Pakistan

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On October 12, 1999, the elected civilian Government of former Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif was overthrown in a bloodless coup led by Army Chief of Staff General Pervez Musharraf. In consultation with senior military commanders, General Musharraf designated himself Chief Executive, and suspended the Constitution, the Parliament, and the provincial assemblies. The office of the President, which is mainly ceremonial, was retained. General Musharraf appointed an advisory National Security Council, which included both military and civilian advisers, and a civilian cabinet. The government bureaucracy continued to function; however, at all levels, the functioning of the Government after the coup was "monitored" by military commanders. In May the Supreme Court ruled that the Musharraf Government was constitutional and imposed a 3-year deadline--starting from October 12, 1999--to complete a transition to democratic, civilian rule. On December 31, local elections were held in 18 districts on a non-party basis; however the Government has not set a timetable for national elections. Corruption and inefficiency remained acute in all branches of government. The suspended Constitution provided for an independent judiciary; however, the judiciary was subject to executive branch and other outside influences, and suffers from inadequate resources, inefficiency, and corruption. The Supreme Court demonstrated a limited degree of independence; however, the overall credibility of the judiciary remained low, and General Musharraf took steps to control the judiciary and to remove his regime from judicial oversight.

The police have primary internal security responsibilities, although paramilitary forces, such as the Rangers and the Frontier Constabulary, provide support in areas where law and order problems are acute, like Karachi and the frontier areas. Provincial governments control the police and the paramilitary forces when they are assisting in law and order operations. In August the Government announced a devolution plan that included some increase in local political control of the police; however, the Government had not implemented this plan by year's end. During some religious holidays, the regular army is deployed in sensitive areas to help maintain public order. After the coup, the army played a role in enforcing exit control restrictions at airports and border crossings, reportedly as part of the Musharraf regime's anticorruption accountability campaign. Members of the security forces committed numerous serious human rights abuses.

Pakistan is a poor country with great extremes in the distribution of wealth. Education, especially for females is poor and only 33 percent of the population are judged literate by a very low standard. Cotton, textiles and apparel, rice, and leather products are the principal exports. The economy includes both state-run and private industries and financial institutions. The suspended Constitution provided for the right of private businesses to operate freely in most sectors of the economy and there continued to be a strong private sector. The per capita annual income is $490 (PRs 29,400).

The Government's human rights record was poor, and the Government committed numerous serious abuses; however, there were improvements in some areas, particularly with respect to freedom of the press. Citizens continued to be denied the right to choose or change their government peacefully. Police committed numerous extrajudicial killings; however, there were fewer such killings than in 1999. In Karachi there were fewer killings between rival political factions during the year; however, many of these killings reportedly were committed by or with the participation of the security forces. Police abused and raped citizens. While the officers responsible for such abuses sometimes were transferred or suspended for their actions, no officer has been convicted and very few have been arrested. In Karachi there were signs of progress in redressing police excesses; however, in general police continued to commit serious abuses with impunity. Prison conditions remained extremely poor, and police arbitrarily arrested and detained citizens. The Government used arbitrary and sometimes incommunicado detention against leaders of the Sharif Government and their families; several major political leaders remained in jail or in self-imposed exile abroad at year's end. Case backlogs led to long delays in trials, and lengthy pretrial detention is common. The judiciary is subject to executive and other constraints.
outside influences, and corruption, inefficiency, and lack of resources remained problems. The Government took steps to control the judiciary and to remove itself from judicial oversight. On January 25, General Musharraf ordered all Supreme Court, Shariat court, and provincial High Court justices to swear to uphold the post-coup Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO), which suspended the Constitution and legislative bodies and prohibited the superior courts from making any decision against the Chief Executive "or any person exercising powers or jurisdiction under his authority." Six Supreme Court justices, including the Chief Justice, and nine other provincial court justices resigned in protest. The Government's anticorruption campaign violated due process. In October 1998, the National Assembly (NA) voted for a 15th constitutional amendment, which would have required the Government to enforce Shari'a (Islamic law) throughout the country. However, General Musharraf abandoned his predecessor's attempt to enact the amendment. In April the Sindh Court found Nawaz Sharif guilty of treason and other charges; however, the court imposed a life sentence instead of the death penalty sought by the Musharraf Government. The court acquitted Sharif's six codefendants. In October the Sindh High Court upheld Nawaz Sharif's conviction. However, on December 9, the Government commuted former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's prison sentence and exiled him and 18 of his family members to Saudi Arabia for 10 years. The Government infringed on citizens' privacy rights. The press was able to publish relatively freely; however, several journalists practiced self-censorship, especially on sensitive issues related to the military. There was not a systematic harassment campaign against newspapers or commentators critical of the Government during the year; however, the broadcast media remain a closely controlled government monopoly. The Government restricted freedom of assembly. During the year, the Government sporadically permitted several large antigovernment demonstrations; however, it prevented other protests and arrested organizers, reportedly for security reasons. In March the Government instituted a country-wide ban on strikes, processions, and outdoor political demonstrations. The Government maintained some limits on freedom of association. The Government imposed some limits on freedom of religion, particularly for Ahmadis. The Government also imposed limits on freedom of movement. General Musharraf spoke out against some of the human rights abuses of the previous regime and held a conference on human rights in April; however, the Government made minimal progress toward achieving the goals set at the conference.

Significant numbers of women were subjected to violence, abuse, rape, and other forms of degradation by spouses and members of society. The Government publicly criticized the practice of "honor killings" but failed to take corrective steps, and such killings continued throughout the country. There was considerable discrimination against women, and traditional social and legal constraints kept women in a subordinate position in society. Violence against children, as well as child abuse, and prostitution, remained serious problems. Female children still lag far behind boys in education, health care, and other social indices. Governmental and societal discrimination against religious minorities, particularly Ahmadis and Christians remains a problem, and the Government failed to take effective measures to counter prevalent public prejudices against religious minorities. Religious and ethnic-based rivalries resulted in numerous killings and civil disturbances. The Government and employers continued to restrict worker rights significantly. Debt slavery persists, and bonded labor by both adults and children remained a problem. The use of child labor remained widespread, although it generally is recognized as a serious problem, and industrial exporters have adopted a number of measures to eliminate child labor from specific sectors. Trafficking in women and children for the purpose of forced prostitution was a serious problem. Mob violence and terrorist attacks remained problems; however, the number of incidents declined slightly during the year.

Respect for Human Rights

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including
Freedom From:

a. Political and Other Extrajudicial Killing

Police committed extrajudicial killings. The extrajudicial killing of criminal suspects, often in the form of deaths in police custody or of staged encounters in which police shoot and kill the suspects, is common. Police officials generally insist that these deaths occur during attempts to escape or to resist arrest; family members and the press insist that many of these deaths are staged. Police personnel have been known to kill suspected criminals to prevent them from implicating police in crimes during court proceedings. After an attempt was made on then Prime Minister