issues on 20 September 2024, and Pakistan filed its written replies in May 2025. The concluding

¹⁵ <https://www.icj.org/pakistan-icj-welcomes-un-human-rights-committees-concluding-observations-on-pakistan/>

¹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁷ https://reports.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2025.pdf

observations are still pending. Legislative measures such as the Juvenile Justice System Act, 2018 are in force, though implementation is uneven across provinces. In its previous concluding observations (2016), the Committee raised concerns about discrimination (including against girls), child marriage, violence against children, and barriers to access to justice¹⁸ (United Nations, 2023).

CRPD: Despite enactment of legislations on the rights of persons with disabilities, systemic implementation details remain scant. There is limited independent reporting on the effectiveness of these laws. The Human Rights Committee has urged protection for transgender people, but comprehensive disability-focused analysis is still limited¹⁹ (ICJ, 2023).

CAT: The Human Rights Committee and other bodies have stressed that although Pakistan passed the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act 2022, the absence of a comprehensive legal definition of torture and weak implantation remain severe concerns²⁰ (Dawn, 2018). Institutional frameworks struggle to translate law into practice. The lack of specialized investigative mechanisms and reports of custodial abuse suggest continued compliance deficiencies.

ICESCR: Pakistan submitted its second periodic report under ICESCR in May 2023, and the CESCR issued a List of Issues in March 2024. Concluding observations are still pending and civil society shadow reporting has been sparse, limiting independent oversight. Despite constitutional guarantees and statutory reforms addressing labour rights, minimum wages, bonded labour, and social protection, the progressive realization of rights is undermined by weak enforcement, fragmented provincial implementation, and poor data collection²¹ (European Commission, 2023). Most notably, education indicators reveal stark gender and regional disparities. While 79 percent of children progress to Grade 5 nationally, retention drops to 67 percent for girls in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and as low as 33 percent for girls in parts of Balochistan, highlighting systemic inequalities²² (HRW, 2024).

ICERD: Pakistan's compliance under ICERD was most recently assessed in August 2024, when the Committee reviewed Pakistan's combined 24th to 26th periodic reports during its 113th session. The Committee issued updated concluding observations on 24 September 2024, noting continuing concerns about systemic discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities, hate speech, forced conversions, and bonded labour, alongside the lack of disaggregated data and comprehensive legal definitions of racial discrimination. Civil society submissions, including reports from the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) and the International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN), highlighted caste-based discrimination, misuse of blasphemy laws, and barriers to justice. While this marks a significant update from the last review in 2016, sustained follow-up and monitoring will be crucial to ensure accountability and progress²³ (United Nations, 2022).

2.8.2 Compliance with UPR

Despite Pakistan's compliance and cooperation with UPR timelines, implementation remains uneven. For example, only a small portion of the total labour-related recommendations saw limited follow-through. Similarly, there has been little or no progress on continued gaps in laws prohibiting child labour and the non-ratification of key conventions like ICRMW or ILO Convention 189²⁴ (The Knowledge Forum, n.d.). The UPR is being treated more as a ritual rather than a domestic reform driver. Ministries participate in report drafting but fail to create action plans for

¹⁸ <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4081024?v=pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.icj.org/pakistan-icj-welcomes-un-human-rights-committees-concluding-observations-on-pakistan/>

²⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1451001>

²¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52023SC0363>

²² <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/01/19/pakistan-submission-un-committee-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>

²³ <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4062541>

²⁴ <https://www.theknowledgeforum.org/pakistans-4th-upr-labour-issues-implementation-of-recommendations/>

implementation. Civil society involvement is minimal, and provincial governments are often left out of the process. As a result, Pakistan is perceived as cooperative but ineffective.

In their joint submission prior to fourth UPR, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and HRCP noted that Pakistan received 289 recommendations, of which the government accepted 168, “noted” (i.e. did not accept) 117, and rejected four. Many of the recommendations accepted by the government have not been implemented or have only been partially implemented. In some instances, the situation has worsened since Pakistan’s third UPR cycle²⁵ (FIDH, 2022).

2.8.3 Cooperation with SR Reporting

Pakistan continues to limit meaningful engagement with UN Special Procedures, which are independent experts mandated to provide impartial oversight of human rights issues. While this mechanism could strengthen Pakistan’s human rights trajectory, the state has not extended a standing invitation and has repeatedly stalled or postponed country visit requests on sensitive areas such as freedom of religion, peaceful assembly, counter-terrorism, and extreme poverty²⁶ (UN OHCHR, n.d.).

2.8.4 GSP+ compliance

Pakistan showed strong engagement and legislative activity, but translating these laws into tangible improvements on the ground is still lacking. In early 2025, the EU reiterated that GSP+ trade benefits are contingent on real progress, especially since Pakistan was approaching midterm and preparing for reapplication under a revised GSP+ framework. The EU raised concerns over blasphemy laws, limitations on media freedom, enforced disappearances, and poor protection of women’s and minority rights.

EU monitoring portrays mixed compliance—legislative progress post-2014, especially since 2020, set against serious, recurring deficits in implementation on civil liberties, labour rights and minority protections. Brussels has kept GSP+ in place through 2027 but has raised the stakes for demonstrable, rights-consistent practice (investigations, prosecutions, remedies, union protections, and safeguards against blasphemy-related abuses). Absent such movement, the risk to preferential access—explicit in EU statements—remains on the table²⁷ (European Commission, 2023).

On overall trajectory, the Commission’s most recent country assessment (covering 2020–2022, published Nov 2023) acknowledges notable legislative steps, including laws on torture prevention, gender-based violence, protection of journalists, child protection and some provincial equality measures. However, it stresses persistent implementation gaps across pillars—especially around due process, protection from torture and ill-treatment, and accountability for abuses. The report underlines continuing concerns about the application of blasphemy provisions, enforced disappearances, and fair-trial guarantees, alongside pressures on media and civil society space²⁸ (European Commission, 2023).

The European Parliament’s 2021 resolution urged a reassessment of Pakistan’s GSP+ status over blasphemy-related rights impacts and the EU’s human-rights envoy, during a 2025 visit to Islamabad, publicly linked the continuation of preferences to tangible reforms on civil liberties, women’s and minority rights, and media freedom.

²⁵ <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/asia/pakistan/human-rights-council-the-situation-of-pakistan-s-national-human>

²⁶ <https://spinternet.ohchr.org/ViewCountryVisits.aspx?Lang=en&country=PAK&visitType=all>

²⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52023SC0363&utm>

²⁸ *ibid*

This underscores that, while preferences continue under the extended GSP, Brussels expects measurable improvements in practice, not just law on paper²⁹ (European Parliament, 2021).

On labour rights, supervision by the ILO remains a pressure point. The ILO’s standards bodies in 2023–24 called on Pakistan to address violence and intimidation against workers and unions and to better ensure freedom of association and collective bargaining—areas central to Conventions 87 and 98 and repeatedly flagged in EU dialogues. Progress on occupational safety frameworks has occurred in some provinces, but enforcement and effective remedies remain uneven, particularly in informal sectors and supply chains³⁰ (ILO, 2024).

For freedom of religion or belief and minority protections (ICCPR/ICERD/CRC), EU monitoring and independent observers continue to cite the chilling effect and misuse of blasphemy provisions, episodic mob violence, and inadequate accountability. Events like the Jaranwala attacks in 2023 have sharpened scrutiny of prevention, policing and prosecution standards. The Commission’s report calls for concrete safeguards against abuse and stronger protection of defendants’ rights³¹ (European Commission, 2023).

GSP+ Assessments	
Period	Assessment Highlights
2020–2022	Strong legislative progress, but lagging practical implementation
2023–2025	Under formal review; EU emphasizes need for deeper reforms—especially on civil liberties and rights enforcement
Trade Context	Exports doubled under GSP+, but benefits hinge on credible reforms and follow-through

On good governance/anti-corruption and criminal justice cooperation (UNCAC and drug-control treaties), Pakistan has adopted legal and institutional measures (e.g., mutual legal assistance, AML/CFT reforms) in recent years; the EU notes these as positive but still expects consistent implementation, transparency, and independent oversight to curb impunity and improve asset recovery outcomes. The continuing emphasis from Brussels is on results—investigations, prosecutions and convictions that meet international standards³² (EEAS, 2024).

For the environment cluster (Basel/Stockholm/CITES/CBD/UNFCCC), monitoring recognises policy-level advances (climate governance and plastics controls) yet flags weak enforcement capacity on hazardous waste, chemicals and wildlife trade, and calls for better data, inspections and penalties. In this area, as in others, the EU’s 2023 assessment frames the agenda as “laws adopted—implementation pending³³” (European Commission, 2023).

Human Rights Protection Framework in Pakistan

3.1 Legislative forums: Pakistan’s Parliament and Provincial Assemblies are formally mandated to uphold rights, with standing and special committees on human rights, child rights, women’s rights, and minority rights providing oversight of executive action. In recent years, parliamentary caucuses have also emerged as thematic forums, creating political space to advance rights-based agendas. Yet, their effectiveness is often undermined by weak follow-up, partisan divides, and limited resources to translate commitments into binding reforms.

3.2 Executive and judicial institutions: At the executive level, federal and provincial departments including police, prosecution services, and social welfare institutions remain the frontline implementers of human rights

²⁹ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2021-0254_EN.html
³⁰ <https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/ILC112-CAN-PV7-Patchwork-with%20D%20Document-%5BNORMES-240520-006%5D-EFS.pdf>
³¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52023SC0363&utm>
³² https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/pakistan/european-union-releases-fourth-gsp-report-evaluating-implementation-27-international-conventions_en
³³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52023SC0363&utm>

protections. Judicial mechanisms, particularly higher courts, have been instrumental in delivering pro-rights jurisprudence. At the community level, peace committees, local alternate dispute resolution (ADR) forums, gender desks in police stations, and child-friendly courts offer innovative platforms for accessible justice. However, weak enforcement, low resourcing, and uneven application continue to limit their effectiveness.

3.3 National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs): Pakistan has established a network of NHRIs including commissions on human rights, women, children, and right to information. While their statutory mandates cover monitoring, investigation, and reporting, most institutions face budgetary constraints, politicized appointments, and limited operational autonomy. As a result, their capacity to function as independent watchdogs remains constrained, and their reporting functions are yet to meaningfully influence policy and practice.

3.3.1 Paris Principles and NHRIs

The Paris Principles, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1993, set the minimum international standards for National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs). They require NHRIs to be independent, pluralistic, and adequately resourced, with a broad mandate to both protect and promote human rights. Governments are expected to establish these institutions through constitutional or legal guarantees to safeguard them from political interference, provide them with adequate financial and human resources, ensure diverse representation from civil society—including women, minorities, and professional groups—grant them powers to investigate violations, advise on legislation, and monitor state actions, and make them accessible and visible to the public, especially vulnerable groups.

The Paris Principles do not require countries to establish multiple NHRIs at provincial or regional levels. Nonetheless, Pakistan has expanded the framework by creating provincial commissions on the status of women in Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, and Gilgit-Baltistan. While not mandatory under the Principles, these provincial bodies have contributed to localized monitoring, advocacy, and policy interventions on gender equality and women's rights.

3.3.2 Current Status of NHRIs

Pakistan has formally aligned with the Paris Principles through the establishment of the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), and several provincial commissions but their effectiveness is undermined by leadership vacuums, weak enforcement capacity, and uneven subnational presence. The National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), formalized in 2012, has remained without a statutory chair on at least two occasions, amounting to nearly three years in total—including the current vacancy of over one year—undermining its credibility and independence under the Paris Principles. Provincial commissions on status of women in Punjab, Sindh, KP struggle with similar leadership gaps.

The National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) also faced similar leadership gaps amounting to five years. In May 2024, the NCHR achieved “A-status” accreditation from the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), the highest level of recognition, confirming its conformity with the Paris Principles. This accreditation enables Pakistan to participate directly in UN human rights forums and enhances the credibility of its human rights monitoring role. NCHR submits its reports to treaty bodies as an independent voice. At the provincial level, only Sindh maintains a functional human rights commission with a strategic plan (2023–27), while Punjab, KP, Balochistan, and GB lack such institutions altogether. Child and minority rights institutions remain especially underdeveloped. The National Commission on the Rights of the Child (NCRC) was set up in 2020 too faced leadership gaps, while provincial commissions are entirely absent. On minorities, Pakistan lacks a statutory National Commission on Minorities while the executive-order body is now dysfunctional, and no provincial

commissions exist. A federal statute to establish a commission on minority rights has been passed in May 2025 pending presidential assent.

Challenges and Opportunities for Institutional Integration of Human Rights

4.1 Structural and cultural barriers: Institutional resistance to rights-based reforms is entrenched in elite capture, bureaucratic inertia, and cultural biases that often dismiss rights as a foreign agenda. Corruption, lack of political will, and weak oversight systems further entrench impunity, creating barriers to aligning practice with Pakistan’s legal commitments.

4.2 Institutional weaknesses: Budgetary shortfalls, weak enforcement capacity, and politicization of appointments in NHRIs and other bodies undermine credibility. Inter-agency coordination remains poor, with duplication of mandates leading to inefficiency. This disjointed system prevents cohesive responses to human rights obligations.

4.3 Good practices and reform windows: Despite systemic weaknesses, Pakistan has examples of reform worth scaling. Individual reform champions among police officers and judges have pioneered pro-rights practices, while models such as gender desks in police stations, mobile courts, and online complaint portals illustrate the potential of innovative solutions. These initiatives show that incremental reforms can build momentum for institutional change.

4.4 Strategic reform interventions: The state can create incentives for compliance through career rewards, recognition of rights champions, and use of political capital. Legislative reforms, capacity-building programs, and creation of cross-sectoral coordination platforms can help integrate human rights into governance. Strategic interventions at the provincial and district levels, where service delivery is most direct, are key to bridging gaps.

Recommendations for Strengthening Compliance and Institutional Integration

5.1 Permanent reporting structure and data systems: Pakistan must establish a cohesive, permanent reporting mechanism that integrates treaty reporting, UPR follow-up, and GSP+ monitoring within a single national framework. This requires institutionalizing vertical data flows from provinces to the federal level, harmonizing formats, and ensuring disaggregated data by gender, minority status, and disability. Crucially, this data must not only be prepared for international submissions but also be systematically used for internal planning, monitoring, and policy reform. Embedding reporting cycles into ministerial performance frameworks, resourcing the Treaty Implementation Cell, and linking with the Bureau of Statistics will ensure continuity, accuracy, and accountability.

5.2 Legal alignment and enforcement: Pakistan must expedite harmonization of domestic laws with international obligations, ensuring constitutional rights are fully operationalized. Enforcement must target persistent gaps such as gender-based violence, torture, enforced disappearances, and misuse of blasphemy laws. Pro-rights legislation and judicial decisions need robust follow-up through credible enforcement agencies, independent prosecution, and accountable policing.

5.3 Independence and capacity of institutions: NHRIs should be insulated from political influence through legal guarantees of financial and administrative autonomy and transparent, merit-based appointments. Strengthening their investigative powers and operational budgets is essential to enable meaningful oversight and rights protection.

5.4 Reporting and monitoring participation: Parallel to state reporting, civil society shadow reporting must be institutionalized by ensuring legal protection of freedoms of expression, association, and assembly. CSO inputs should be embedded into national reporting cycles to enrich accuracy, highlight implementation gaps, and link grassroots realities with international advocacy.

5.5 Inter-agency coordination and training: Formal coordination platforms must link parliament, the executive, and judiciary to mainstream rights into governance. Reporting obligations should be tied to ministerial performance indicators, while training programs for police, prosecutors, judges, and local officials must focus on enforcing protections for marginalized groups. Community innovations — gender desks, ADR forums, and child-friendly courts — should be replicated nationwide.

5.6 International engagement and external accountability: Pakistan must shift from defensive to constructive engagement with Special Rapporteurs by proactively inviting thematic visits, responding to communications, and creating follow-up mechanisms. Adoption of treaty-based individual complaint procedures should be considered to enhance accountability. On trade, Pakistan should treat GSP+ not as external pressure but as an incentive for governance reform, with a cross-ministerial action plan and measurable compliance indicators.

5.7 Civic space and civil society engagement: Protecting civic space is critical. Legal reforms must safeguard media freedoms, journalist safety, and CSO independence. Civil society coalitions need support to strengthen technical capacity, mobilize communities, and sustain advocacy.

5.8 Feedback loops and adaptive learning: Periodic compliance audits and a national human rights scorecard should be developed to track progress. Digital technologies — complaint portals, citizen participation tools, and awareness platforms — must be deployed to create a two-way accountability channel between state institutions and citizens.

5.9 Promote business and human rights Integration: Pakistan should adopt and implement a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights aligned with the UN Guiding Principles. This requires embedding human rights due diligence into corporate governance, public procurement, and investment frameworks, while incentivizing responsible business conduct through tax breaks, export facilitation, and preferential access to government contracts. Stronger linkages between labour rights, environmental protections, and trade compliance (such as GSP+) can make business respect for human rights a competitive advantage, while sector-specific guidelines (e.g., textiles, agriculture, extractives) can help industries integrate rights safeguards into supply chains.

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