

*The report covers events and activities regarding both peace and anti-peace and political process in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly in the newly merged districts. The report enhances connectivity among activists by providing them information in a holistic manner*

# Peace and Democracy in The Newly Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Quarterly Report

**A Report by CRPD (project of KKF)**

---

# Quarterly Report on Peace and Democracy in The Newly Merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

November 1, 2022 to January 31, 2023

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	3
<b>Peace and Anti-Peace</b> .....	4
<b>Peace</b> .....	4
<b>Anti-Peace</b> .....	5
<b>Political and Social</b> .....	6
<b>Political</b> .....	6
<b>Social</b> .....	6
<b>Governance and Services Delivery</b> .....	7
<b>Border and Borderland</b> .....	8
<b>Festivity, Poetic &amp; Cultural Events</b> .....	9
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	11
<b>Appendix</b> .....	12
<b>List of Media forums</b> .....	12

## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

PEACE became a common voice of every walk of life throughout Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, this quarter reported. The other prominent news included in this quarter is the dissolution of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly and formation of a caretaker government in the province. This quarter also reported a massive series of demonstrations, flag-marches, sit-ins and protests against the resurgence of militant groups and terror attacks. Target killings, kidnapping and attacks on police substantially increased during this quarter. People of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa continuously demonstrated and protested against this development of militancy.

This report also has observed some political development in terms of demanding better governance and services delivery and criticizing the state for its poor governance and services delivery. The issues at border and borderland remained the same; however, a discussion has been noted over these issues between Pakistan and Afghanistan and between state and the civilians in Pakistan.

## Chapter II

### Peace and Anti-Peace

#### Peace

The Taliban takeover of Arg and the ultimate rise of TTP in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, especially in newly merged districts, resulted in massive demonstrations and sit-in throughout the province demanding durable peace. The peace marches and demonstrations against specific incidents, for example, target killing or for overall establishment of peace took place in almost every area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Some huge public gatherings have been noticed in this report; for example, [Bajaur Peace Action Committee demonstration](#) against the incidents of [terrorism in the region](#) in which all the [political and tribal leaders and activists](#) participated.

Considering fundamental demand of the people, the government of Pakhtunkhwa also took steps for maintaining peace in the province. In the [aftermath of new wave of terrorism](#) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, Eagle Squad in Islamabad checked 2,024 suspicious persons, motorcycles and vehicles in the last 24 hours only. In Malakand division, too, the [police demanding cooperation](#) from the people in countering terrorism. Police has also [started intelligence-based search operations](#) in Malakand and in districts Bajaur. Some steps have been taken by the Bajaur police to counter terrorism. All the DSPs and SHOs attended the meeting to discuss the prevailing law and order situation and readiness of the police [to counter any terrorism-related incident](#) in the region. The members of [dispute resolution council \(DRC\)](#) in Bajaur were seen active to play their role for promotion of peace and normalcy in the district by keeping a close watch over the movement of suspected people in their respective areas and to resolve the local disputes in a swift manner on merit. In this regard, the mainstream political leaders demanding government to [eradicate terrorism by implementation](#) of national action plan (NAP).

There were backdoor talks with the TTP those were condemned and criticized by the political forces of the country for by-passing the people representatives, i.e. national and provincial assemblies. These negotiations have been refused by the interior minister reiterating that there were [no formal talks or agreements with the TTP](#).

The overall atmosphere in the province Pakhtunkhwa was securitized by the state as the victims of different incidents were arrested for demanding justice from the state. For example, the relatives of the deceased in a suicide blast in Waziristan and other [local residents had been arrested](#) when they were seeking protection after they left their homes. They were saying that they had left the area for peace but suicide attacks and targeted killings of the youth continued even after the operation against militants.

There are continuous protests, sit-ins and demonstrations noted throughout the NMDs where people are demanding peace and strongly condemn the resurgence of terrorist groups. The demonstrations, [flag marches](#) and protests held in [South Waziristan](#), North Waziristan, [Momand](#), Khyber, Kurram, Bajaur, Swabi, Swat, [Dera Ismail Khan](#), and many other districts. Interestingly, [the people from all walks of life](#), including traders, social activists and workers of Pakistan People's Party, Awami National Party, National Democratic Movement, Jamaat-e-Islami, Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement and Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party participate in the protest. Similarly, People from different walks of life in district Swabi thronged the venue of a mammoth peace march and pledged to stand united for [fighting the fresh wave of terrorism](#) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The ironic release of main culprit Rao Anwar by a court order is condemned by the Pashtuns in these protests and rallies against the decision of the court. The [protesters were holding placards](#) and banners inscribed with slogans against the release of Rawo Anwar and 17 other suspects in the Naqebullah Mehsud murder case.

## Anti-Peace

Resurgence of terrorism remained the most discussed topic during this quarter. Public gatherings throughout Pakhtunkhwa vigorously rejected this resurgence through rallies, protests, jargas and demonstrations. The ousted government of PTI blames the new government's failed policies for this resurgence. Amid a rise in terror attacks across the country, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) leader Fawad Chaudhry linked the resurgence of terrorism with what he called the "[reversal of PTI government's policy on Afghanistan](#)". However, there remained a [soft-corner among PTI's](#) leadership for the terrorists. A document prepared by the National Counter-Terrorism Authority (Nacta) presented to the Senate Standing Committee on Interior blamed the ['peace talks' with the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan \(TTP\)](#) for an increase in terror attacks across the country. The Senate panel was informed that the dialogue initiated with the banned outfit by the government of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) "emboldened" the Taliban which increased their "footprint and magnitude of activities" during the corresponding period. Adding to this, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was being funded in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), while Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan had himself admitted to [reintroducing the TTP militants back](#) in the province they were expelled from. The leader of Awami National Party, Aimal Wali Khan, even mentioned the names of the ex-chief minister, ex-speaker national assembly, ex-governor and ministers of the recently ousted PTI government in Pakhtunkhwa and the center who funded the TTP in the garb of extortion.

The target killings, blasts, kidnapping and [attacks on police](#) still continues in Pakhtunkhwa, especially in NMDs. There are also [attacks on girls' schools](#), [female teachers](#), check posts, businessmen and even on [religious bodies](#). [Police check post attacked](#) by terrorists in Bannu, [army men killed](#) in Kurram and militants [attack on police check post](#) in DI Khan. The most scaring act of the [terrorists is seizing of Bannu CTD center](#). Detained militants inside a Bannu CTD facility took over its compound, held interrogators hostage and demanded safe evacuation to Afghanistan, while in another terrorist attack four policemen were martyred in Lakki Marwat, police confirmed. Terrorist attack on Sarband police station in Peshawar, [three officials including DSP killed](#). [Suicide blast in Police Line mosque](#) resulted in the loss of 150 lives. A [teenager beheaded](#) in Lakki by terrorists on spying charges.

Another striking issue in Pakhtunkhwa is [the extortion on calls](#). Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inspector General of Police said the province had approached the center for signing an agreement with Afghanistan to crack down on extortion demands over phone calls from the Afghan soil. Police claimed to have [devised a strategy to trace and arrest](#) the people making threatening telephone calls to traders to seek extortion from them.

## Chapter III

### Political and Social

#### Political

President of Awami National Party Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Amil Wali Khan, has said that after provincial autonomy, [our next goal is district autonomy](#). The task of national and provincial assemblies is to legislate and to have oversight. Awami National Party and Pakistan Peoples' Party leaders said that the assemblies should [complete their constitutional tenure](#) and accused the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf leaders of working against the Constitution and democratic principles. However, the provincial [assembly was dissolved](#) and the [swearing-in ceremony of the Caretaker](#) Chief Minister was held at Governor House Peshawar. Jamaat-i-Islami chief said that the Pakistan [Tehreek-i-Insaf government had bankrupted the province](#) as it had been facing difficulty to pay the salary to its employees. He said the PTI had been in power in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the last about 10 years but the people still faced many problems.

Awami National Party successfully [observed Bacha Khan week](#) where teachings of Bacha Khan were shared through seminars and conferences. ANP also organized a country level conference in Islamabad under the theme, 'Bacha Khan, Wali Khan and 21<sup>st</sup> Century' in which speakers from all walks of life and leaders of various political parties spoke on the teachings of Bacha Khan and their relevance for the current era. People from all over the country participated and talked about the political and social struggle of Bacha Khan. It was also [urged that Pashtuns unity](#) was of prime importance to steer the Pashtuns and Pakistan through the current political, social and economic crises.

#### Social

A meeting was organized under the auspices of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa [National Commission on the Status of Women](#) (NCSW) in collaboration with Cowater International. The [first-ever cycle rally for girls](#) was held in Landi Kotal tehsil of Khyber district under the Global Sports Mentoring Program. The event organizer, Jamima Afridi who belongs to Landi Kotal and is a social activist, said that 15 girls participated in the event.

Women Parliamentary Caucus of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly assured the media persons' bodies of its [full support in getting the bill](#) on protection of journalists passed from the provincial legislature.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa recorded [around 365 cases of child sexual abuse](#) last year with four victims of those offences killed by culprits, said provincial additional inspector general of police Mohammad Ali Babakhel.

A group of youth established a ['place of kindness'](#) in Salarzai tehsil to provide warm clothes and shoes to the needy people. The place of kindness was set up in Talai area along the Khar-Pashat Road by local youth led by social activist Eng Jawad Iqbal Salarzai.

#### Economy and Development

The Ahmadzai Wazir tribe has welcomed the government's [plan to set up an economic zone](#) in Thal Wazir area of Bannu district. Speaking at a jarga in Bannu, the elders said that the establishment of economic zone would bring development to this backward region.

Bajaur [elders meeting with Governor](#) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said that issues being faced by the people of tribal districts should be resolved on priority. They stated that apart from education and jobs, skill

learning opportunities should be provided to the youth of the merged districts. The governor stated that there was a need to introduce such employment schemes in collaboration with the federal and provincial governments under which loans could be provided to the youth on easy terms.

The Peshawar High Court has declared that the [federal government can't deal](#) with the natural oil and gas resources unilaterally as it is bound by the Constitution and the Petroleum Policy, 2012, to involve the respective provinces for the purpose.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly unanimously passed a resolution urging the federal government to [extend the tax exemption](#) of Malakand division and tribal districts from 2023 to 2033. The resolution read, 'The government, following 25th Constitutional Amendment, decided merging erstwhile Fata and Malakand division in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where it was decided that erstwhile fata and Malakand division will have tax exemption till 2023'.

Traders affiliated with the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf have requested party chairman Imran Khan for a meeting over an "alarming" [law and order situation](#) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. "I would like to bring to your kind attention that extortion and kidnapping have started again in KP, especially in Peshawar," the Insaf Traders' Wing (ITW) said in a letter.

Residents of Warr Mamond tehsil here held [a protest demonstration against](#) the stoppage of reconstruction work on the main Umary-Shago Road. The protesters raised slogans against the local PTI MNA, the officials of roads and highway department and the contractor. They said rehabilitation work on the road was initiated in mid -April, and was scheduled to be finished by November but alleged work on the road had been stopped for last couple of months.

The members of the provincial assembly of the merged districts have [approached the Peshawar High Court](#) against the non-participation of the tribal districts in the NFC. They have filed a writ petition in which the federal government, the provincial government, the NFC Cabinet Division, Council of Common Interest and Finance Division have been made respondents. Six members of the dissolved Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly [moved Peshawar High Court](#) for declaring the recent formation of a steering committee by the federal government for overseeing its development funds for the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) as unconstitutional. The ex-MPAs have requested the court to declare the relevant notification issued on January 3 by the planning commission, ministry of planning, development and special initiative, against the spirit of Article 129 and the Constitution (Twenty-Fifth Amendment) Act, 2018, through which former tribal areas were merged into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

People in various cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa held [protest demonstrations against rising](#) prices of flour and other essential commodities and asked the government to take immediate steps to control prices and ensure availability of essential food items. They said [flour prices touched a record high](#) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where 20kg flour bag had reached Rs 3, 200. They said the people were worried about [the flour crisis](#) and needed immediate relief. [People from various walks](#) of life and political activists held rallies in Swat, Charsadda, Lower Dir and Battagram [to demand from the government](#) to ensure easy availability of wheat flour and other essential food commodities besides controlling their prices. Former prime minister and PML-N central leader Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said the [military's interference in national politics](#) was to blame for the current economic and political instability in the country as well as the failure of the prevailing system of governance to deliver.

## **Governance and Services Delivery**

The leaders of Ettihad-i-Malkanan Bajaur, an alliance of local elders, [called for improving performance](#) of government departments in the district. Addressing a meeting, they alleged that the performance of



several government departments was very poor. The meeting, held in Civil Colony Khar, was attended by scores of elders from across the district. The participants of the meeting said that the government departments lacked check and balance

Tehreek-i-Haqooq-i-Qabail, a group of political parties, has asked the federal government to [implement the recommendations of the Sartaj Aziz-led Fata Reforms](#) Committee to bring tribal districts at par with other developed areas of the country.

With the law and order in most parts of district Khyber comparatively under control, officials said that public confidence in local police encouragingly increased as more than [1,300 First Information Reports \(FIRs\) were registered](#) during the last year at different police stations of the district.

Elders and leaders of political parties [demanded of the government to extend the tax exemption for Malakand division for 10 years](#). They were speaking in a jirga organised by Jamaat-i-Islami at its centre in Sangota, Swat. It was presided over by party's provincial deputy chief MPA Inayatullah Khan. Leaders of almost all political parties, lawyers, businessmen, elders and members of civil society participated in the meeting and discussed the problems being faced by the people of Malakand division. They said that people of Malakand could not afford any more unrest and military operations on their land and if any elements tried to sabotage peace all people of the region would stand united against them.

The district administration has [started collecting data of religious seminaries](#) from across Bajaur for their registration. According to a statement issued from the deputy commissioner's office, the initiative has been launched in accordance with the provincial government's policy to collect the data of religious seminaries.

## **Border and Borderland**

The border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, known as Durand Line, remained a major source of income for the people on both sides of the borderland. A single ethno-national community is dwelling on both sides of the border with shared social and cultural traditions. This region has been subjected to terrorism for the last four decades where the border has been fenced and closed in the name of security. The overall social structure of the borderland has been deteriorated along with the closure of business activities for the locals. Defense Minister Khawaja Asif informed the National Assembly that [Kabul had apologized](#) to Islamabad over Sunday's "unprovoked attack" on a village along the Pak-Afghan border, while lawmakers called for engaging the Afghan Taliban government through a parliamentary committee. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condemned the Chaman attack in the strongest terms, saying that it was "unfortunate and deserve[d] the strongest condemnation".

The business community of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa [urged Pakistan and Afghanistan to relax visa policies](#) and remove hurdles in the promotion of bilateral trade. Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) senior vice-president Shahid Hussain told a meeting on the chamber's premises that business communities of both Pakistan and Afghanistan required hassle-free visas to travel to their neighboring country.

The customs border [terminal at Torkham will start full operation by the end of next year](#), according to officials of National Logistic Cell (NLC). Although the idea of setting up the much needed terminal was conceived in 2003, yet construction work was delayed till 2015 due to security situation in the region and also due to a row over acquisition of land owned by Khugakhel sub-tribe of Landi Kotal of district Khyber for the project. The construction work, when finally started seven years ago, faced many hurdles

and delays owing to protests by Khugakhel tribe against the terms and conditions for acquisition of the required land.

As some semblance of normality returned to the Chaman border, [a flag meeting between Pakistan and Afghan authorities](#), scheduled to be held, was postponed in favour of a Jirga that would visit Afghanistan for negotiations with the Afghan Taliban officials. Efforts by tribal elders and the security forces were underway in a bid to normalize the tense border situation, which was precipitated by Afghan border forces' shelling on civilian settlements in Chaman.

While Islamabad looks to Kabul to rein in the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Afghan Taliban regime is adamant that the [group is not operating out of Afghanistan](#) and, as such, their attacks on Pakistani soil are an internal issue that Pakistan must deal with itself. When the Afghan Taliban seized Kabul in Aug 2021, their willingness to engage with Pakistan was taken as a silver lining, and there was a high degree of optimism that they would use their influence on the TTP and help Pakistan restore order in the bordering province, more so in the troubled tribal districts. The new rulers of Kabul initially offered to facilitate talks between Islamabad and the TTP leadership in Kabul and several rounds of overt and covert meetings were held.

Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has said the United States is [willing to provide Pakistan funds to enhance border security](#) for preventing cross-border attacks from Afghanistan. Responding to queries from Dawn, the foreign minister said that during his visit to the US Congress last week, two senior senators — Bob Menendez from New Jersey and Lindsey Graham from South Carolina — told him that they were provided “funding in the 2023 budget to help us with border security”.

Afghan Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said that his government desired “good relations” with Pakistan and all neighboring countries, but urged [Islamabad to refrain from issuing “provocative and baseless” statements](#). The statement comes after the National Security Committee (NSC) on Monday categorically asked Afghanistan's Taliban rulers without directly naming them to deny safe havens to Pakistani terrorist groups on its soil and end their patronage, while reiterating its intent to crush terrorist groups operating inside the country with full force.

The government is [contemplating the resumption of the Pakistan-Afghanistan Dosti bus service](#) to increase people-to-people contacts between the two countries, said an official. Deputy commissioner of Khyber district Shah Fahad said that the local administration along with local security officials were in contact with the local Khugakhel tribal elders for the acquisition of land to set up a bus terminal on the Torkham border.

### **Festivity, Poetic & Cultural Events**

The Raswa Pashto Adabi Jirga (RPAJ) [launched five Pashto poetry books](#). Literati and poetry lovers attended the books launching event chaired by noted Pashto poet Fazle Subhan Abid. On the occasion, Mr Abid said it was a prideful moment for the local poets that a literary body working in the area for last several years was able to bring out five new poetry collections.

The [10-day sports gala concluded](#) with a cricket match and prize distribution ceremony in district Lakki Marwat. The tehsil government had arranged the activity to provide a chance to the local youths and players to participate in different games and healthy activities. Tehsil nazim Hidayatullah Khan was chief guest at the concluding ceremony.

Speakers at [a seminar on gender-based violence](#) observed that Islam and the country's Constitution guaranteed the rights of women so everyone should follow the related injunctions and laws. The seminar

was organized at Begum Naseem Wali Khan Social Welfare Complex, Charsadda, by the social welfare department with the support of Cowater International.

[A two-day 'peace fair' began at University of Peshawar](#) to promote a positive image of the province. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) set up a tourist information desk at the fair to inform youth about the steps taken by it for providing facilities to tourists.

The [two-day winter youth sports festival concluded](#) with colourful New Year celebrations, including a musical show and fireworks, at the Hayatabad Sports Complex Peshawar. Thousands of families attended the celebrations, which were followed by a bonfire and fireworks. They also enjoyed traditional food at the stalls, especially set up for the occasion.

Participants of [an annual event have asked young students to work for promoting the cause of peace](#) and national unity, adding that peace and stability was vital for progress and prosperity in the region. They pointed out that engaging in cultural activities served the purpose of knowing about the value of peaceful human society that taught us to develop a taste for mutual harmony and dignity to respect views of others.

A Three-day literary festival was organized at Peshawar University in the first week of March. Academia, students, literati and activists participated in the literary festival.

## Chapter IV

### Conclusion

The data in third quarter reveals terror haunts the atmosphere of both the new districts and the adjacent areas where Taliban and the “unknown” are attacking civilians and security personnel equally. These incidents are growing day after another. This quarter has reported high number of attacks on police by the unknown persons. Majority of these attacks are on the check posts and police stations which also show the strong presence of militant groups in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in general and in the new districts specifically.

The report also observes poor performance of governance and services delivery by the Pakhtunkhwa government, especially in the new districts. The reason for this poor governance has been noted in the shape of non-provision of the developmental funds for which the provincial government accuses federal government. Another major obstacle in services delivery is the law and order situation in the new districts, the increasing intensity of terrorism and resurgence of terrorism which have created an atmosphere of fear for the public and business community. The opposition parties in Pakhtunkhwa are criticizing the government for not showing its sincerity and seriousness in combating terrorism.

The situation at border and borderland remains the same where the locals complain about the visa regime. The fencing of border and visa regime has deteriorated the local businesses, social structure and cohesion on the borderland. The local traders on borderland have staged protests demonstrations at different points across the Durand Lines passes demanding relaxation in crossing the border.

It has been observed from the data that poor governance, lack of service delivery and the menace of terrorism are due to the absence of institutionalization. It is believed that proper institutionalization would solve issues with service delivery, local business and peace-building in the new districts.

## **Appendix**

### **List of Media forums**

1. Dawn
2. Daily Shehbaz
3. The News
4. Mashriq
5. Express Tribune
6. Geo News and other TV channels
7. Social media pages [of activists, political workers, institutions and organizations]