

# Freedom in the World 2019

## POLITICAL RIGHTS: 17 / 40 (-2)

### A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 5 / 12 (-1)

#### A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4 (-1)

A prime minister responsible to the bicameral parliament holds most executive power under the constitution. The president, who plays a more symbolic role, is elected for up to two five-year terms by an electoral college comprising the two chambers of parliament and the provincial assemblies. PTI-nominated candidate Arif Alvi was elected president in September 2018 by the electoral college, which had been newly constituted after the general elections in July.

Imran Khan became prime minister in August 2018 after the PTI emerged from the general elections as the largest party. In the run-up to the polls, observers documented concerted efforts by elements of the country's military and judicial establishment to hamper the PML-N in order to increase the chances that Khan would attain a parliamentary majority. These included corruption, contempt-of-court, and terrorism charges against PML-N leaders and candidates, and their apparently politicized adjudication. PML-N leader Sharif, Khan's principal rival, had been forced to step down as prime minister as a result of a 2017 Supreme Court ruling that his failure to disclose certain assets left him in violation of a vague constitutional clause requiring parliament members to be "honest." Critics of the ruling noted that the court had accepted, without a trial, the findings of an ad hoc investigative panel that included military members, and many observers tied Sharif's ouster to his long-standing rivalry with the military over control of foreign policy and national security matters. Sharif was permanently banned from politics in April 2018, prosecuted on corruption charges and found guilty in July, and jailed for two months before his sentence was suspended. His ouster from the country's political arena left the PML-N with severely weakened leadership in the run-up to the 2018 polls.

Observers also noted pressure on and interference with the media, apparently at the behest of the security services, that resulted in muted coverage of the PML-N's campaign.

*Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to apparent efforts by the military and judicial establishment to shape the outcome of the 2018 elections and ensure the installation of Imran Khan as the new prime minister.*

#### A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

The parliament consists of a 342-member National Assembly and a 104-member Senate. Members of the National Assembly are elected for five years. Of the 342 seats,

272 are filled through direct elections in single-member districts, 60 are reserved for women, and 10 are reserved for non-Muslim minorities. The reserved seats are filled through a proportional representation system with closed party lists.

In the Senate, each provincial assembly chooses 23 members, National Assembly members representing the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) elected 8, and 4 are chosen by the National Assembly to represent the Islamabad capital territory. Senators serve six-year terms, with half of the seats up for election every three years. The most recent Senate elections were held in March 2018—before the final adoption in May of a constitutional amendment providing for the FATA's absorption into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (PKP) province.

International and domestic election observers, including the European Union Election Observation Mission, delivered a mixed verdict on the July 2018 National Assembly elections. Polling was orderly and generally took place according to the electoral law, though serious technical difficulties with the Result Transmission System resulted in delays in results reporting.

At the same time, the rush of judicial actions against PML-N leaders and restrictions on and interference with media coverage significantly disadvantaged the party, contributing to a spectacular rise in PTI representation in the National Assembly. The PTI received 32 percent of the vote and 149 seats, compared with just 35 seats previously. The PML-N received 24 percent of the vote and 82 seats, down from 157 seats previously. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) received 13 percent of the vote and 54 seats, an increase of 12 from its previous representation. Another notable feature of the elections was the participation of parties and candidates linked to active Islamist militant groups. These included Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) and Allah-o-Akbar Tehreek (AAT). The PTI formed a coalition government at the national level, with the support of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), other minor parties, and independents. Voter turnout was 52 percent.

Provincial assembly elections were held concurrently with the 2018 National Assembly elections. In Punjab, the PML-N took the largest number of seats, but it fell short of a majority, and the PTI succeeded in forming a coalition government. The largest party in Baluchistan, the Baluchistan Awami Party, entered a coalition with the PTI in that province. The PPP again formed the provincial government in Sindh, as did the PTI in KPK. In keeping with the constitutional amendment providing for the FATA's absorption into KPK, elections to fill KPK provincial assembly seats for new constituencies in the former FATA were scheduled for 2019.

### **A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4**

Elections are administered by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), whose members are current or retired senior judges nominated through a consultative process that includes the government and the parliamentary opposition. The electoral laws are largely fair and impartially implemented, and candidates have extensive access to the courts in electoral disputes.

The 2018 election observer missions acknowledged that the formal electoral

framework and its implementation complied with international standards. However, the ECP proved unable to counteract efforts by elements of the judicial and military establishment and their allies to manipulate the campaign environment. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, politically orchestrated judicial activism resulted in the disqualification of candidates, while the “censorship, intimidation, harassment, and abduction” of journalists who were critical of the security establishment or favored the PML-N or PPP ensured uneven access to the media.

Other, ongoing problems include lower rates of voter registration among women, a requirement that members of the Ahmadi religious minority register as non-Muslims despite considering themselves Muslims, and vague moral requirements for candidate nomination.

## **B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 7 / 16 (-1)**

### **B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4 (-1)**

Pakistan has had a thriving and competitive multiparty system. Several major parties and numerous smaller parties and independents are represented in the parliament and provincial legislatures. However, established parties maintain patronage networks and other advantages of incumbency that hamper competition in their respective provincial strongholds, and a party’s electoral success is also influenced by the strength of its relationship with unelected arms of the state.

In 2018, preelection interference by the military and judicial establishment disrupted the operations of the PML-N. Such activity included politicized prosecutions and detentions of party leaders and candidates, as well as efforts to intimidate PML-N candidates into defecting to other parties or running as independents. The PML-N also accused members of the security forces of harassing, attacking, or detaining hundreds of its supporters.

Meanwhile, the MQM was greatly reduced as an electoral force in Karachi by a series of splits and defections, most of which seemed to have been similarly orchestrated by the security forces. The entry into electoral politics of the militant-linked Islamist parties TLP and AAT was interpreted as a military-endorsed move to erode support for the PML-N in Punjab.

*Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to selective military and judicial pressure on the PML-N ahead of the elections, including the intimidation and prosecution of its candidates.*

### **B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4**

Opposition parties are free to campaign and contest elections, and each of the last three national elections has resulted in an erstwhile opposition party taking power at the federal level. Opposition forces continue to hold power or significant shares of assembly seats at the provincial level. Most recent complaints of political repression

have concerned alleged attempts by the military and reputedly allied groups like the PTI to weaken other parties.

**B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4**

The manipulation of politics by religious extremists and the powerful military limits voters' ability to freely express their political preferences.

In 2018, the heavy presence of security agents at many polling stations was interpreted by observers including the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan as tantamount to voter intimidation. A number of candidates in the 2018 election campaign had links with extremist groups that had advocated or carried out acts of violence, further contributing to a sense of unease among many voters.

**B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4**

A joint electorate system allows members of non-Muslim minorities to participate in the general vote while also being represented by reserved seats in the national and provincial assemblies through the party-list system. However, the participation of non-Muslims in the political system continues to be marginal. Political parties nominate members to the legislative seats reserved for non-Muslim minorities, leaving non-Muslim voters with little say in the selection of their supposed representatives. Ahmadis, members of a heterodox Muslim sect, face political discrimination and are registered on a separate voter roll.

Political parties maintain women's wings that are active during elections, but women face practical restrictions on voting, especially in KPK and Baluchistan, where militant groups and traditional societal constraints are more prevalent. Women rarely achieve leadership positions in parties or the government. The interests of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people are generally not represented by elected officials.

**C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 5 / 12**

**C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4**

Formally, the elected prime minister and cabinet make policy in consultation with the parliament, which holds full legislative powers. However, there has been a long-running struggle between these civilian structures and the military establishment for control of national security policy. The military has asserted primacy on relations with India, Afghanistan, China, and the United States, as well as on counterterrorism policy within Pakistan. In the last two years of the PML-N government, it appeared that the civilian administration aspired to act independently of some military priorities, most notably through exploring détente with India. In May 2018, Sharif provoked a sharp reaction from the military when he suggested that anti-India militant groups were present in Pakistan and had effectively been permitted to cross

the border to carry out a devastating 2008 terrorist attack in Mumbai. After the installation of the PTI government in August, the civilian administration seemed to align itself more closely with the priorities set by the military.

## **C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4**

There are numerous formal safeguards against official corruption, including a dedicated agency, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). The military and judiciary have their own disciplinary systems. However, corruption is believed to remain endemic in practice, and the use of accountability mechanisms is often selective and politically driven.

Senior figures in the PML-N and PPP faced corruption investigations and prosecutions in 2018, and these played a key role in the transition to a PTI government. Former prime minister Sharif and his daughter were convicted in July for holding assets beyond their means; they were jailed and banned from politics, but subsequently released in September after the suspension of their sentences. Sharif's younger brother Shahbaz Sharif—the opposition leader in parliament and a former Punjab chief minister—was arrested in October for alleged corruption in a housing scheme, although this did not prevent him from being elected chair of the National Assembly's Public Accounts Committee in December. In addition, a travel ban was imposed on former president Asif Ali Zardari of the PPP in December, amid investigations into alleged corruption. A number of other senior figures in the PML-N and the PPP were charged with corruption during the year.

## **C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4**

Accessing official information remains difficult, and existing provisions for obtaining public records are ineffective. At the federal level, a 2002 ordinance on access to information remains in force and is widely considered to be weaker than current international standards.

Think tanks, civil society organizations, and universities all contribute to lively debate on many aspects of public policy. However, debate on certain aspects of national security policy, such as the insurgency in Baluchistan, disappearances, and the military's alleged support for militant groups targeting Afghanistan and Indian-controlled Kashmir, has in effect remained taboo.

# **CIVIL LIBERTIES: 22 / 60 (-2)**

## **D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 6 / 16 (-1)**

### **D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4 (-1)**

Pakistan has a relatively vibrant media sector that presents a range of news and opinions, but state agencies and the military seek to control media activity through legal and extralegal means. While coverage of corruption scandals and other politically sensitive topics was notably tolerated in 2017, there was a clampdown on

coverage in 2018 as authorities sought to tighten their grip on the operations of investigative outlets. In March and April, Geo TV was blocked across much of the country; after the government asserted that it was not responsible for the ban, some observers suggested that the block had come at the behest of figures in the military. Authorities also targeted the newspaper *Dawn* in May after it published an interview with Nawaz Sharif; security agencies blocked the paper's distribution in some 20 cantonment areas. In September, the Lahore High Court placed *Dawn* journalist Cyril Almeida on the Exit Control List (ECL) and issued a warrant for his arrest in connection with a May interview he conducted with Sharif, though in October the court ordered his name removed from the ECL and the warrant withdrawn. Multiple media-related figures have reported a system of "press advice," whereby men claiming credibly to be from security agencies contact them to warn them against covering taboo subjects such as the PTM, or to dictate coverage on political issues; these figures have warned of consequences for defying the advice.

Access to certain areas is prohibited by the military, impeding coverage of issues there. In Baluchistan, local journalists are often caught between authorities who order them not to cover separatist rebel activity and rebel groups that threaten them for siding with the government.

Twenty-two journalists have been murdered in Pakistan over the last 10 years, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, which noted in October 2018 that a recent decline in fatal violence against journalists "masks [a] decline in press freedom" characterized by the military's pervasive intimidation of journalists. The perpetrators of violence against the media typically enjoy impunity.

*Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to authorities' increased interference with the media during the year, including reports of guidance on coverage and obstruction of certain outlets' distribution networks.*

## **D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4**

Constitutional guarantees of religious freedom have not provided effective safeguards against discriminatory legislation, social prejudice, and sectarian violence. Hindus have complained of vulnerability to kidnapping and forced conversions, and some continue to migrate to India. Members of the Christian minority and others remain at risk of blasphemy accusations that can arise from trivial disputes and escalate to criminal prosecution and mob violence. This was illustrated by the latest development in the case of Aasia Bibi, a Christian woman sentenced to death for allegedly insulting the prophet Muhammad. In October 2018, after she had spent eight years on death row, the Supreme Court acquitted her. But in the wake of mass protests by Islamist activists, the government agreed to seek a review of the decision and to block her from leaving the country. At year's end, she remained in protective custody.

The most specific discriminatory legislation has been directed at members of the Ahmadi community, who are prohibited from calling themselves Muslims. The practical effects of this were exacerbated in March 2018, when the Islamabad High Court ruled that a declaration of religious faith was mandatory for those applying for

government jobs, including positions in the armed forces, the judiciary, and the civil service, and in order to access key documents including passports. The same court in July ruled that citizens have a right to know the religion of key officials. The most prominent case of anti-Ahmadi discrimination in 2018 occurred when Prime Minister Khan appointed Atif Mian, an Ahmadi, as a member of the Economic Advisory Council in September. Following pressure from Islamist groups against the appointment of an Ahmadi to such a prestigious position, the government asked Mian to withdraw from the council.

**D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4**

Pakistani authorities have a long history of using the education system to portray Hindus and other non-Muslims negatively and to rationalize enmity between Pakistan and India, among other ideological aims. Past attempts to modernize education and introduce tolerance into school textbooks have made little progress. Some space has opened for scholars to discuss sensitive issues involving the military in recent years.

**D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4**

Pakistanis are free in practice to discuss many topics both online and off, but the 2016 Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) gives the executive-controlled Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) unchecked powers to censor material on the internet, and law enforcement agencies have cracked down on allegedly blasphemous content in particular. In recent years, evidence has emerged of widespread state surveillance of social media and internet activity. In 2017, a Shiite man convicted of blasphemy became the first person to receive a death sentence for a social media posting. That same year, a Christian man was similarly sentenced to death for sharing allegedly blasphemous material on the messaging application WhatsApp.

Extralegal violence also serves as a deterrent to unfettered speech. In 2017, five bloggers who had criticized Islamist militant groups and the military were forcibly disappeared, allegedly by military intelligence personnel; all five had been released by March 2018. Also in 2017, a student at a university in KPK was shot and beaten to death by a mob after being accused of blasphemy.

**E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 6 / 12**

**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4**

The constitution guarantees the right to assemble peacefully, though the government can harness legal provisions to arbitrarily ban gatherings or any activity designated a threat to public order. In 2018, the authorities arbitrarily and systematically prevented PTM supporters from holding rallies to protest the killing by police of a Karachi-based aspiring fashion model, Naqibullah Mehsud, in January. The authorities tried to block rallies in Lahore in April and in Karachi in May through mass arrests, by preventing PTM leaders from flying, and by restricting media coverage of the movement. In May, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan

expressed concern over reports that more than 150 PTM activists had been detained or disappeared in the run-up to the Karachi rally. Later, 19 leaders of the movement were named in a police complaint regarding antistate activities, in connection with their participation in a demonstration in Swabi in August, and at least one of them was put on the ECL. In contrast, when Islamist groups held violent demonstrations in Islamabad to protest the acquittal of Aasia Bibi, the authorities eventually dropped proceedings against those accused of participating in the violence, prompting widespread criticism.

**E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work? 1 / 4**

The government has continued a crackdown on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), enforcing rigid regulations and subjecting organizations to intrusive vetting by military intelligence. Officials can demand that civil society organizations obtain a “no-objection certificate” (NOC) before undertaking even the most innocuous activity. As part of the process of implementing its new centralized registration procedures for international NGOs, the authorities in late 2017 refused applications from 18 such groups, including the well-known South Africa–based ActionAid, and demanded that they close down; in December 2018, the deadline expired for the groups to end their operations. The European Union and key democracies including Canada and Australia issued a joint statement to express concern about the NGOs’ closure “without clear justification,” while foreign diplomats claimed that 11 million Pakistanis would be affected by loss of access to services provided by the departing organizations.

**E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4**

The rights of workers to organize and form trade unions are recognized in law, and the constitution grants unions the rights to collective bargaining and to strike. However, many categories of workers are excluded from these protections, which are not strongly enforced. Roughly 70 percent of the workforce is employed in the informal sector, where unionization and legal protections are minimal. The procedures that need to be followed for a strike to be legal are onerous. Strikes and labor protests are organized regularly, though they often lead to clashes with police and dismissals by employers.

**F. RULE OF LAW: 4 / 16 (–1)**

**F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4 (–1)**

The judiciary is politicized and frequently issues rulings that are seen as aligned with the priorities of the military. During 2018, the judiciary was involved in multiple cases and judgments against former prime minister Sharif, his family, and his close political allies, in what amounted to a campaign of judicial activism to drive the PML-N from power. In one episode during the series of anti-Sharif cases, an Islamabad High Court judge was fired over his criticism of the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), Pakistan’s top spy agency. The judge, in a July speech,

had accused the ISI of issuing directives to the judiciary on their dealings with Sharif. The ISI in response lodged a complaint with the Supreme Judicial Council, which recommended the judge's removal. He was ultimately fired by President Alvi in October, marking only the second time in the nation's history that the Supreme Judicial Council had taken such action against a judge. Separately, the chief justice of the Supreme Court faced criticism in 2018 for drawing attention to economic issues and infrastructure projects in a manner viewed as damaging to the PML-N.

The broader court system is marred by endemic problems including corruption, intimidation, insecurity, a large backlog of cases, and low conviction rates for serious crimes.

*Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to a lack of impartiality in the judiciary's handling of politically fraught cases against former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and his associates.*

## **F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4**

Police have long been accused of biased or arbitrary handling of initial criminal complaints, and both the police and the prosecution service have been criticized for a chronic failure to prosecute terrorism cases. The government responded in 2015 by allowing for some civilians to be tried in military courts, despite concerns that they lack transparency and due process guarantees, such as access to a competent defense. In December 2018, the army stated that the military courts had ruled on 546 terrorism cases since 2015, and had issued 310 death sentences. At the end of the month, the government decided to extend the courts' operation for another two years, though passing the necessary legislation would require opposition support in the National Assembly.

The FATA were considered outside the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and subject to the colonial-era Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) instead of the criminal code, effectively exempting them from most due process guarantees. However, the outgoing PML-N administration pushed through a constitutional amendment providing for the FATA's absorption into KPK, which was signed by the president in May 2018 and was viewed as a major step forward for the legal rights of FATA residents. The FCR was repealed as part of the change, but it was replaced by the FATA Interim Governance Regulation, which preserved a number of problematic FATA institutions. The Peshawar High Court ruled the interim regulation unconstitutional in October, and an appeal was pending at year's end.

## **F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4**

A multiyear decline in terrorist violence continued in 2018, with a total of 697 people killed in terrorist incidents during the year, compared with 1,260 in 2017 and a peak of over 11,700 in 2009. The reduction is due in large part to the military's suppression of an Islamist insurgency in KPK and the former FATA, and the pacification of unrest in Karachi. Nevertheless, terrorist attacks continue. In July 2018 alone, 230 people were reported to have been killed in terrorist strikes, including a suicide attack on an election rally in Mastung District that killed 128 and another in Peshawar that killed senior Awami National Party leader Haroon Bilour and some 20 supporters. A

separatist insurgency continued in Baluchistan, and Islamist militants were still able to stage high-profile attacks elsewhere in the country.

The military denies long-standing allegations that it supports militant groups targeting Afghanistan and Indian-controlled Kashmir. Seven people charged in connection with the devastating 2008 terrorist attack in Mumbai remained on trial in a Rawalpindi court during 2018, but the proceedings had been stalled for years, and little progress was reported.

Civilians also face the threat of extralegal violence by state actors, including enforced disappearances. The number of pending cases of people registered as missing by an official commission of inquiry on enforced disappearances, led by a retired judge, rose to 2,116 by the end of November. However, there was no sign of the commission's deliberations leading to any effective sanctions against the agencies undertaking the disappearances. Most victims were from KPK, the former FATA, or Baluchistan, and typically had been held incommunicado by security and intelligence agencies on suspicion of terrorism, rebellion, or espionage. Although the commission tracks cases, it has refrained from attributing responsibility.

#### **F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4**

Women face discrimination in employment despite legal protections, and they are placed at a disadvantage under personal status laws. Women are also subject to a number of harmful traditional practices and societal abuses, the perpetrators of which often enjoy impunity.

Other segments of the population that suffer legal or de facto discrimination and violence include ethnic and religious minorities, Afghan refugees, and LGBT people. The penal code prescribes prison terms for consensual sex “against the order of nature,” deterring LGBT people from acknowledging their identity or reporting abuses. Members of the transgender and intersex community are authorized to register for official documents under a “third gender” classification recognized by the Supreme Court since 2009, and some transgender people were recognized in the 2017 census. However, transgender and intersex people continue to face targeted violence as well as discrimination in housing and employment.

### **G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 6 / 16**

#### **G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4**

There are some legal limitations on travel and the ability to change one's residence, employment, or institution of higher learning. The authorities routinely hinder internal movement in some parts of the country for security reasons. The main tool for restricting foreign travel is the ECL, which blocks named individuals from using official exit points from the country. It is meant to include those who pose a security threat and those facing court proceedings, though periodically it has been used as a means of controlling dissent.

#### **G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and**

## **establish private businesses without undue interference from state or non-state actors? 2 / 4**

In principle, Pakistan's constitution, legal system, and social and religious values all guarantee private property and free enterprise. In reality, however, organized crime, corruption, a weak regulatory environment, and the subversion of the legal system often render property rights precarious. Powerful and organized groups continue to engage in land grabbing, particularly in Karachi and Punjab.

Inheritance laws discriminate against women, and women are often denied their legal share of inherited property through social or familial pressure.

## **G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4**

In some parts of urban Pakistan, men and women enjoy personal social freedoms and have recourse to the law in case of infringements. However, traditional practices in much of the country subject individuals to social control over personal behavior and especially choice of marriage partner. "Honor killing," the murder of men or women accused of breaking social and especially sexual taboos, remains common. Most incidents go unreported. Successive attempts to abolish the practice, most recently in a 2016 law, have not been fully implemented.

## **G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4**

Extreme forms of labor exploitation remain common. Bonded labor was formally abolished in 1992, and there have been long-standing efforts to enforce the ban and related laws against child labor. Gradual social change has also eroded the power of wealthy landowning families involved in such exploitation. Nevertheless, employers continue to use chronic indebtedness to restrict laborers' rights and hold actual earnings well below prescribed levels, particularly among sharecroppers and in the brick-kiln industry.