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COUNTRY ANALYSIS REPORT



WORLD FOOD DAY

October 1st - 15th, 2026

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Executive Summary

Pakistan enters October 2026 amid renewed pressure on democratic institutions, fragile economic stabilisation and persistent insecurity, while poverty and climate risks continue to expose weaknesses in public service delivery. The report identifies a recurring gap between government interventions and their ability to address the underlying causes of instability. Constitutional disputes, uneven economic adjustment and limited institutional accountability are placing additional burdens on citizens already struggling with rising living costs and inadequate protection.

The immediate political crisis centres on the federal government's imposition of emergency rule and governor's rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on October 11. The intervention, justified by security concerns and tensions with the PTI-led provincial administration, has transferred authority from an elected government to an appointed administrative structure. Parliamentary endorsements and legal challenges have moved the dispute into constitutional institutions, while detentions, disrupted connectivity and educational closures have extended its consequences to the public. The distinction between counterterrorism coordination and political control remains central. Any continuation of emergency measures requires clearly defined legal grounds, transparent conditions for restoring elected government and independent scrutiny of whether the intervention improves security.

Economic stabilisation has created some financial breathing room but has yet to establish a durable foundation for growth. The October 8 staff-level agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) could release approximately \$1.2 billion, subject to Executive Board approval, while projected FY27 growth of 3.5% remains below the government's 4% target. Declining development expenditure, unequal tax enforcement and uncertainty over provincial spending threaten investment in infrastructure, health and education. Businesses in Karachi continue to face unreliable utilities and inadequate municipal services, while a reported 22% Rabi water shortage raises concerns about wheat production, food prices and future import requirements. Sustained recovery will depend on more equitable revenue mobilisation, effective public investment and administrative reforms that improve implementation rather than simply contain expenditure.

Pakistan's diplomatic engagement offers opportunities for regional cooperation and economic access but remains constrained by unresolved security and governance challenges. Relations with Afghanistan have deteriorated amid competing accusations over cross-border militancy, restrictions on transit and declining bilateral trade, which fell to \$1.38 billion in FY25 from \$1.85 billion in FY23. Engagement with Russia could provide channels for dialogue, while negotiations with the European Union over migration and GSP+ offer opportunities to strengthen trade and labour mobility. However, preferential market access depends on credible implementation of human rights, labour and environmental commitments. International recognition and diplomatic agreements will have limited domestic value unless they translate into investment, employment and better public services.

Security conditions remain particularly concerning in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, where militant attacks continue despite sustained counterterrorism operations. Attacks on police facilities and the killing of civilians demonstrate that operational gains have not yet produced dependable security across affected districts. The political confrontation between federal and provincial authorities further complicates the coordination required for effective counterterrorism. Cross-border tensions with Afghanistan also disrupt commerce and livelihoods. Durable improvements require clearly assigned civilian and military responsibilities, effective investigations and prosecutions, parliamentary oversight and functioning civilian institutions capable of maintaining security after military operations conclude.

Social and humanitarian pressures reveal the cumulative effects of economic insecurity and weak institutional protection. Pakistan accounts for approximately 48% of the population living below the \$3-a-day poverty line across the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan region, while the 2026 Global Hunger Index places the country's hunger score highest in South Asia. Unsafe sanitation work, overcrowded prisons and limited mental healthcare further expose gaps in labour protection, access to justice and essential services. These challenges reinforce one another: food insecurity undermines health and learning, unsafe employment threatens household livelihoods, and prolonged pre-trial detention places additional pressure on families. Public policy must prioritise preventive protection, accessible services and timely institutional responses rather than relying on measures introduced after harm has occurred.

Climate risks add another layer of uncertainty to Pakistan's economic and humanitarian outlook. The World Meteorological Organisation's warning of an intensifying El Niño through early 2027 raises concerns about changing rainfall patterns, agricultural production and water availability, although its effects within Pakistan remain uncertain. The approaching winter cropping season makes timely forecasts, irrigation planning and district-level preparedness particularly important. Potential agricultural losses could compound existing food insecurity, increase import costs and weaken household purchasing power. Priorities include strengthening climate information systems, communicating forecasts in accessible local languages, improving coordination over water resources and preparing targeted assistance for vulnerable communities. Across these areas, Pakistan's ability to withstand future shocks will depend on whether institutions can translate available evidence into coordinated decisions, accountable spending and reliable protection for citizens.

World Food Day

Every October 16, [World Food Day](#) demands a global reckoning on agricultural sustainability and human nutrition. For Pakistan, a nation where agriculture is the undisputed bedrock of the economy, this day does not serve as a celebration of harvest, but as a glaring spotlight on a profound national paradox. The country is endowed with one of the largest contiguous irrigation systems on earth and vast fertile plains that produce millions of tons of wheat, rice, and sugarcane annually. Yet, despite this immense agricultural capacity, an escalating number of [Pakistani citizens](#) are being systematically priced out of basic sustenance, trapped in a cycle of structural waste and economic volatility.

The empirical reality of Pakistan's food landscape in 2026 is bleak. According to the 2026 Global Hunger Index, Pakistan scores [25.5](#), categorizing its hunger levels as "serious" and placing the country [106th out of 122 evaluated nations](#). This metric translates directly into mass human suffering. [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification \(IPC\)](#) data for the period spanning December 2025 to March 2026 reveals that approximately [7.5 million people](#), constituting 21 percent of the analyzed rural population across 45 districts, are currently trapped in high levels of acute food insecurity. These millions of people are not merely skipping a luxury item at the market; they are facing severe dietary deficits that drive soaring rates of chronic malnutrition and child stunting.

The central thread tying this crisis together is a catastrophic failure of systems. Pakistan has a severe food access and preservation deficit instead of a production deficit. The agricultural supply chain is plagued by systemic rot, both literal and economic. Every year, between [10 to 15 percent](#) of vital grains, including wheat and rice, are completely lost after the harvest.

Because of a severe deficit in modernized cold-chain logistics, adequate grain silos, and efficient transportation networks, billions of rupees worth of food simply perishes or is consumed by pests before it can ever reach a consumer. This massive post-harvest hemorrhage artificially shrinks the national food supply, betraying the hard work of farmers and priming the market for price manipulation.

When supply is artificially constrained by structural waste, the economic burden is entirely transferred to the consumer, manifesting as crippling inflation. The purchasing power of the average Pakistani household has been decimated by continuous macroeconomic instability. By September 2026, while the broader annual food inflation rate was recorded at [8.2 percent](#), the price of wheat flour, the most critical staple for caloric survival in the country, surged by a staggering [31.7 percent](#).

When the absolute bedrock of the local diet becomes a luxury commodity, low-income families are forced into brutal coping mechanisms. They routinely reduce their daily meal intake, pull children out of school to work, and substitute nutrient-dense vegetables and proteins for cheap, empty calories, directly feeding the nation's malnutrition emergency.

This fragile, wasteful system is currently buckling under the ultimate multiplier: climate change. The residual impacts of the 2025 monsoon floods, compounded by prolonged dry spells and droughts, have severely weakened agricultural and pastoral livelihoods. Because the existing infrastructure cannot even protect food in good years, the extreme weather shocks of the climate era hit with devastating, unmitigated force. When floods wipe out a standing crop, there is no robust national reserve of perfectly stored grain to fall back on, because those reserves have already been heavily diminished by poor storage practices.

Solving this agrarian paradox requires abandoning the illusion that simply encouraging farmers to plant more seeds will cure national hunger. The core argument for Pakistan's agricultural future must pivot from increasing gross production to ensuring structural preservation and economic accessibility. Massive state and private investments must be redirected toward modernizing rural grain silos, deploying solar-powered cold storage hubs, and cutting out the predatory middlemen who exploit both the farmer and the end consumer.

Until a grain of wheat can travel from a farm in Punjab to a market in Balochistan without being lost to rot or rendered unaffordable by runaway inflation, the fields will remain full while the plates remain empty.



Political Updates

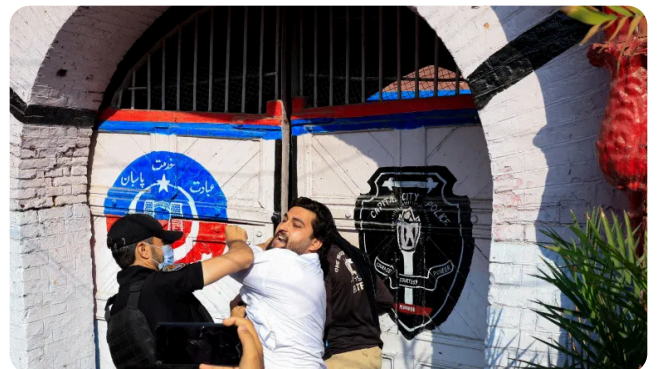
The federal government declared an emergency and imposed [governor's rule](#) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as tensions with the PTI-led provincial administration escalated over counterterrorism policy and worsening security conditions. Throughout September, the federal government's security concerns were increasingly intertwined with its determination to prevent the PTI from marching on Islamabad. On September 18, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi publicly opposed the planned march while criticising the KP administration for concentrating on political mobilisation instead of terrorism. By late September, threats of emergency and governor's rule were already circulating alongside negotiations over the protest. The possibility of removing the provincial administration therefore emerged publicly as part of a political confrontation before it became an accomplished constitutional intervention. Alongside, the opposition alliance Tehreek-i-Tahaffuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP) [suspended negotiations](#) with the government until it secures a meeting with Imran Khan and information about his health.



Source: Dawn News

President Asif Ali Zardari's approval of measures under [Articles 232 and 234](#) transferred provincial authority to Governor Faisal Karim Kundi. An eleven-member advisory council was constituted, Dr Muhammad Fakhr Alam Irfan was appointed chief secretary, and another senior official, Muhammad Yahya Akhunzada, was placed at the provincial government's disposal. Army deployment in aid of civil power was authorised. These decisions replaced an elected chain of accountability with an appointed administrative structure. Whatever its professional credentials, a technocratic council cannot reproduce the political relationship between provincial voters, their assembly and their government.

The immediate consequences extended beyond institutional rearrangement. Roads in Peshawar were blocked with containers, connectivity was disrupted in parts of the province, and educational institutions were closed in several districts. Reports described clashes in which police firing injured at least [five protesters](#). Officials subsequently acknowledged the preventive detention of Chief Minister Sohail Afridi and some cabinet members.



Source: Aljazeera

On October 13, Afridi's brother approached the [Peshawar High Court](#) seeking disclosure of his whereabouts, production before the court and examination of the legality of his detention. His petition alleged that masked armed individuals had removed Afridi from the Chief Minister's House; that allegation requires investigation, but the government's acknowledgement of custody makes disclosure of the legal basis and place of detention an immediate responsibility.

These events sharpen the distinction between securing a province and neutralising a political movement. Preventive detention and the [disruption of opposition organisation](#) may help an administration contain demonstrations, but they do not, by themselves, demonstrate progress against militant networks. Neither can unrest arising after the suspension of representative government retrospectively prove that the suspension was necessary beforehand. Consequences of the intervention must not be recycled as its justification. That chronology is of great importance here.

Yet it would also be inaccurate to suggest that KP had been free of unrest or public dissatisfaction before October 11. Doctors had been protesting over remuneration and threatening to disrupt routine hospital services more widely. Displaced communities from Tirah and Rajgal demanded return, compensation, and the restoration of civilian institutions. Such grievances show that provincial residents had substantial reasons to question governance and security arrangements.

What these grievances do not establish is a public mandate for replacing the provincial government with federal rule. Citizens can demand better policing without consenting to the removal of the government they elected.



Source: Reuters

The comparison with Balochistan exposes the central weakness in treating violence alone as sufficient grounds for intervention. CRSS figures cited in the reporting recorded [829 violence-linked deaths](#) there during the third quarter, exceeding KP's total. This does not mean that Balochistan should also be placed under governor's rule. It means that Islamabad must explain the additional, province-specific circumstances that supposedly made constitutional government impossible in KP. Governor's rule has a [maximum six-month duration](#) through prescribed parliamentary extensions; emergency has a different approval and termination framework. Neither should be presented as an unrestricted six-month administrative mandate.

There is a further question of responsibility. If the threat involves militant sanctuaries across the Afghan border, the explanation cannot be confined to provincial policing. Border management, foreign relations and major military decisions extend beyond the chief minister's authority. KP's administration must answer for responsibilities it controls, but it cannot reasonably be made solely accountable for the outcome of a national security strategy it does not command. The Centre's argument becomes persuasive only if it specifies which lawful actions the provincial government refused, how those refusals impaired operations, and why negotiated coordination could not resolve the problem.

The competing accounts of the failed negotiations illustrate this tension. Naqvi said the PTI had agreed to emergency arrangements in twelve districts; PTI spokesperson Sheikh Waqas Akram denied this and said Afridi rejected the proposal. Taimur Jhagra argued that talks about Khan's medical treatment and visitation rights had been redirected towards counterterrorism policy.

Developments through October 15 show that the confrontation is moving into Parliament and the courts without leaving the streets behind. The National Assembly and Senate endorsed the emergency on October 14, while a joint sitting was scheduled for October 15. These are distinct parliamentary stages, and approval by the federal majority does not itself establish that the substantive grounds for intervention were adequate. The National Democratic Movement also approached the Peshawar High Court against the measures, widening the challenge beyond the PTI's immediate organisational interests.

Addressing the National Assembly on October 14, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari defended the emergency while offering to personally urge Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to [withdraw](#) it if dialogue with the PTI produced conditions that made it unnecessary. The question arises: what exactly must change for elected government to resume? If the answer is demonstrable improvement in security coordination, the conditions should be published and independently assessed. If restoration depends on political compliance by the PTI, emergency rule becomes a bargaining instrument. A province's democratic institutions should not be held pending agreement over an opposition party's behaviour.



Source: NA Media Cell

For the coming months, the distinction between suppressing mobilisation and resolving conflict will be decisive. Detentions and administrative control may weaken the PTI's immediate capacity to organise. They may also strengthen its claim that electoral victory offers no protection against exclusion. Meanwhile, federal authorities now assume greater responsibility for security outcomes. If violence persists, blaming the suspended administration will become progressively less credible.

The broader democratic danger extends beyond the PTI. If disagreement with national security policy can be converted into a finding that provincial constitutional government has failed, every opposition-led province becomes more vulnerable. Parties supporting the intervention today may later discover that the same reasoning can be applied to their own disputes over resources, policing or federal priorities. Pakistan's federation depends on the ability of different electoral mandates to coexist, including when cooperation is difficult.

Economic Updates

Pakistan's economic updates in early October expose a widening gap between financial stabilisation and economic recovery. The government has secured another staff-level agreement with the IMF, while Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal has questioned whether its policies can deliver growth and employment before the next election. Businesses in Karachi are demanding basic infrastructure and reliable services, and pressure on development spending continues. These developments raise a question that successful programme reviews alone cannot answer: is Pakistan strengthening its capacity to generate income, or merely extending its ability to meet immediate obligations?



Source: Aljazeera

The October 8 agreement on the fourth review of the Extended Fund Facility and third review of the Resilience and Sustainability Facility would release [approximately \\$1.2 billion](#), subject to IMF Executive Board approval. The reported recovery in reserves and improvement in market confidence represent meaningful progress. Yet the IMF's latest outlook, as reported, places FY27 growth at [3.5 per cent](#), below the government's 4 per cent target, with inflation projected at 9.9 per cent.

This combination leaves limited room for households to recover purchasing power or for businesses to expand. The IMF's warning that Gulf economies face a prolonged recovery, with Saudi Arabia projected to contract by [3.3 per cent in 2026](#), adds risks to Pakistan's outlook through pressure on remittances and persistently high energy import costs.

Iqbal's description of stabilisation as ["stunted and borrowed"](#) is significant because it comes from within the government. His criticism concerns how adjustment is being achieved: development expenditure is compressed while borrowing helps cover external requirements. According to his memorandum, federal development spending has fallen from 2.6 per cent of GDP in [2018 to 0.8 per cent](#) this fiscal year. Cutting investment can improve the immediate fiscal position while weakening the infrastructure, skills and productivity needed to sustain it. However, protecting development allocations is only part of the answer. A larger development budget does not automatically produce higher growth. Project selection, completion rates, procurement and maintenance determine whether expenditure creates useful public assets. The case for restoring investment therefore needs to be accompanied by scrutiny of unfinished schemes and politically motivated allocations. Otherwise, the government risks defending the development budget without addressing the weaknesses that reduce its economic returns.

Taxation explains much of this pressure. According to Dawn, Salaried workers paid [Rs633 billion](#) in [income tax in FY26](#), while repeated efforts to bring retailers into the system have delivered disappointing results. The deeper problem is unequal enforcement: income that is already documented remains easier to tax than sectors with the political influence or informality to resist collection. Higher demands on compliant workers and businesses can discourage formal activity without resolving the revenue shortage.

Broadening taxation requires sustained enforcement and credible dispute resolution, alongside evidence that public money buys functioning services. Repeated concessions followed by new voluntary schemes weaken that credibility. The World Bank's latest review highlights the institutional challenges behind these reforms. It rated implementation of its Pakistan Public Resources for Inclusive Development programme, which supports federal and provincial efforts to improve revenue collection and public services, as ["moderately satisfactory"](#), while flagging substantial risks, particularly in politics and governance. The programme aims to raise the tax-to-GDP ratio from 12.3 per cent in June 2025 to 15 per cent by June 2030, making consistent enforcement and stronger administrative capacity central to its success.



Source: Arab News

The consequences are particularly serious for [health and education](#). The October 6 report of a possible reduction in provincial spending targets sits uneasily alongside the [October 8 IMF statement](#) committing Pakistan to higher expenditure in these sectors. The figures concern different measures and cannot be treated as directly comparable, but the implementation problem is clear. If revenue shortfalls lead the federation to seek provincial expenditure restraint, social spending commitments can be undermined by the same fiscal arrangements intended to preserve stability. Announced allocations matter little unless funds are released, spent effectively and translated into better services.

Karachi's business community illustrates how these fiscal and administrative failures affect production. Its demands for water supply, reliable utilities, road repairs and security concern the everyday costs of operating a business. Unreliable services force firms to finance alternatives, absorb delays and limit expansion. Calls for named institutional responsibilities, deadlines and independent audits offer a practical basis for accountability. Their success would depend on federal, provincial and local authorities agreeing on who funds, delivers and maintains essential infrastructure.

Agriculture exposes similar failures of coordination. Mohsin Leghari's analysis links the approaching wheat import requirement to a reported [22 per cent Rabi water shortage](#), declining storage and inefficient delivery. His allegations concerning politically influenced releases require independent scrutiny, and downstream flows cannot simply be classified as waste without considering ecological needs and storage constraints. Nevertheless, the economic connection is persuasive: poorly managed water can reduce harvests, raise food prices and increase demand for foreign exchange. Irrigation decisions therefore belong within economic planning, rather than being treated as an isolated provincial concern.



Source: The Friday Times

Pakistan's reported appointment to [chair the Borrowers' Platform](#) allows it to advance developing countries' concerns over financing and debt management. The forum provides cooperation and a stronger shared voice. Its relevance at home will depend on whether improved borrowing practices accompany stronger domestic investment and revenue mobilisation.

The same discipline applies to [exchange-rate management](#). Defending a preferred rupee value through borrowing can postpone adjustment while increasing its eventual cost. Pakistan's immediate achievement is greater financial breathing room.

However, translating this temporary fiscal relief into long-term prosperity requires deep institutional changes, as the state's administrative machinery dictates the success of any economic policy. Pakistan's pursuit of sustainable economic growth and effective governance is fundamentally constrained by an [antiquated civil service structure](#) that lacks the strategic design required for a modern economy. While mainstream discourse frequently prescribes macroeconomic targets like privatization and enhanced tax revenues, these objectives remain unattainable without a foundational overhaul of the state's administrative machinery. The current framework, inherited at independence and dominated by elite cadres such as the Pakistan Administrative Service, maintains a deeply centralized grip on authority despite constitutional efforts toward provincial devolution. Within this system, a pervasive bureaucratic culture institutionalizes red tape, offering no penalties for stalling processes while demanding endless approvals that actively stifle economic transactions. Furthermore, over two dozen past reform commissions have failed because they focused too narrowly on human resource logistics, such as recruitment, training, and lavish compensation packages, rather than dismantling the systemic inefficiencies that paralyze policy execution.

Compounding these structural flaws is a dangerously overextended governmental mandate that has historically treated the state apparatus as an employment agency rather than a facilitator of broader economic opportunity. Successive administrations have bloated government secretariats with a massive, redundant workforce, leading to hyper-specialized and inefficient job descriptions that severely drain public finances. Once established, this expansive institutional framework fiercely protects the operational structures and continuous funding of civil servants, creating a system that effectively functions for the benefit of its own employees. Consequently, the rights, perks, and privileges of the bureaucracy are consistently prioritized over the actual delivery of essential public services, sacrificing critical sectors like healthcare and education. To break this cycle of institutional paralysis and achieve meaningful progress, Pakistan must aggressively restructure its civil service into a professional, agile, and citizen-centric administration capable of meeting the demands of a globalized world.

Diplomatic Landscape

Pakistan's diplomatic activity in early October reveals a country seeking a larger international role while confronting difficult questions about the foundations of its influence. Yet these relationships also expose a growing tension: Pakistan's international ambitions depend on domestic stability, economic competitiveness and institutional credibility that diplomacy alone cannot deliver.

Relations with Afghanistan remain a major constraint on its regional ambitions. The Moscow Format meeting ended without a joint statement after Pakistani and Afghan representatives disagreed over terrorism-related language. Pakistan accused the Taliban authorities of supporting groups conducting cross-border attacks; Kabul rejected the framing and criticised Islamabad's use of military pressure, transit restrictions and measures affecting Afghans. The disagreement showed how a bilateral security dispute can obstruct wider regional cooperation. Russia's willingness to [facilitate dialogue](#) offers an opening, although mediation will have limited value without verifiable commitments and sustained channels of communication.

The economic consequences extend beyond diplomatic deadlock. Recent trade analysis places bilateral merchandise trade at [\\$1.38 billion in 2024-25](#), down from [\\$1.85 billion in 2022-23](#). Afghanistan's dependence on external trade makes disruption particularly damaging, but Pakistani exporters, transporters and border communities also bear substantial costs. Security concerns require credible action; they also require mechanisms that prevent every confrontation from becoming a prolonged commercial crisis. A permanent border coordination mechanism, agreed procedures for managing incidents and predictable arrangements for legitimate trade would give both countries practical reasons to sustain cooperation.

Europe presents a different diplomatic test: whether Pakistan can convert cooperation into durable economic opportunity. During European Commissioner Magnus Brunner's visit, Pakistani leaders linked efforts against [irregular migration](#) to demands for expanded legal pathways for workers and professionals. This is a reasonable negotiating position, but its success should be measured through accessible recruitment channels, recognised qualifications and worker protections. Expressions of goodwill will mean little to prospective migrants unless they produce workable alternatives to dangerous journeys.



Source: Dawn

The GSP+ relationship makes the connection between domestic governance and foreign policy even clearer. EU Ambassador Raimundas Karoblis stressed that continued preferential access depends on [demonstrable implementation of human rights](#), labour, environmental and governance commitments. Concerns over disappearances, expression and minority protections therefore carry direct economic implications. Maintaining export access requires coordinated domestic action, while making better use of that access requires competitive energy costs, predictable regulation and a more diversified export base. Diplomatic engagement can support these changes, but cannot substitute for them.

Pakistan's diplomatic activity also raises a question about priorities at home. As Malik Ali Hassan argues in ["The Diplomacy Trap"](#), international recognition can become a misleading measure of success when poverty, unemployment and weak public services receive less sustained attention. High-level meetings and mediation efforts have value, but their benefits depend on institutions that can turn agreements into investment, jobs and improved living conditions. The same applies to policy research: expertise in strategic affairs needs to be matched by serious investment in education, food security, local governance and women's economic participation. A government seeking credibility abroad must also demonstrate that it can address the everyday problems of its citizens.

Social and Humanitarian Updates

Pakistan's social and humanitarian challenges are becoming increasingly interconnected. October arrived amidst rising poverty, worsening food insecurity, preventable worker deaths, overcrowded prisons, and substantial gaps in mental healthcare. Behind these developments lies a common problem: households are absorbing repeated economic and social shocks with insufficient institutional protection. For many, hardship extends beyond low income to unsafe employment, interrupted education, untreated distress and limited access to justice.

The scale of economic vulnerability is evident in the World Bank findings reported on October 7. Pakistan accounts for approximately 48 per cent of people living below the [\\$3-a-day poverty line](#) across the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan region. This is Pakistan's share of the region's extremely poor population, rather than the proportion of Pakistanis living in extreme poverty. The same report records a [6.4-percentage-point](#) increase in Pakistan's poverty rate at this threshold between 2018-19 and 2024-25. Successive shocks, including the pandemic, floods, inflation and prolonged economic adjustment, have weakened household incomes and employment opportunities.

These losses help explain why improvements in national economic indicators may bring little immediate relief. Families that sell productive assets, accumulate debt or withdraw children from school lose the means to benefit from recovery. Lower inflation does not restore lost savings or reverse missed schooling. Poverty reduction therefore requires support that reaches households before they exhaust their resources, alongside sustained investment in employment, education and protection against climate-related losses.

Food insecurity adds urgency to this challenge. The 2026 Global Hunger Index places Pakistan's hunger score [highest in South Asia](#), linking deteriorating conditions to reduced [purchasing power](#), food inflation and climate shocks. Although child stunting and mortality have improved over the longer term, persistent deprivation and rising wasting indicate that progress remains fragile. Flood-related crop losses and higher fuel, transport and fertiliser costs can further restrict access to nutritious food. Agricultural recovery, maternal and child nutrition, and affordable food must therefore be treated as connected priorities. citizens.



Source: Business Recorder

The consequences of weak protection are especially stark in sanitation work. In [“Broken people”](#), Naeem Sadiq recounts the deaths of [17-year-old Vanesh](#) and [35-year-old Ramesh](#) while cleaning an underground tank in Karachi on September 10. He reports more than [two dozen](#) sanitation worker deaths during the year, highlighting informal contracting, unsafe working conditions and failures of accountability. His account also raises the intersection of religious marginalisation and hazardous employment. Mechanised cleaning, documented employment arrangements, independent investigations and reliable compensation would address responsibilities that cannot be discharged through small, private settlements after a death.

Economic disadvantage also shapes access to justice. An October 11 editorial, citing the Annual Prisons Data Report, records [110,513 prisoners](#) against an authorised capacity of [68,832](#). Of these, 82,988, approximately three-quarters, are under trial. Undertrial status does not establish innocence or guilt, but these figures expose the consequences of delayed proceedings and extensive reliance on detention before conviction. For people unable to afford representation or meet bail conditions, poverty can prolong imprisonment while depriving their families of income. Legal aid, timely case review and appropriate alternatives to detention deserve greater attention than prison construction alone.



Source: Sara Akmal/WHO Pakistan

Mental health requires similarly sustained implementation. Launch of a [national mental health policy](#) is a step in the right direction; however, a credible response needs a costed service plan, trained and supervised personnel, clear referral arrangements, and meaningful participation by people with lived experience. Announcing a policy is only the beginning of establishing a functioning system.

Together, these developments show why social policy must address how disadvantages accumulate. Hunger affects learning; insecure work exposes families to injury and destitution; detention removes earners; untreated distress makes recovery harder. Public institutions should be judged by whether they prevent these losses and provide timely support when they occur. For Pakistan's most vulnerable citizens, meaningful progress means being able to work safely, eat adequately, remain in school, obtain care and seek justice without being defeated by the cost.

Security Updates

Pakistan entered October facing sustained militant violence despite an intensive series of counterterrorism operations. Recent attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have inflicted heavy casualties, while security forces have reported killing militants and dismantling hideouts across several districts. The continuing violence raises questions about how operational gains are being consolidated through policing, civilian administration and public cooperation. These questions have become more urgent as confrontation between the federal and provincial governments complicates security decision-making.

On October 8, state media reported that security forces had killed [nine militants](#), including four described as important commanders, during intelligence-based operations in North Waziristan's Palangzai, Nadeem Kot and Kot Khazri areas. Weapons and ammunition were reportedly recovered and several hideouts destroyed. Other operations in early October reportedly killed [thirteen, five and seven militants](#) in separate engagements in North Waziristan. These followed late-September operations in Mir Ali, Bara and Dera Ismail Khan, reflecting sustained activity across affected districts.



Source: Reuters

Militant attacks nevertheless continue to demonstrate considerable organisational capacity. On September 26, a suicide bombing targeting the Aman Mela police checkpost in Darazinda, Dera Ismail Khan, killed twelve people and injured thirty-five. An attack on Kohat's old Police Lines on September 18 claimed twenty-three lives and injured approximately one hundred. PICSS figures for August recorded fifty-four attacks in KP, excluding the merged districts, compared with thirty-six in July, a 50 per cent increase. The targeting of police facilities places additional pressure on institutions already responsible for maintaining everyday security.

The persistence of attacks alongside frequent operations points to difficulties in sustaining control after militant networks are disrupted. Killing commanders can interrupt planning and coordination, but groups may recover where recruitment, financing and local intimidation continue. [Lasting improvements](#) depend on the ability of police and civilian authorities to investigate networks, protect witnesses, prosecute offences and maintain a dependable presence. Progress should therefore be assessed through declining attacks, functioning public institutions and residents' ability to travel and earn a living safely.

Relations with Afghanistan add another layer of difficulty. Islamabad accuses the Taliban authorities of providing sanctuary and support to the TTP, while recurring border tensions obstruct communication and commerce. Addressing cross-border militancy requires verifiable commitments, sustained diplomatic engagement and reliable channels for managing incidents. Border communities also need predictable arrangements for legitimate movement and trade. Prolonged disruption damages livelihoods and can widen the distance between affected populations and the authorities responsible for their security.

Pakistan's experience since [2001](#) demonstrates both substantial counterterrorism capacity and persistent weaknesses in the wider policy framework. Major operations dismantled militant strongholds and reversed territorial control in areas such as [Swat and the former tribal districts](#). Maintaining those gains has required civilian institutions capable of delivering justice, services and economic opportunity. Balochistan presents a distinct challenge, where attacks on security forces, infrastructure and Chinese interests intersect with longstanding political grievances. Effective responses must account for these different local conditions.

The immediate priority is a security programme with clear civilian and military responsibilities, parliamentary oversight and credible arrangements for public consultation.

Climate Change Related Updates

The World Meteorological Organisation's warning of an intensifying El Niño adds uncertainty to Pakistan's climate and economic outlook. According to its October update, the phenomenon is expected to peak in December and persist through [February 2027](#), potentially ranking among [the strongest recorded since 1950](#). Rising surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific are expected to influence temperatures and rainfall patterns worldwide, increasing drought and flood risks across different regions.



Source: Reuters

For Pakistan, the implications require close monitoring, particularly as farmers enter the winter cropping season. Changes in rainfall and temperature could affect soil moisture, irrigation demand and crop development. The effects will vary by location and depend on other weather systems, so the global forecast should not be read as a definitive prediction of drought or flooding within Pakistan. Updated national and regional forecasts will be essential for assessing risks to agriculture, water availability and settlements.

The economic consequences could extend through food and energy markets. Weather-related production losses in exporting countries may increase import costs, while domestic crop damage would place further pressure on farming incomes and household purchasing power. Families still recovering from floods, inflation and livelihood losses would have limited capacity to absorb another disruption. [Water management](#) will also require careful coordination as agricultural, household and electricity-generation needs compete for available supplies.

The period ahead provides an opportunity for anticipatory action. Seasonal forecasts should inform irrigation planning, crop advisories and district-level preparedness, with information reaching farmers in accessible local languages. Authorities should identify vulnerable communities, prepare assistance arrangements and monitor food supplies and prices. Clear communication about forecast uncertainty will help households and institutions make informed decisions as conditions develop.

Reading Recommendations

- Reviving the Role of Youth in Pakistan's Social and Political Life ([Click Here](#))
- From Digital Ambition to Democratic Trust: Charting Pakistan's Path Toward Inclusive Digital Governance ([Click Here](#))
- Why Are Sexual Violence Cases Rising While Convictions Remain So Low in Pakistan? ([Click Here](#))
- Pakistan's Rising Poverty: What Is Driving the Recent Increase in Poverty and Household Vulnerability? (Minimum Wage versus Actual Living Costs) ([Click Here](#))
- Protecting Pakistan's Children: Why Are Children Still Vulnerable to Abuse and What Happens When They Report It? ([Click Here](#))
- Beyond Hunger: Tackling Nutritional Deficiencies Among Pakistani Children ([Click Here](#))
- When the Weather Becomes a Workplace Hazard: Climate Change and Labour Rights in Pakistan ([Click Here](#))
- Battleground Algorithms: How Artificial Intelligence is Shaping Modern Conflict Narratives ([Click Here](#))
- Reimagining Civil Society Action in Pakistan ([Click Here](#))
- Building Digital Resilience of Civil Society ([Click Here](#))
- Why Pakistan's Entrepreneurial Landscape Has Struggled to Deliver for Its Youth: A Critical South Asian Comparison ([Click Here](#))
- Mental Health Access for Women: Cultural Stigma and Systemic Barriers ([Click Here](#))
- Concrete Over Canopy: The Unmaking of Islamabad's Green Capital Dream ([Click Here](#))
- Menstrual Health Management: Policy Gaps, Access to Hygiene Products and Cultural Taboos ([Click Here](#))
- Climate Change and Food Security in Pakistan: A Crisis on Our Plate ([Click Here](#))
- Environmental Health Risks: Gendered impacts of air pollution, water contamination, and climate change on women ([Click Here](#))
- Imagination as the Blueprint of Reality ([Click Here](#))
- Constitution for All: Rethinking Gender Inclusive Governance in Pakistan ([Click Here](#))
- Rethinking Reforms Process in Balochistan: Innovation and Leadership at BCSA ([Click Here](#))
- Sports as a Tool for Preventing Violent Extremism in Pakistan ([Click Here](#))
- Groundwater Recharge: Reviving the Hidden Lifeline ([Click Here](#))
- Selling Misinformation ([Click Here](#))
- Data-Driven Cities: Lessons from World for Pakistan ([Click Here](#))
- The FY 2025–26 Budget and Its Impact on Pakistan's IT & ITeS Sector ([Click Here](#))
- Planting for Survival: Pakistan's Path Out of the Heat ([Click Here](#))
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