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**Tariq Parvez**  
President Advisory Board, NIOC:  
Former Director General  
Federal Investigation Agency

**Zahid Hussain**  
Member NIOC AB:  
Eminent journalist particularly  
specializing in countering terrorism

**Samina Ahmed**  
Member NIOC AB:  
Senior Adviser Asia and Project Director,  
South Asia for the International Crisis Group

**Zubair Habib**  
Chairman CPLC Karachi, Member  
NIOC AB:  
For community outreach.

**Jawaid Akhtar QPM**  
Member NIOC AB:  
Police Officer. retired as the Deputy Chief  
Constable of West Yorkshire Police

**Fasi Zaka**  
Member NIOC AB:  
Communications expert. To steer the  
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**Kashif Akram Noon**  
Lead Researcher

**Saroop Ijaz**  
Legal Expert

## NIOC DIRECTORATE

## CONSULTANTS

# Director's Message

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**I**T gives me a great pleasure to report that the National Initiative against Organized Crime (NIOC) has successfully completed the first year of its operations since 01 November 2019.

I express gratitude to our 6-Member Advisory Board: Tariq Parvez, Zahid Hussain, Samina Ahmed, Zubair Habib, Jawaid Akhtar and Fasi Zaka for invaluable advice and guidance.

Our Directorate's small team of Amir Rana, Ali Nekokara, Hassan Sardar along with Consultants Kashif Noon, Ammar Jaffri and Saroop Ijaz have made a huge difference in promoting the cause for which NIOC was established.

We feel proud of undertaking a research study on Gaps in CE Laws, a Project awarded to us recently by the British High Commission in Islamabad.

Above all, we are grateful for the support NIOC has got from Vienna-based Global Initiative Resilience Fund.

We are committed to making a difference in building community resilience against Organized Crime in Pakistan.

**TARIQ KHOSA**

**01 December 2020**

# Minutes of NIOC's 13th AB Meeting

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THE 13th Advisory Board Meeting of the National Initiative against Organised Crime (NIOC) was held on Friday, 6th of November 2020, at 4 pm. The Board president Tariq Parvez and the following members participated: Zahid Hussain, Jawaid Akhtar and Fasi Zaka. Samina Ahmed and Zubair Habib could not participate as they were in Turkey and Saudi Arabia, respectively.

NIOC Directorate was represented by Tariq Khosa (director), Ali Nekokara (deputy director) and Hassan Sardar (manager administration). NIOC secretary Amir Rana could not participate as he was in Turkey.

Meeting was also attended by NIOC consultants Kashif Noon and Ammar Jaffri and legal expert Saroop Ijaz.

Director NIOC apprised the meeting about the award of a project on counter-extremism (CE) legislation by the British High Commission to NIOC/PIPS. Over the next four months or so, a team finalised by NIOC will undertake a study on "Gaps in CE Legislation and Way Forward." President NIOC AB Tariq Parvez will lead the project.

Director NIOC informed the Board members about the status of the report on "National Strategy against Organized Crime in Pakistan." He shared that NIOC consultant Kashif Noon will draft executive summary and Secretary Amir Rana would get it professionally edited before releasing it to relevant stakeholders for peer review.

Consultant Kashif Noon was further provided with the input to prepare a concept note for holding a webinar on aspects of human smuggling to be jointly held by NIOC with the FIA. Ammar Jaffri, consultant, would be the organizer for this initiative.

An AB member Fasi Zaka put forward a suggestion to organize podcasts based on interviews of selected professionals related with different areas of organized crimes in Pakistan. The Board appreciated and approved the proposal. Director NIOC would work out further modalities of weekly podcasts during Nov-Dec 2020.

Kashif Noon will complete a case study of "Crime-Politics Nexus in Karachi" and submit the final draft towards end of November 2020.

Director NIOC informed about continuing collaboration between NIOC and PIPS. It would be formalised through establishing an MoU between the two organisations.

Director NIOC discussed various pros and cons of registering NIOC with the SECP as a non-profit NGO or for-profit CSO. Further modalities are being considered and AB would be kept informed.

NIOC will start working on a project proposal for funding by GI Resilience Fund for 2021. Director NIOC will work with the concerned directorate staff in developing the proposal that would be put up for AB's approval in the next meeting to be held on Friday (4th of December 2020).

# Violence Against Women & Girls: Revisiting Pakistan's International Human Rights Obligations

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By Jamil Junejo



COVID-19 is not only a public health crisis, it also carries various implications for democracy, human rights and gender justice. According to a recent special report by Freedom House, "Democracy Under Lockdown", since the Coronavirus outbreak, the condition of democracy and human rights has grown worse in 80 countries.

**I**T is argued that COVID-19 has deepened the existing gender inequalities and gender power imbalances leading to gender-based violence (GBV) across the world. However, response to the implications on gender-based violence remains insufficient. According to the United Nations, one-fifth of the 206 countries analyzed, or 42 States, had no gender-sensitive measures in place to respond to the pandemic.

There is a critique on the preparedness and response plan of Pakistan with regards to its gender component. A great deal of literature has been produced so far as to how better respond to gender-based violence in the wake of COVID-19 in Pakistan.

Keeping that aspect aside, in this article, I reiterate Pakistan's obligations under Concluding Observations of UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies and Outcome Document of Third Universal Periodic Review of Pakistan (2017) with a belief that an effective response to these recommendation at policy and practice level could not only overshadow impacts of COVID-19 on GBV but also help improving the overall situation of gender-based violence in the country. Further, I will take into account violence against women and girls (VAW&G) only under GBV.



The Outcome Document of the review adopted by UPR working group lays down various recommendations for Pakistan. However, concerning VAW&G, Pakistan accepted to fully staff and fund the national human rights institutions outlined in its Action Plan for Human Rights to better collecting and analyzing of disaggregated data in support of laws, policies and safeguards related to women and girls. It accepted to strengthen the national and provincial commissions on the status of women through increased funding and support, given the importance of the issue. Also, it accepted to implement, effectively and stringently, legislation criminalizing violence against women and domestic violence including marital rape and improve data collection mechanisms on violence against women.

Pakistan ratified Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) on 12 March 1996. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in its concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Pakistan at its seventy-fifth session (10–28 February 2020) recommended Pakistan: to adopt legislation to criminalize all forms of gender-based violence against women, including domestic violence and marital rape, without exemptions, to adopt a national plan of action to combat all forms of gender-based violence against women with a particular focus on domestic violence. It also recommended to introduce systematic capacity-building for judges, prosecutors, police officers and other law enforcement officials on the strict application of criminal law provisions for gender-based violence against women and on gender-sensitive investigation procedures, and introduce mandatory training for medical personnel.

READ Editorial | Do Only Irresponsible Mullahs Enjoy Liberties In "Free" Pakistan?

Further, it recommended the government to ensure the availability of inclusive and accessible shelters for women who are victims of violence, medical and psychological support services as well as legal counselling and rehabilitation services for victims by providing adequate funding, staff training, while regularly monitoring those services. In addition to that, it recommended to systematically collect and analyse data on all forms of GBV, disaggregated by age, region, disability and relationship between the victim and perpetrator, as well as data on the number of protection orders issued, on prosecutions and on the sentences imposed on perpetrators, and include such data in the next periodic report.



Pakistan ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) on 23 Jun 2010. Human Rights Committee in its Concluding Observations on the initial report of Pakistan adopted by the Committee at its 120th session, 3-28 July 2017, recommended Pakistan to effectively enforce the anti-honour killings, anti-rape laws and other relevant laws criminalizing violence against women and domestic violence, and monitor their enforcement throughout the territory. Also, it recommended protecting women and girls from sexual abuse, harassment, trafficking, and investigating any such cases to bring perpetrators to justice and providing the necessary assistance to victims.

Pakistan ratified UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) on 23 Jun 2010. Committee against Torture in its Concluding Observations on the initial report of Pakistan at its sixtieth session (18 April-12 May 2017) recommended Pakistan to intensify efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate all forms of violence against women by strengthening legal provisions in national and provincial legislation that address and criminalize violence against women. It recommended to guarantee in practice that women who are victims of violence have immediate access to legal remedies, effective protection, including shelters, medical care and psychological support. Furthermore, it recommended to conduct awareness-raising campaigns and training for public officials concerning their due diligence obligation under the Convention to protect women from violence, including honour killings, and to refrain from acquiescing in or condoning such violence.

#### READ Pakistan's Politicians Will Be Remembered for A Lack Of Audacity

Pakistan ratified Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on 12 Nov 1990. Committee on the Rights of the Child in its Concluding Observations on the fifth periodic report adopted by the Committee at its seventy-second session (17 May-3 June 2016) recommended Pakistan to ensure that effective protection, including shelter and other protection measures, is provided to women and children who are victims of crimes committed in the name of so-called honour, and to those at risk of falling victim to such crimes.

Pakistan ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) on 17 Apr 2008. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its Concluding Observations on the initial report of Pakistan adopted by the Committee at its sixty-first session (29 May-23 June 2017) recommended Pakistan to effectively enforce the anti-honour killings laws and all other relevant laws criminalizing violence against women and monitor their enforcement. Further, it recommended to promptly investigate cases of violence against women and punishing the perpetrators with penalties in commensurate with the gravity of the offences.

Undoubtedly, the government of Pakistan has taken many steps at various levels in the light of aforementioned obligations; however, only a complete compliance will improve the situation of VAW&G in the country considering relevant impacts of COVID-19 on VAW&G.

**Published in [www.nayadaur.tv](http://www.nayadaur.tv), November 02, 2020**

## Yet more space

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**M**ANY a reactionary outfit has been allowed to thrive on Pakistani soil. Each one of them has ill served the global image of this county. Indeed, their incendiary rhetoric and violent actions have reinforced the enemy's narrative and weakened our principled positions on regional human rights issues. And in its efforts to 'manage' the violence these ultra-right-wing outfits wreak, the government cedes more and more space to them – a vicious cycle that appears to have no end in sight.

The latest instance of this myopic approach was played out at the Faizabad interchange between Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The site was occupied by many Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan activists protesting against the blasphemous caricatures by the French magazine Charlie Hebdo. Despite clashes with the police, they refused to end their sit-in until the government met their demands.

These included: boycotting French products, expelling the French ambassador, not appointing an ambassador to France and releasing all arrested TLP activists. On Monday night, the TLP announced that the government had agreed to its demands. While no official confirmation has yet been forthcoming, the interior ministry apparently ordered the immediate release of the detained activists. Once again it seems the ultra-right has browbeaten the Pakistani state into capitulation.

The sense of déjà-vu is unmistakable, and not only because such craven surrender has been par for the course for some time in this country. It was in November 2017 at the Faizabad interchange, during the PML-N government's tenure, that the TLP first made its presence felt when its activists forcibly occupied the site for over 20 days to demand the ouster of the law minister on entirely specious grounds.

A police operation went awry, forcing the resignation of the minister and a humiliating climbdown by the government. The end came with a questionable army-brokered agreement – and cash being distributed among the protesters by a senior military official. In the elections that followed next year, the TLP – until recently a little-known outfit whose raison d'être had been the lionisation of former Punjab governor Salmaan Taseer's murderer – played spoiler and dented the PML-N vote bank in several constituencies. It has since demonstrated its destructive street power on several other occasions, most notably on the announcement of Asiya Bibi's acquittal by the Supreme Court.

The group tasted blood when it first clashed with the authorities in 2017, and like other such entities, it will continue to use its bully pulpit to pressure governments into wholly untenable compromises that an economically weak country cannot afford. Blocking coverage of the protests on television or suspending mobile phone services, as the PTI government has done this time, are redundant and short-term tactics. Matters have come to a point where it is imperative to stop molycoddling groups of TLP's ilk, let alone using them for dubious political objectives. They can only lead Pakistan to ruin.

**Published in Dawn, November 18th, 2020**

# The deteriorating state of rehabilitation centres and Pakistan's reluctance to own the drug problem

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By Shazia Mehbooba

A staggering 99.7 percent of those who seek treatment for drug addiction in Pakistan simply cannot afford it, says a survey.



Fourteen-year-old, Obaid Rehmat\* is currently undergoing rehabilitation for drug addiction at a private clinic in Islamabad. In addition to hashish, the teenager was addicted to hard drugs such as heroin and crystal meth.

Obaid started using drugs when he was in the sixth grade. Drug abuse is common where he lives, in Khyber District in the Peshawar division. "There is no taboo against using hashish in our area, particularly on happy occasions such as weddings," the teenager tells Eos. His first exposure to hashish was at his elder sister's wedding.

“I was living a normal life until I started using hashish and then I also got on heroin. But since I started using meth, my life turned into hell,” says Obaid, now in the ninth grade. His father, Rehmat Khan\*, says bringing his son to Islamabad for treatment was hardly affordable, but there was no other option if he were to save his son’s life.

Rehmat Khan was concerned about Obaid’s failing health and his waning interest in studies amidst other activities. The day he came to know about Obaid’s meth addiction was nothing less than a nightmare.

### **The shortcomings of treatment facilities**

Khan made efforts to admit his child for treatment to the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF)-run Model Addiction Treatment & Rehabilitation Centre (MATRC) located in Islamabad, under the Tribal Areas quota, but could not get space for him there.

“There are some private clinics providing treatment in Peshawar, but their treatment charges are very high and a poor man, like me, cannot afford them,” he says. Some private centres in Islamabad are more affordable than those in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Here he found a suitable one for Obaid.

The UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in its Technical Summary Report on Drug Use in Pakistan 2013 revealed that addiction to hard drugs is on the rise among Pakistanis, with 6.7 million past-year users, including 4.25 million thought to be “drug dependent”. Yet, “treatment and specialist interventions are in short supply, available to less than 30,000 drug users a year. Moreover, not all structured treatment is free of charge,” the reports highlights.

A staggering 99.7 percent of those who seek treatment for drug addiction in Pakistan simply cannot afford it, the survey further reveals.



Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan are the most affected provinces in terms of opiate users, with tens of thousands of drug users, especially the youth. KP had the highest prevalence overall of any form of drug use – 10.9 percent of the population had used an illicit substance in the past year. Meanwhile, Balochistan had the highest prevalence of opiate users – 1.6 percent of its population uses either heroin, opium or both.

A senior officer at the ANF headquarters in Rawalpindi, requesting not to be named, tells Eos that although limited-capacity treatment centres are operational in different parts of the country, they are not adequate to accommodate the large numbers of patients.

The ANF official discloses that a 45-bed MATRC, working on self-help basis, was established in Quetta, but has remained closed since January 2016 due to the non-availability of staff. There is no treatment facility operational under the ANF in Peshawar, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata), adds the ANF official.

The MATRC Islamabad is a 36-bed facility with approximately 2,650 patients on its waiting list, according to ANF documents. “Besides Islamabad and Rawalpindi, the centre has to accommodate patients from Gilgit-Baltistan, AJK and the Tribal Areas,” says the MATRC project director Jibran Yousafzai.

The centre tries to accommodate the maximum number of patients, but people doubt their credibility when they are turned away, he says. And a significant number of people approach the centre, like Rehmat Khan and Obaid. “MATRC has the capacity to treat around 400 patients annually. It provided treatment to 5,747 drug patients from 2005 to 2019,” says Yousafzai.

### **What are the authorities doing to help?**

The KP provincial government, in coordination with the ANF, had constructed a 100-bed facility in Peshawar but, upon its completion, the government handed it over to the social welfare department of KP, because the department needed a building for Prime Minister Imran Khan’s inauguration of a shelter home last year, according to an ANF officer in Peshawar.

The KP Social Welfare Department Secretary Idrees Khan claims that the building location was not suitable for drug patients, and the department will soon establish a facility in a rented building in Peshawar.

Talking to Eos, Idrees Khan says the government has planned to establish rehabilitation facilities in every district of KP and, in this regard, they are planning to coordinate with

the health department. However, according to the ANF Peshawar officer, a proposal to start another joint venture for a hospital with the provincial government was denied by the secretary.



Meanwhile, Dr Said Ramzan, a Quetta-based philanthropist, holds the Balochistan government responsible for the lack of rehabilitation facilities in the province.

A minister or two had visited the centre while it was operational and had also pledged support, but they never returned to uphold their promises, says Ramzan.

“No one is ready to take responsibility,” says Javed Baloch, director of the Detoxification and Rehabilitation Complex (DRC) Quetta. According to him, from 2008 to 2019, the complex received only one million rupees for the purchase of medicines and a mere three million rupees for the diet of patients.

As far as facilities are concerned, it has a similar problem as the MATRC. “We have a 250-bedded complex,” says Baloch, “but it is not enough to accommodate all drug patients, as the number is much higher than the available space. We have to put them on the waiting list.”

Baloch warns that the drug abuse problem may get out of control if state institutions do not take the issue seriously.

He draws attention to the alarming rise of drug abuse in the areas bordering Afghanistan. According to another UNODC report, *The Global Afghan Opium Trade 2011*, of the estimated 350 to 400 tons of opium trafficked through Pakistan in 2009, an estimated 132

tons were consumed in Pakistan. Also in 2009, of the approximately 160 tons of heroin trafficked from Afghanistan into Pakistan, an estimated 20 tons were considered to have been consumed in Pakistan.

“Easy access to drugs and a lack of treatment facilities have worsened the situation in Balochistan,” Ramzan says. Who will take responsibility?

### **Reluctance to own the drug problem**



In 2014, the UN recommended that addiction be treated as a medical issue, and that the member countries of the United Nations address it through their healthcare systems.

The UNODC Adviser on Drug Demand Reduction in Pakistan, Dr Manzoorul Haq, says, “State institutions’ approach towards this mental health issue lacks coordination. The UN has termed drug addiction as a health risk factor which needs serious efforts at the state level. The issue should be a health subject but, in Pakistan, it is handed over to the social welfare department, which should be responsible for the rehabilitation of recovered persons to prevent relapse.”

Farman Ali Turi, director PsychAid Islamabad, points out that “If the state can declare HIV/Aids a national health risk factor, why is the state ‘reluctant’ to own the drug problem? After all, injected drugs are a leading factor of HIV/Aids.”

The federal health secretary, Allah Bakhsh, says his ministry is facilitating the provinces with treatment and rehabilitation centres under the Global Financing Facility (GFF). He adds some public sector hospitals in Islamabad and the rest of Punjab have allocated

separate psychiatry wards where treatment is also provided to patients with drug disorders.

Yet the attitude towards these patients is apathetic. A psychiatrist at the state-run PIMS hospital in Islamabad, requesting not to be named, says, “The hospital [PIMS] has a 20-bed psychiatry ward, but they prefer accommodating patients with other mental health issues rather than drug users.” In her view, accommodating drug users is “a waste of time and money” because “99 percent of drug patients are non-cooperative and, without patient cooperation, treatment is not possible.”

A senior bureaucrat in the Ministry of Narcotics argues that every stakeholder has developed its own mechanism of providing treatment to drug patients. The majority of such clinics do not follow international treatment standards approved by an anti-drug agency and they lack trained and skilled staff. The ministry has sent a draft bill for the establishment of a new regulatory authority but, according to the bureaucrat, Prime Minister Imran Khan passed it along to the health ministry for consent.

No development on the bill has been made so far.

DRC Quetta’s Javed Baloch insists that the way forward is to identify the responsibilities of the various stakeholders, adding that providing treatment facilities should be the health department’s prerogative while rehabilitation should be the responsibility of the social welfare department. “Well-coordinated efforts by the stakeholders can improve the situation but, under the existing circumstances, it seems impossible,” he says.

Despite drugs having harmed millions of people in the country, it seems we and state are still in denial. “The undeniable drug issue is affecting our health, economic and political development directly or indirectly,” says Turi. “We don’t realize how much drug abuse has penetrated the roots of our society.”

Those struggling with drug abuse disorders, such as young Obaid, are in dire need of immediate care. They can no longer be turned away from a chance to regain their lives.

\*Names have been changed to protect identities

**This article was first published in Dawn, EOS, November 15th, 2020**

# Witness protection

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**A**MONGST the numerous factors hobbling the criminal justice system in Pakistan is the fact that due to inefficient witness protection programmes, eyewitnesses are afraid to testify, or end up retracting their testimony. As pointed out recently in this paper, three witnesses retracted their statements in the high-profile case of Nageebullah Mehsud, an aspiring model who was gunned down in a staged encounter on the outskirts of Karachi allegedly by policemen. According to the counsel of Nageebullah's family, the witnesses backed out because they were afraid to testify against 'influential' suspects, which include former policeman Rao Anwar. This is not the first incident of its kind, as ATC judges have said on record that members of the public are 'too frightened' to assist the state in prosecuting terrorists and violent criminals. This is understandable, for unless witnesses are promised foolproof protection for themselves and their families, not many will risk their lives to testify against dangerous suspects. While a witness protection law has been passed in Sindh, its full implementation remains lacking, which explains people's reluctance to take the witness stand without fear.

However, should the state so desire, it can put in place an effective witness protection programme that can help bring violent perpetrators to justice. For example, the paramilitary Rangers ensure protection to witnesses in cases which they prosecute, and observers say this was one of the key reasons for the successful prosecution in the Baldia factory fire incident in Karachi. Indeed, the state must ensure that such programmes – which protect the identity of vulnerable witnesses and help relocate them if necessary – are put in place for better prosecution of cases of terrorism and violent crime. If the state leaves witnesses to fend for themselves, no one will be willing to risk their life to testify against violent actors and powerful, well-connected suspects. Pakistan's criminal justice system leaves a lot to be desired. Along with better investigation, a credible witness protection programme can help improve matters.

**Published in Dawn, November 20th, 2020**

# Countering financial crimes

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By Dr Ikramul Haq | Huzaima Bukhari

**I**N recent days, Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has taken many steps to enforce internal accountability mechanism to uproot corruption/malpractices within the organisation. The steps like making Chief Commissioners as 'IRS Ombudsman' and establishing 'Integrity Management Cell' (IMC) to facilitate general public/taxpayers for filing of complaints against corrupt practices of officers/officials of FBR are laudable. However, to avoid conflict of interest, an independent watchdog is necessary that can effectively combat tax frauds, money laundering, terrorist financing and other financial crimes. Prosecution should also be independent and not through the same agency where crime is committed in connivance with the insiders or otherwise.

FBR has issued a clear warning on its website and through newspaper [Can't Hide Any More: Avail Yourself Of Last Chance] to those who are filers but not declaring correct facts or NTN (National Tax Number) holders but failed to file tax returns or unregistered withholding agents not filing statements/returns to do so by December 8, 2020, the date will not be extended. They can no longer deceive the nation and tax authorities as FBR claims to have their complete data.

While FBR is determined to chase all non-compliant citizens, the Directorate General of Internal Audit (Inland Revenue), according to a report, FBR's DG of internal Audit detects massive tax evasion in 6 months, Business Recorder, November 17, 2020, "has detected massive tax evasion cases of nearly Rs. 1,300 billion during investigations conducted during the last six months of 2020-21, reflecting serious loopholes and irregularities in the working of income tax, sales tax, and federal excise departments of the FBR". The report ["2020-21" is a typographical error], sadly reflects on the performance of Inland Revenue Service (IRS) and Customs for failing to counter huge pilferages, due to lack of trained manpower, capacity, facilitates, tools or connivance. Some glaring facts given in the report are summarised below:

Cases of non-filing of income tax returns by persons showing sales tax turnover of Rs. 50 million and above. Non-filers and withholding tax agents using fake persons for the purpose of evading income tax. The impact of revenue loss is around Rs. 500 billion in this area alone.

- Manipulation in the system of Pakistan Revenue Automation (Pvt) Limited (PRAL) causing a revenue loss of around Rs.10 billion to the national exchequer. Cases of Rs.11 billion involving bogus sales tax registered persons.
- Transactions with estimated revenue loss of Rs.10 billion within the steel sector.
- Loss of revenue of Rs. 15 billion caused by different units abusing SRO 1125 as exporters. Billions of rupees evaded by importing finished fabrics misusing the same SRO [it could not be possible without the connivance of Customs authorities].
- Large-scale tax evasion and frauds in withholding tax regime.

Time will tell whether revenue leakages of Rs. 1300 billion, as reported in the news story, are bona fide or not, and how much recoupment of revenue losses is made by FBR's officers. Cases of "mega tax frauds" are frequently leaked to Press by FBR officials, but subsequent remedial actions are not made public.

In majority of tax frauds, the parties are the official(s) and the taxpayer(s) directly or through their tax advisers. Cases where unilateral tax fraud is committed are rare, such as using fictitious bank account(s) to obtain fake refunds. Even in such cases, bank officials are in collaboration with tax officials. It is thus imperative that in all tax fraud cases, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) is informed by FBR to initiate proceedings against the tax official [public officeholders as defined in section 5(m) of National Accountability Bureau Ordinance, 1999] and the other beneficial party, booked as partner in financial crime.

The Supreme Court of Pakistan on January 9, 2020, questioned the FBR's counsel why PRAL was not made a department and why is it working as a private company? A three-member Bench, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan, observed: "Why does the FBR not design software itself?" FBR's counsel contended that the company and not the government was paying all the employees working in PRAL. The Supreme Court clubbed the case of PRAL with suo moto case of ISAF (International Security Assistance Forces) Container and informed FBR that they wanted to take this matter to its logical end. Further details are available in 'ISAF containers scam: FBR preparing new report', Business Recorder, January 28, 2020.

In Dismantle containers' mafia, Business Recorder, September 14, 2018, it was specifically mentioned:

"It is a matter of great regret that at the cost of the country, massive tax evasion continues unabated and many tax advisers, even though being instrumental in it, are now advising

the PTI government how to improve things! The repeated vow by the Prime Minister, Imran Khan, of collecting Rs. 8 trillion.....counter tax evasion, loot and plunder of national wealth continue unabated due to unholy alliance amongst unscrupulous tax advisers, greedy businessmen and corrupt tax officials. The evasion and corruption of billions of rupees to the national exchequer is not possible without the connivance of this trio".

"It is a disturbing reality that containers-both inbound and outbound-are not scanned in Pakistan. In importation, the collector-businessman mafia deprives the nation of billions of rupees in the form of evaded duties-Customs, Sales Tax and Federal Excise Duty, wherever applicable. These goods then remain outside the purview of income taxation as well. This is the main cause of generation of underground economy. Customs mafia is not ready to accept simple technological reforms of scanning of all the containers and baggage".

While the ISAF Container Case pertaining to 2007-2010. remained a mystery, another mega scam, according to a report, surfaced where the Customs Intelligence Department "unearthed a network of top officials involved in large-scale misdeclarations of description and value of imported goods in over 900 containers causing losses worth billions to the national exchequer"-see detail comments in Tax frauds, corruption & NAB, Business Recorder, February 7, 2020.

It was claimed in the report of a newspaper: "The corruption in customs department has become so vivid at the collectorate level that DG Customs Intelligence Muhammad Zahid had sent several letters to FBR Chairman Shabbar Zaidi for taking action against the involved officials....A special report on fraud at Customs Station, Torkham was also sent to the Chairman of FBR on December 6, 2019....However, no action was taken against those officers involved in the corruption".

FBR or any other institution cannot clean its own house by making committees and issuing instructions to refrain from malpractices/corruption or asking taxpayers/citizens to file complaints. Why would the dishonest in their ranks and files take any action against those whom they serve and mint millions every month at the expense of the state. The decision of Prime Minister of December 10, 2019 to lodge a crackdown against tax evasion in cigarette industry and other sectors by reactivating Inland Revenue Enforcement Network (IREN) also failed to bring desired results. Now, the FBR is given powers to monitor money laundering, benami transactions and regulate transactions by jewelers, real estate agents, accountants etc [Designated Non-Financial Business and Professions (DNFBPs)] under amended anti-money laundering (AML)/Counter Financing of Terrorism (CFT) laws without providing training and facilities to perform these functions and ignoring the global standards of monitoring through an independent

body and not through self-regulation to those who are most vulnerable for money laundering etc!

On January 28, 2020, the Supreme Court directed the Chairman FBR to restart inquiry against an officer in an illegal tax refund matter. The three-member bench, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan, ordered FBR to complete its inquiry against DC Sales Tax in refund of taxes. The Apex Court passed strict observation: "How is an officer being cleared and another punished having committed the same offence". It was reported in the Press that the Honourable Chief Justice of Pakistan expressed his disappointment and asked, "Why are you people not telling the truth to the court....."don't play games, we know you will produce an old inquiry (before the court). Why don't you catch an officer involved in misconduct?" On earlier hearing of the case on January 7, 2020, the Supreme Court expressed its disappointment with FBR over the delay in investigation of undue tax refund.

The above are just a few instances of malpractices and corruption in FBR. Numerous cases were reported and documented in articles published from 2008-2019, some of which are as follows:

1. Dismantle containers' mafia, Business Recorder, September 14, 2018
2. Performance audit of FBR, Business Recorder, July 6, 2018
3. The FBR and revenue losses, The News, February 25, 2018
4. Sordid story of tax frauds-III, Business Recorder, February 3, 2013.
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11. Enough of Revenue losses!, Business Recorder, May 12, 2008.

Now in 2020, the same sordid stories keep on resurfacing in IRS and Customs, when the Prime Minister continues showing his determination to uproot corruption and mafias causing loss of billions of rupees. Way back in March 2015, the NAB forwarded several recommendations to FBR "to plug loopholes" that are the main cause of massive tax evasion and other irregularities. These recommendations, prepared by NAB's Prevention Committee on FBR, were worth considering but nobody in FBR even talks about it, what to speak of briefing the Prime Minister about the same and its implementation. The one recommendation was that 'Automated Income Tax System' in the FBR should be fully

functional, so that doors of corruption and misuse of authority by the tax collectors should be stopped, to increase the volume of revenue in the economy. This critical goal remains unfulfilled till to date.

The matter of corruption is not restricted to FBR alone. All government departments are inflicted with this malaise. The recent case of abuse by government officials of funds of Benazir Income Support Programme, now renamed as Ehsaas, meant for the needy testifies to the grave malady we are faced with. We need all-out reforms in all institutions to make them efficient and transparent, manned by competent people who can deliver.

It is high time that report of Tax Reform Commission of 2016 is made public, its recommendations debated and after taking input of all stakeholders, they should be implemented. The same ought to be the case with other reports relating to anti-corruption efforts that are now part of dusty official shelves. All these should be implemented without any further delay.

A forensic audit of FBR's affairs by a team of competent professionals in this field should be the starting point of telling the nation that the coalition government of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) really believes in accountability and is serious to uproot the causes of corruption. If an agency itself is not transparent and free of corruption even in posting and updating data of income tax returns, registered sales tax persons, refunds etc on monthly basis, how can it enforce tax obligation fairly and fearlessly, monitor DNFBPs and apply laws relating to money laundering, terrorist financing and prohibition of benami transactions?

The Prime Minister needs to quit rhetoric and take some concrete steps in this direction or we will never be able to uproot the cancerous growth of corruption, tax evasion, and all forms of rent-seeking. For this, fundamental structural reforms are needed in all institutions with an independent national watchdog and prosecution agency to monitor all financial crimes for our own sake, not under pressure of Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Searching and appointing only honest persons without effective internal and external checks, prevalent in many countries, will never work to make our institutions effective and free of malpractices and corruption.

The moment has come for the Prime Minister to understand that tax frauds by deceitful businessmen with the help of their unscrupulous advisers and staff, rent-seeking, plundering of national wealth and loan sharking by corrupt politicians, organized crimes like money laundering, terrorist financing by mafias cannot be countered by constituting committees and sub-committees of the departments that are part and parcel of the problem.

For dismantling unholy alliance between robber barons and state functionaries, money launderers and financiers of terrorists, Pakistan needs a special national agency [Financial Crime Monitoring Bureau] for all financial crimes, including tax frauds, money laundering, and financing of terrorism and passing the evidence to an independent and competent National Prosecuting Agency to take them to task in special speedy trial courts where judges have expertise in anti-money laundering and combating financing of terrorism (AML-CFT) laws to deliver judgements swiftly but following Article 10A of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan. This will help us meet all the conditions of FATF and come out of grey list in February 2021.

The complete blueprints of Financial Crime Monitoring Bureau and National Prosecuting Agency have been communicated to Hammad Azhar, Federal Industries and Production Minister and focal person for FATF. In case, Pakistan fails to implement these, then with the present fragmented structures and the incompetent institutions to monitor AML/CFT as explained in 'Pakistan's Archaic Approach to Addressing FATF Mandates', Business Recorder, November 16, 2020, the FATF and world community will not take us seriously knowing how weak and incompetent as well as how discredited our existing institutions are, and the way these are used/abused for political victimisation and favouring/protecting the financiers of every ruling party and winning "supporters" for military dictators in the past.

(The writers, lawyers and partners in Huzaima, Ikram & Ijaz, are member Adjunct Faculty of Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS))

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# Social media rules

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**T**HE dreaded outcome of the state's relentless campaign to control social media has become a reality. With the notification of the 'Removal and Blocking of Unlawful Online Content (Procedure, Oversight and Safeguards) Rules 2020' under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, the government now has legal cover to issue blanket bans on digital content. The rules apply to any social media company operating in Pakistan and require them to set up a brick-and-mortar presence in the country with the goal of eventually moving data servers here.

Given the state's proclivity for surveillance, clamping down on free expression and hounding journalists and activists who use social media to share information, this development marks a dark chapter in Pakistan's digital rights story. In a continuation of this sinister tradition, the rules were gazetted without consultation with stakeholders, rights groups and citizens, despite initial promises that a discussion would take place. National and global digital rights groups have expressed outrage and concern over the rules for legitimate reasons. One worrying turnabout from the initial draft is the removal of the position of 'national coordinator' and the vesting of these powers with the historically censor-happy Pakistan Telecommunication Authority.

Without providing adequate safeguards, the rules give sweeping powers to the PTA to ban and remove content, and ironically also empowers it to conduct a review of its decisions. Its words "integrity, security and defence of Pakistan" make room for blocking content that can create "hatred, contempt or disaffection of government or public servants". Effectively, this means whistleblowers and journalists can be censored when sharing critical views which "harm the reputation" of federal or provincial government officials. The Asia Internet Coalition which represents several social media platforms including Facebook, Google and Apple has pointed out that the rules were passed without a discussion, labelling the demands draconian as the data localisation requirements will prevent people from accessing a free and open internet. Tragically, the same demands will hurt Pakistan's digital economy and cut it off from the rest of the world as they lay the groundwork for an intimidating regulatory environment which forces companies to go against their privacy and regulatory policies regarding "established human rights norms on privacy and freedom of expression". Not only are

these rules a historic own goal on the part of the Ministry of Information, they also cement the government's reputation of being paranoid, restrictive and intolerant.

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# Afghanistan, home to the heroin trade, moves into meth

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By Secunder Kermani



A rehabilitation centre in Kabul is treating Afghans addicted to meth

**U**NDERNEATH a busy bridge in Kabul, among piles of discarded rubbish and a stream of filthy water, lives a drug-ravaged community of homeless men. "It's no place for a human being," said Khudadad, who is 48. "It's not even fit for a dog."

Khudadad has been addicted to both heroin and methamphetamine - known as crystal meth - for the past five years. Heroin has long been a problem in Kabul but now many are turning to meth, a cheaper but equally dangerous drug.

"When I first started, meth wasn't very common," Khudadad said. "But over the past few years more and more people have begun taking it."

A new report released on Tuesday warns that Afghanistan is becoming a significant global producer of methamphetamine. The country's opium poppy fields are already the

source of the majority of the world's heroin, and now this report, by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), warns that crystal meth could eventually become just as big an industry.

The boom is the result of a discovery by drug traffickers that a plant commonly found growing wild in parts of Afghanistan, ephedra, can be used to create the key component of meth: ephedrine.

"The realisation that you could produce methamphetamine from a wild crop in the mountains has been a fundamental gamechanger," said Dr David Mansfield, an expert on Afghanistan's drug industry and lead author of the report.



Drug labs in Afghanistan are now producing meth from a plant commonly found in the wild

Dr Mansfield said drug traffickers previously used to extract ephedrine from more expensive imported medicines but were now able to use this far cheaper alternative and some "simple chemistry".

The ephedra plant has been used to create crystal meth in other parts of the globe too, but not on the scale that has been discovered in Afghanistan. Using satellite images, as well as interviews with Afghan drug producers, Dr Mansfield and a team of researchers have mapped out more than 300 suspected ephedrine labs in just one district in western Afghanistan, Bakwa. The area has become the hub of the meth trade in the country, but Dr Mansfield has also begun identifying labs elsewhere.

The team discovered that methamphetamine production was a "two-tiered process", with ephedrine relatively easy to make even for people in poor households, who then sell it on to more specialised "meth cooks". The researchers were able to identify the images of ephedrine labs through the large quantities of wastewater and dried ephedra crops left over from the process and dumped outside the buildings.



Commonly-found plant ephedra is being used to produce meth

The US has in the past carried out airstrikes on alleged drugs labs in Afghanistan, bombing 68 in a single day in May 2019. But the combination of civilian casualties and ease with which the makeshift factories can be rebuilt led the campaign to be abandoned.

The Taliban, however, do charge the drug traffickers a tax. The EMCDDA report estimates the Taliban could be earning in excess of \$4m a year from Bakwa district alone, depending on the quantity of ephedrine and methamphetamine being produced. The group collects taxes on a wide variety of industries in the areas under its control, though they deny links to the drugs trade.

On the condition of anonymity, one Afghan smuggler told the BBC that taxes were levelled by the insurgents both on farmers harvesting the ephedra crop, and then again on anyone transporting the drug for sale. "There are Taliban checkpoints everywhere," he said, "so you can't hide it from them."

When asked why the Taliban, given their professed Islamic ideology, did not oppose the sale of the drug, the smuggler replied that the Taliban say, "we're in the middle of a war, so it's ok, but when the right time comes, we will ban it."



Around 300 suspected labs were found by researchers in Bakwa district alone

Some of the meth produced in Afghanistan is consumed inside the country, or across the border in Iran. But it seems it is also now being trafficked much further afield.

This year, hundreds of kilograms of the drug, worth tens of millions of dollars and suspected to originate from Afghanistan, have been found hidden onboard cargo boats during search operations by the Sri Lankan Navy, as well as by international forces patrolling the Arabian Sea. There are fears the methamphetamine could end up in Europe too, following an established heroin route from Pakistan and Iran and then through East Africa. Andrew Cunningham, another of the authors of the EMCDDA report, told the BBC that at the moment methamphetamine use in Europe is not "widespread" but added, "there is a good chance the crystal meth will carry on its journey up into Europe at some point."

Authorities in Australia have already noticed a rise in seizures of methamphetamine linked to Afghanistan and neighbouring Iran in recent years, including a huge quantity of the drug dissolved in crates of mineral water bottles, with a street value of more than \$50m, that was discovered in April.

Andrew Parkinson heads a team in the Australian Federal Police conducting forensic analysis of the intercepted drugs and told the BBC that the results show they were,

"produced by the natural form of ephedrine, which indicates to us the starting product is the ephedra plant."

"That gives us ammunition to impact the organized crime groups that are producing this methamphetamine and shipping it to Australia," he said.

While Afghan meth may be exported worldwide, it is on the streets of Kabul that its impact is being felt first and foremost. Back by the bridge that has become a shelter for those addicted to the drug, one man tells us he is spent months searching for his younger brother, a meth user. "Our mother died from all the stress," he said.

With continuing instability in the country, the amount of methamphetamine produced, and number of lives ruined by it, looks like it will only increase. "Business has never been better," said one smuggler, with a laugh.

Additional reporting by Sami Yousafzai & Mahfouz Zubaide

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# 'India most corrupt country in Asia'

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Transparency International survey reveals highest bribery rate of 39% in the South Asian nation



**I**NDIA has emerged as having the highest bribery rate of 39 per cent in the Asian region and the highest rate of people (46 per cent) who used personal connections to access public services, according to a recent survey-report released by Transparency International, a global civil society organization.

"Nearly 50% of those who paid bribes were asked to, while 32% of those who used personal connections said they would not receive the service otherwise," read the report.

For the survey-report titled 'Global Corruption Barometer - Asia,' Transparency International surveyed 20,000 people across 17 Asian countries - largely between June-September this year, seeking their perception of and experiences with corruption in the

past 12 months. Six key public services are covered in the report including police, courts, public hospitals, procurement of identity documents and utilities.

"Of the people surveyed in India, who met the police, 42% had paid bribes. Use of bribes was also rampant (41%) to obtain official documents such as identity papers. Use of personal connections was also largely made in dealings with the police (39%), procurement of identity documents (42%) and in relation to courts (38%)," the report stated.

**Bribery rates: The highest and lowest**

Highest rates

Lowest rates

Country	Rate	Country	Rate
India	39%	Maldives & Japan (tie)	2%
Cambodia	37%	South Korea	10%
Indonesia	30%	Nepal	12%

Bribery in public services continued to plague India. Slow and complicated bureaucratic process, unnecessary red tape and unclear regulatory frameworks force citizens to seek out alternate solutions to access basic services through networks of familiarity and petty corruption, according to the report.

An issue of concern reflected in the report is that while reporting of corruption is critical to curbing the spread, as many as 63% of those in India, were particularly concerned about retaliation.

"Both national and state governments need to streamline administrative processes for public services, implement preventative measures to combat bribery and nepotism, and invest in user friendly online platforms to deliver essential public services quickly and effectively," it suggests.

In an earlier report, issued by Transparency International, which was released in January at Davos at the World Economic Forum, India was ranked at 80th position among 180 countries in the Corruption Perception Index.

The survey-report finds that three-quarters of respondents across Asia believe that government corruption is a big problem in their country, with nearly one in five people (19%) paying a bribe when accessing public services in the previous year. This is equivalent to about 836 million people.

Nearly 38% of people surveyed think corruption increased in their country in the previous twelve months, while another 28% think it stayed the same. In Nepal and Thailand, a clear majority of citizens (58% and 55% respectively) think corruption increased. Conversely, a majority of citizens in China (64%), the Philippines (64%) and Cambodia (55%) think that corruption decreased, according to the report.

Second to India with a bribery rate of 39%, was Cambodia at 37%, followed by Indonesia at 30%. The Maldives and Japan maintained the lowest overall bribery rate (2%), followed by South Korea (10%) and Nepal (12%). However, even in these countries, governments could do more to stop bribes for public services, Transparency International states.

In addition to bribery, the use of personal connections to access public services is also prevalent across Asia. The results found that more than one in five people (22%) who accessed public services used their personal connections to receive the assistance they needed.

India had the highest rate of citizens using personal connections to access a service, at 46%, followed by Indonesia at 36% and China at 32%. Conversely, in Japan and Cambodia, a small minority of those who accessed public services used their personal connections, only 4% and 6% respectively.

This article appeared in The Times of India.

# Deaths from terrorism fall 59% in five years

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## GTI reports Pakistan seventh most-impacted country

**I**N what can be described as good tidings against the backdrop of covid-19 outbreak terrorism deaths had declined globally for the fifth consecutive year in 2019, according to Global Terrorism Index 2020 report released by the Australia based Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP).

According to the IEP annual report Afghanistan remained the worst affected country by terrorism while Pakistan is ranked seventh. Seven of the top-10 affected nations come from the Sub-Saharan Africa region.

The 2020 Global Terrorism Index (GTI) has found that deaths from terrorism fell for the fifth consecutive year since peaking in 2014. The number of deaths has now decreased by 59% since 2014 to 13,826, said the report entitled “Vision for Humanity”.

The largest decreases in deaths occurred in Afghanistan and Nigeria however they are still the only two countries to have experienced more than 1,000 deaths from terrorism, it said adding that conflict remained the primary driver of terrorism with over 96% of deaths from terrorism in 2019.

The fall in deaths was also reflected in country scores with 103 improving compared to 35 that deteriorated. This is the highest number of countries to record a year on year improvement since the inception of the index.

The 10 worst affected countries are: Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Syria, Somalia, Yemen, Pakistan, India the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Philippines. It said that the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan was responsible for 73 deaths and 30 attacks in Pakistan as of 2019.

The annual report aims at comprehensively analyzing the impact of terrorism on 163 countries, covering 99.7% of the world population. It said the global economic impact of terrorism cost in 2019 was \$16.4 billion 25% lower than the war expenditures of 2018.

Despite the overall fall in the global impact the report said, terrorism remains a significant and serious threat in many countries. As we enter a new decade, we are seeing new threats of terrorism emerge said Steve Killelea, Executive Chairman of IEP.

The rise of the far-right in the West and the deteriorations in the Sahel are prime examples.

**Published in Express Tribune, November 27, 2020**

# NGOs bear brunt of govt's drive to fulfil FATF requirements

By Mohammad Ashfaq



Thousands of small and medium level non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have suffered during the government's campaign to regularize their affairs in a bid to fulfill the requirements of Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the global watchdog for illicit financing—AFP/File

**P**ESHAWAR: Thousands of small and medium level non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have suffered during the government's campaign to regularise their affairs in a bid to fulfil the requirements of Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the global watchdog for illicit financing.

The mapping of NGOs was started in May 2019 to fulfill the FATF requirements.

The provincial government deregistered earlier this year around 3,851 NGOs of the total 4,935, working in different sectors in the province.

Prior to launching the exercise, sources said that 3, 838 NGOs were registered with the provincial social welfare department and 1,097 were registered with the provincial industries department.

They said that social welfare department deregistered 3,030 NGOs while industries department deregistered 821 for not fulfilling the criteria required for their mapping.

However, later on the social welfare department re-registered 12 NGOs out of 3,030 while industries department re-registered 20 NGOs after they provided the required documents, sources in both departments told Dawn.

The government has also frozen the bank accounts of all the deregistered NGOs. The major information sought by the government from NGOs included registration certificates; constitution, rules and regulations; annual action plan and five years strategic plan; detailed annual budget; tax registration certificates; tax exemption certificates; tax returns of the last three years; evidence of withholding taxes; and annual performance reports for three years.

It also included details of the three years account audit; the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan membership certificate of the auditor; funding guarantee letter containing donor commitment; proof of local residence; copies of publications and magazines and newsletters; passport and visas in case of foreigners; project reports; and minutes of the board meetings.

An office-bearer of a local NGO in Mardan told Dawn that their organisation was deregistered by the social welfare department without conveying them the message about the required information for mapping NGOs.

“We were unaware about deregistration of our organisation and continued social welfare activities in our village,” he said.

A few days ago, he added, police and officials of social welfare department came and sealed their office for continuing social welfare activities despite deregistration of the organization.

“Later on we came to know that police have also registered an FIR against some of the organisation’s members. It was astonishing for us. How can police and social welfare department register FIR when our village-based welfare organisation doesn’t know about deregistration,” he questioned.

He said that their organisation was working against drug abuse in the village, social evils and festive firing during marriage ceremonies besides repairing electricity transformers and holding medical camps.

He said that neither foreign donors nor government was providing funds to them rather their organisation's main sources of funds was collecting fines from the villagers for violating certain rules they had framed for maintaining peace in the village.

He said that members of their organisation used to play the role of guards outside government girl schools when militancy was on its peak in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

"We are in favour of regulating NGOs but they should not be strangled in the name of regulation," a representative of a NGOs network told Dawn, wishing not to be named. First of all, he said, government should educate the NGOs about its requirement and then facilitate them before regulating them.

He said that most of the deregistered NGOs were working at the village and town level, having no foreign funding issue. He said that government should not make such regulations that caused sinking of local NGOs.

He said that international NGOs had online facilities, offices and highly educated staff members and were well-informed about the government's requirements but local NGOs had no such facilities so they suffered during the mapping initiative.

The local NGOs still used a register for record keeping and using Hujras (guest house) as offices, he added.

The director of social welfare department, Habib Afridi, when contacted, said that those NGOs were deregistered, which were not fulfilling the required criteria. "We have reregistered 12 NGOs, which have properly applied and provided the required documents," he said.

He claimed that the most of deregistered NGOs had been dormant since long.

When asked as to why social welfare department did not issue letters to such NGOs prior to deregistration, the director said that it was impossible to issue letters to thousands of NGOs on the addresses of their offices which they changed frequently.

However, he said, the department had directed all the NGOs through advertisements in the newspapers to provide the requisite information.

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