

Summary

The arrest of Pakistani ex-Prime Minister Imran Khan has further complicated socio-political unrest in Pakistan, which is already being battered by Islamic and separatist terrorism as well as large-scale protests. Given Pakistan's fragile economy and instable politics, protests are expected to become more violent. In addition, the country has seen the second-largest increase worldwide in terrorism and separatist violence. Security forces are most often targeted, but passers-by can also become collateral targets.

Recent events and developments

On May 9, 2023, Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan was arrested by governmental paramilitary forces. Immediately afterwards, mass protests erupted across the country, with thousands arrested and at least 9 casualties. Quickly after, internet access was cut in large parts of the nation. Khan was released on bail on May 12 but has called for more protests. Large-scale political protests have been extremely common throughout Pakistan. Among them, violent riots have also taken place with at least 184 casualties in 468 events in the past year.

Additionally, the country has seen the second-largest increase worldwide in terrorism and separatist violence, with deaths from such events rising from 292 in 2021 to 643 in 2022. Separatists attack only in Balochistan. Other attacks are perpetrated by the Islamic group Pakistan Taliban (TTP). It targets mostly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and to a lesser extent the capital Islamabad and the other provinces of Pakistan. Of 294 events in the past year, 1 was in the capital, Islamabad, with a total of 3 casualties. Most other attempts have been thwarted.

Impact assessment

The protests following Khan's arrest are unlikely to abate, as his imprisonment can fuel further violent protests. This violence can be perpetrated against security forces but also against other governmental actors as many of Khan's supporters see his arrest as a political plot by the government and military. Retributive action from authorities is also likely. Despite Khan's release, the probability of large-scale protests remains high as an agreement on a date for new national elections seems unlikely. In addition, the current Pakistani health and economic crises, which have increased child mortality and hunger, as well as reduced access to clean water, are expected to exacerbate social unrest. The continued social decline could see large foreign projects become targeted, such as the case of The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Security forces are by far the most common target in both separatist and terrorist attacks. Foreigners can also become collateral targets if caught up in areas where government forces and civilians clash, and due to the unpredictable nature of terrorist attacks.

Advice from Forth Global

- Make sure emergency and evacuation plans are updated and appropriately distributed to employees on the ground.
- Workers travelling to Pakistan should undertake a three-day HEAT training prior to deployment.
- Advise staff to avoid protests and demonstrations of any kind, as violence is likely to erupt.
- Monitor local news to stay informed about any developments regarding the political situation and planned protests. Be aware that internet access may not be guaranteed.
- Advise staff to avoid all non-essential travel to Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. If travel is necessary, advise staff to plan their journey ahead and check the state of the roads.

Customized advice

Please contact us for specific advice:

+31 (0) 35 543 04 37

christiaan@forthglobal.com

We provide a wide range of services to prepare your organization and employees for situations like these. More information on our website: www.forthglobal.com

[DISCLAIMER](#)