



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
2 September 2024

English only

---

## Human Rights Council

Fifty-seventh session

9 September–9 October 2024

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by Centre d'Encadrement et Développement des Anciens Combattants, a non- governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[12 August 2024]

---

\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



## Discrimination and Denial for the People in Pakistan's Sindh

'Dismal' is the word to summarise the inglorious state of human development in Pakistan's southern province of Sindh. It is indeed an irony that while Sindh produces almost 72% of Pakistan's total oil and gas, its hinterland is still one of the more backward regions in the country, with soaring poverty, high unemployment, and widening rural-urban inequality. For instance, Badin district, which produces 60 %of the country's oil, ranks at 90 in the Human Development Index of districts of Pakistan.

Sindh is a study in contrasts defined by sharp urban-rural and socioeconomic divides. The province's extremes range from the wealth and density of Karachi, the mega port city that dominates the economy not only of Sindh but also of Pakistan as a whole, and the poverty of Tharparkar and Badin. The rural districts of Sindh are home to some of the most impoverished citizens of Pakistan, many of them "haris" (sharecroppers) who are tied to "waderos" (landowners) in bonded labour arrangements.

Today Sindh is in the throes of abject poverty, with the provincial planning and development department statistics pointing to a widening rural-urban income disparity.

According to a December 2022 World Bank report, "Sindh has deep-seated inequalities and significant gaps in social protection (SP) service delivery due to fragmentation of interventions, inadequate coverage and leakage, and administrative inefficiencies." (1)

As per a UNDP the intensity of multidimensional poverty is highest in Sindh. (2) Some of the districts of Sindh appeared to be in a specially distressing situation. As per the UNDP report in districts like Umerkot, Tharparkar, Thatta, Tando Muhammad Khan, Jacobabad, Badin, Kashmore and others, the percentage of persons affected by multidimensional poverty is more than 70 percent. In Umerkot and Tharparkar, 84.7 % and 87 % of the population respectively were victims of multidimensional poverty. Accumulated neglect, plunder and poor governance of decades have bruised Sindh's human development landscape.

According to a World Bank report titled 'State of Water Supply, Sanitation and Poverty in Pakistan', the gap between rural and urban poverty is the widest in Sindh at almost 30 percentage points. (3) Rural Sindh has around 50% of the population, and shares about 30% of the province's GDP. Sindh's rural population comprises small or subsistence-level farmers, landless sharecroppers, agricultural labourers and livestock herders. The problem of poverty in the province is compounded by low rainfall, poor quality water, saline land and lack of water supply because of the poor quality of the canal irrigation system.

Rural inhabitants are mainly dependent on agriculture, with those in arid zones on animal rearing, and those along the coastal belt on fishing. But the constant shortage of water in Thatta, Badin, Umerkot, and parts of Sanghar, Mirpurkhas, Dadu districts, and surprisingly even in some pockets of the Rohri canal system in Khairpur district, is a major factor behind increased poverty.

This is due to the mismanagement of water. Independent economists and the World Bank have held both the drought and the policymakers responsible for low agricultural production.

Already on the lower rungs of human development, Sindh suffered a further setback on account of the 2022 floods. The devastating rains exposed the rickety infrastructure and poor management, which contributed to the catastrophic outcome. Food insecurity, malnutrition and stunting are prevalent in Sindh, and worsened due to the floods.

The poor also suffer from low quality public services. They have relatively lower access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities. Only 10% of Sindh's rural populace has access to proper sanitation facilities. (4) Across Sindh's villages, excreta accumulations can be found outside homes, and this becomes a major source for spread of infectious and waterborne diseases.

Attendance in Sindh's public schools is lower than in other parts of Pakistan and dropout rates are also high. The province also has the gravest problem of ghost schools—that is, nonfunctional schools that nonetheless draw funds from the provincial government and maintain ghost teachers on salary.

### **The Socioeconomic Status of Minority Groups within Sindh:**

Sindh has 92% of the total Hindu population of the country and 14% of total Christian population. They are found in higher ratios in Umerkot, Tharparkar, Mirpur Khas, Sanghar, Badin and Hyderabad.

The trials and tribulations of Pakistan's minorities are most pronounced in Sindh. Here the Christian community is subjected to frequent ruthless killings, bombings, attacks on churches, and undesirable legislation proposed for marriage and divorce. Desecration of temples, abduction of Hindu traders and forced conversion of young Hindu girls is a commonplace and Hindu families know better than to appeal for justice to the authorities.

In Sindh, blasphemy laws are regularly invoked to victimise non-Muslims, since the procedure to implement that law is not clear. Minorities are constantly fearful of being falsely charged with blasphemy, which is punishable by death in Pakistan, or of being targeted in mob violence. With Sindh's economy on the brink of collapse, the pressures on the province's minorities, often its poorest people, have increased.

### **Strong Control of 'Feudal' Lords in Sindh:**

Feudalism which has been gradually eliminated in a number of countries somehow still exists very strongly in Pakistan, particularly in Sindh. The overall backwardness of Sindh because of poverty and lack of education is further aggravated because of the very strong control of 'feudals' and 'waderas' in Sindh who have a direct influence on the economic life of the poor and also enjoy control over 'thanas' and the 'official machinery' in the province.

Since the facility of micro credit is also non-existent in Sindh poor peasants are often forced to work for the feudal at practically non-existent remuneration. (5) Peasantry in Sindh is caught in an eternal, vicious circle of indebtedness to the feudal lord, never getting out of the loop.

A World Bank report titled, Securing Sindh's future prospects and challenges, noted that, "given its feudal traditions, progressive ideas and reforms have always taken more time to take roots in the interior of Sindh than in most other areas of Pakistan. Sindh has the highest incidence of absolute landlessness, the highest share of tenancy and lowest share of land ownership in the country.

"Wealthy landlords with holdings in excess of 100 acres form less than one percent of all farmers in the province, and own 150 percent more land than combined holdings of 62 percent of small farmers with holdings less than five acres."

### **Patronage Politics, Failure of Governance, and Rising Extremism:**

The politics of Sindh has long been dominated by the PPP which has entrenched its position in Sindh by developing strong patronage networks among the landowning elite and the provincial bureaucracy. Landowners use their influence over sharecroppers, shrines, and local police to secure votes during elections. This patronage politics leads to governance failings and poor service delivery. The political setup also leads to widespread corruption and rent-seeking at all levels. The toll on governance and service delivery of Sindh's patronage politics is highlighted in the state's poor governance and low human development indices.

Growing frustration with poor service delivery and the erosion of public support for democratic forces is felt acutely in Sindh. Failings in Sindh's public school system coupled with widespread poverty are contributing to the growing popularity of madrassas throughout the province.

As this analysis suggests, the province is at a tipping point systemic issues and socioeconomic factors, such as poverty, Sindh's extreme urban-rural divide, poor governance, the lack of basic service delivery, and the continuance of a centuries-old feudal system creates conditions within the province that risk driving greater discrimination, denial and an exacerbating cycle abject poverty.

- (1) Factsheet: Strengthening Social Protection Delivery System in Sindh (worldbank.org)  
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/factsheet/2022/12/19/factsheet-strengthening-social-protection-delivery-system-in-sindh#:~:text=Almost%20half%20of%20Sindh%27s%20population,53.4%20percent%20in%20Badin%20district.>
- (2) MPI-4pager.pdf (undp.org) <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/pk/MPI-4pager.pdf>
- (3) When Water Becomes a Hazard : A Diagnostic Report on The State of Water Supply, Sanitation and Poverty in Pakistan and Its Impact on Child Stunting (worldbank.org)  
<https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/649341541535842288/when-water-becomes-a-hazard-a-diagnostic-report-on-the-state-of-water-supply-sanitation-and-poverty-in-pakistan-and-its-impact-on-child-stunting>
- (4) Poverty in rural Sindh - Newspaper - DAWN.COM  
<https://www.dawn.com/news/1024852/poverty-in-rural-sindh>
- (5) <https://www.dawn.com/news/361022/feudalism-keeps-sindh-backward>