NATIONAL COMMISSION
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Inquiry Report on the

Longstanding Humanitarian Crisis in Kurram District

National Commission For Human Rights Pakistan

Foreword

As Chairperson of the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), I am confronted daily with a wide range of human rights concerns. Some are longstanding, deeply entrenched issues, while others emerge suddenly as urgent crises during times of internal or external conflict, each carrying devastating consequences for communities and resulting in grave violations of fundamental rights. The NCHR plays a leading role in responding to these challenges, often becoming the first point of recourse for victims who approach us in person or reach out through letters and emails, sharing their sorrows and seeking redress.

One such instance occurred in early December 2024, during the closure of the Thall–Parachinar highway. The NCHR began receiving urgent complaints from residents of Parachinar who had been cut off from the rest of the country for nearly a month, facing acute shortages of medicine and food. Among the many voices of desperation, two young boys found their way to the NCHR office. Their faces, etched with fear and uncertainty, spoke of the despair felt by countless others. Their repeated appeals to other government departments had gone unanswered, and their visit stood as a stark reminder of the human cost of neglect and inaction. What they sought was not only assistance, but also dignity, connection, and safety. Their stories and those of many others trapped by the blockade form the basis of this report.

The valley of Kurram has long echoed with stories of loss and devastation, where land disputes frequently escalate into sectarian crises. Such violence constitutes a grave violation of the fundamental ‘Right to Life’ and ‘Security of Person’ guaranteed under the ICCPR and UDHR. Pakistan’s own Constitution, in Article 9, upholds the protection of citizens’ liberties against cruel and unlawful treatment.

In line with its mandate to raise a voice against these violations, NCHR initiated inquiries into the ongoing crisis. Our research team engaged with journalists present on the ground, as well as relief organizations such as the Edhi Foundation, to uncover the true reality faced by affected communities.

After comprehensive research, we urge the Government of Pakistan to take decisive steps to resolve the long-standing land disputes that continue to fuel recurring conflicts and result in the repeated closure of the Thall–Parachinar Highway. The government must activate and enforce the mandate of the Land Commission while strengthening the authority of administrative institutions so that communities feel secure and are no longer compelled to carry personal weapons for protection.

Addressing this crisis requires collective action. The foremost priority must be the safety and security of the people, which is only achievable if the police and the Deputy Commissioner’s office are adequately empowered and resourced. In addition, the government should establish an alternative route to connect Kurram with the rest of the country. Such a measure would ensure uninterrupted access to essential supplies, preventing shortages of food and medicine during times of unrest.

Only through decisive governance, institutional empowerment, and inclusive infrastructure planning can lasting peace and dignity be restored to the people of Kurram.

Rabiya Javeri Agha

Chairperson,
National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR)

Introduction

The Kurram District is grappling with a severe humanitarian and security crisis that has evolved into a violent sectarian conflict primarily between the Shia and Sunni tribes. Rooted in longstanding land disputes and incited by external militant groups, the conflict has erupted into deadly confrontations. The most recent violence was triggered by a land lease dispute and an ambush on the Thall-Parachinar highway, resulting in the highway's closure. To date, the conflict has claimed around 600 lives[1], leaving residents in acute distress and struggling with shortages of essential services, including emergency medical aid.

The National Commission for Human Rights NCHR has undertaken this report due to serious concerns about the violation of **'Right to Life'** and **'Security of Person'** under both national law and international norms of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights **(ICCPR)** and Universal Declaration of Human Rights **(UDHR).** In exercise of its statutory functions, the Commission has been monitoring media reports, and addressing individual appeals from the residents of Parachinar. The Commission has also been approached by victims of November 21st militant attacks, who claim their lives are allegedly under threat as part of the targeted killings of Turi Tribe. The commission urges the Government of Pakistan (GOP) to take assertive action in order to provide security and basic essentials to Kurram Residents.

Situational Analysis

Kurram has long endured cycles of conflict, where fleeting periods of peace are frequently disrupted by sudden outbreaks of violence. The latest wave of unrest began on October 12, following a shooting in the Kunj Alizai area. This incident led to the closure of the highway—the only route connecting Parachinar to Peshawar—severing the region's access to essential supplies and services. Since then, sporadic skirmishes have continued, compounding the challenges faced by the local population.

Tensions surged further on November 21st, when a brutal ambush claimed 54 lives, highlighting the vulnerability of civilian convoys and the inadequacies of state security measures. This surge in violence has deepened the mistrust between the region's Shia-majority population and the government.

Efforts to broker peace culminated in a Grand Jirga held in Kohat, which led to a peace agreement on January 1st, 2025. However, hopes for stability were short-lived; on January 3rd, an attack on Deputy Commissioner Javedullah Mehsud's convoy derailed the fragile truce.

The attack, which injured the DC, marked a severe blow to peace efforts and intensified the humanitarian crisis. The constant attacks on convoys, and critical shortages of food, medicine, and heating supplies continue to worsen the suffering of the trapped population.

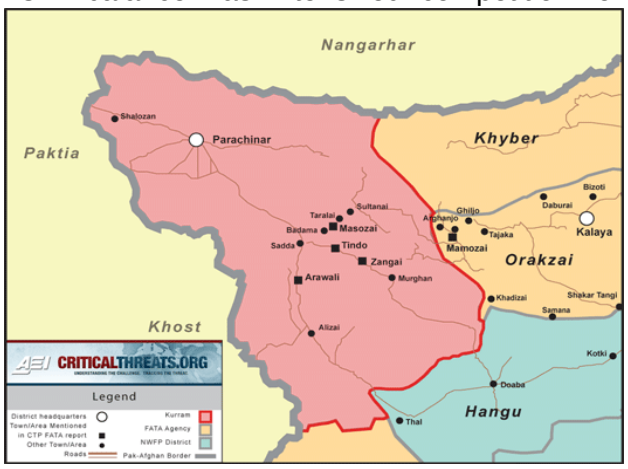
[1] Humera A, *Humanitarian Crisis Report: Sectarian Violence, Road Blockade, and the Death of 29 Children in Kurram District (2023-2024),* The Voice Pakistan, 17.12.2024

Root Causes

Land Disputes: Decades-old land disputes between Kurram's Shia-majority old settlers, who dominate land ownership, and the growing Sunni population, bolstered by migration from Afghanistan, have frequently led to violent clashes over land division. The recent flashpoint on November 21st, stemmed from a dispute over a 100-kanal agricultural plot. The Shia Maleekhel tribe had leased the land to the Sunni Madgi Kalay tribe but demanded its return after the lease expired. The Madgi Kalay tribe's refusal escalated the dispute into a major confrontation, highlighting the region's entrenched land issues[2].

In an effort to address the growing number of disputes, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government established the Boundary Commission in 2023. Tasked with mediating land conflicts and supported by local Jirga elders, the commission aimed to provide a neutral mechanism for resolution. However, its findings remain unpublished and unenforced, leaving these longstanding grievances unresolved[3].

Sectarian Divisions: Demographic changes and systemic marginalization have deepened sectarian rifts. Sunni tribes like the Mangal, Moqbil, and Para Chamkani have gradually expanded their presence, confining the Shia community to limited areas such as Parachinar in Upper Kurram and Ali Sherzai in Lower Kurram. Sunnis now constitute 58% of the population, while Shias make up 42%. This imbalance has intensified competition for resources, fueling recurring violence[4].



External Influence: The conflict is further complicated by the involvement of militant groups. These external actors, seek to secure strategic footholds in Kurram and have perpetuated instability by fueling local rivalries[5].

Challenges

Highway Blockade: The closure of the Thall-Parachinar highway has left the residents of Upper Kurram completely isolated from the rest of the country. Alternative routes through Afghanistan, via the Kharlachi transit point, are also inaccessible. Since December 20th, peaceful protests have been underway, demanding the reopening of the main highway[6].

Essential Shortages: The blockade has severely disrupted essential travel, cutting off access to critical medical care in Peshawar and preventing students from attending college entrance exams. It has also caused a dire shortage of essential commodities, including heating gas, fuel, life-saving medicines like insulin and antibiotics, and staple foods such as sugar and oil. Residents reliant on the route for firewood collection face extreme hardship during freezing winters, leading to widespread cold-related illnesses, including pneumonia among children. This disruption has deprived the community of vital resources and services.

[2] Ibid
[3] Zia ur Rehman, The Roots of Kurram's cycle of bloodshed, Dawn news, 1.12.2024
[4] Ibid
[5] Asmatullah Niazi, Road to Nowhere: Thall Parachinar highway & Kurram's Deep-Rooted Issues, Voicepk.net, 11.11.2024
[6] Tribune Correspondent, *Protests, misery spread across Kurram*, The Express Tribune, 26.12.2024

Violence: Any attempts by residents of Upper Kurram to travel southward to reconnect with the rest of the country out of necessity have been met with brutal violence, often resulting in fatalities.

Current Responses

Government Efforts: The government's approach to addressing the ongoing conflict in Kurram has faced considered obstacles. The government has repeatedly sought ceasefires through the Jirga system, but hostilities consistently resume. Efforts by politicians to mediate peace have been complicated by Kurram's recent integration into the mainstream administrative framework, disintegrating stability efforts.

After significant delays, the provincial cabinet approved measures including relief payments for victims, the establishment of a Commission on Minority Rights, the disarmament of warring tribes, and removal of highway bunkers[7]. However, the effective implementation of these initiatives has been constrained by limited infrastructure and policing capacity, which remains insufficient to address the sensitive dynamics of sectarian tensions.

NGOs: The Edhi Foundation has has been at the forefront of providing crucial relief to deliver medicines and transport critically ill patients from Parachinar to Peshawar, despite the absence of government-provided security and the non-functional status of the Parachinar airstrip[8].

NCHR Private Hearing of victims

The National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) is a statutory body established under the NCHR Act XVI of 2012. The Act stipulates a broad and overarching mandate for the promotion and protection of human rights, as embedded in Pakistan's Constitution, domestic law and international treaties. Amongst its key responsibilities, the primary function of NCHR includes investigating into allegations of human rights abuses and advising the Government on legislative, policy and administrative matters pertaining to the situation of human rights in the country.

After receiving a humanitarian plea from **Zahid Ali**, a resident of Parachinar, the NCHR initiated a fact-finding mission to investigate the situation on ground and assess the extent of basic supply shortages. In his distress, Zahid reached out to the Commission, stating:

> *"Lack of food supplies has caused widespread hunger, and the shortage of medical aid has led to preventable deaths, especially among children who are losing their lives due to malnutrition and preventable diseases. To cope with the ongoing food shortages, local residents are resorting to informal means of support, with many sharing whatever food they have with their neighbors. Community networks are stepping in to provide for the most vulnerable, particularly families with young children or elderly members. However, these efforts are increasingly unsustainable, as the overall supply of food and resources continues to dwindle."*

[7] News Desk, *K-P govt declares emergency in Kurram,* The express Tribune, 23.12.2024
[8] Ali Afzal Afzaal, *Edhi Foundation starts air ambulance service for Kurram,* 18.12.2024

Following a lengthy interview call, Zahid presented a letter from the Medical Superintendent of the District Headquarters Hospital in Parachinar, requesting an urgent list of all essential medicines. The letter has been attached to the end of the report.

As part of further investigations, the NCHR fact-finding mission interviewed two victims of the November 21st attack, Danish Hussain Turi and Aun Mohammad Turi, in Islamabad. Both had fled the region with the assistance of a KP government helicopter arranged by the Deputy Commissioner due to alleged life threats. The mission recorded their heart wrenching account as follows:

"Nestled in the snowcapped valley of Kurram, the scenic route of Thall-Parachinar Highway has transformed into a deadly battleground for its residents. On November 21st, Danish Hussain and Aun Muhammad, both 18 years old, were traveling in a convoy accompanied by women and children. These convoys, dispatched routinely every two days from Parachinar, offer a semblance of safety in an increasingly hostile region. But that day, safety was an illusion.

As the convoy passed through the village of Mundari, Bagan, a barrage of rockets and gunfire erupted, transforming the scenic route into a scene of terror. For 45 agonizing minutes, the convoy was under relentless attack. Security forces, which had abandoned the convoy at the village of Alizai, were nowhere to be found. Panic-stricken passengers scrambled for cover, running into nearby trees and bushes in a desperate bid to survive. Danish clutched his 8-year-old sister in his arms and joined others seeking refuge. They crouched at the edge of the road, concealed by bushes and tree roots, while bullets whizzed past them. Amidst the chaos, Danish summoned the courage to call the Kurram Deputy Commissioner, the police, and tribal leaders for help. Their responses were chillingly indifferent: "Wait for the security teams."

As Danish and the others frantically sought an escape route, a single bullet tore through his sister's chest. Her small body went limp in his arms as she drew her last breath. Danish's world shattered in an instant, and his strength began to wane. The violence raged on, and it seemed as though no end was in sight.

Then, in an unexpected twist, the sound of a nearby school bell pierced the air. Scores of children poured out of the school, their sudden presence halting the gunfire. Only then did security forces from the nearby village of Thall arrive, rescuing the injured and escorting the remaining survivors to safety. But the damage was done. Fifty-four lives were lost in the attack, and not a single investigation was conducted. No one was held accountable for the carnage.

Haunted by grief and injustice, Danish and Aun turned to the media, desperate for their voices to be heard. Their positions as youth council leaders provided them a sliver of access, enabling a meeting with the local Deputy Commissioner. Fearing for their lives after receiving death threats following their interviews, the two were sent to Islamabad for their safety.

In the capital, Danish and Aun remain cut off from their families, moving from one government office to another in search of help and answers. Their plea for justice is met with bureaucracy and indifference. Danish's anguish is palpable—his constant head nodding and vacant eyes bear the weight of a tragedy too great for his years. Aun, though resolute, mirrors the pain of a community torn apart."

The valley of Kurram echoes with countless similar stories — tales of loss, devastation and unanswered cries for help. Danish and Aun's harrowing account is a stark reminder of the urgent need for action, as the social fabric of their community has been torn apart.

Recommendations

The situation in Kurram presents both an immediate and a long-term problem – both of which must be addressed to pave the way for a lasting peace in the region. To address this pressing issue, NCHR submits the following recommendations:

1. **Access to basic supplies**: Collaborate with NGOs, such as Edhi foundation, to deliver essential goods, including food, medicine and cylinders to affected areas till safety clearance is provided. Supplement the current air ambulance system with other logistics transportation for bulk supplies and heavy materials.
2. **Access to travel:** Immediate reopening of the Thall-Parachinar Road to ensure uninterrupted connectivity between the focal population centers. Furthermore, the government can establish a CCTV surveillance system at critical hot spots that provides video feed accessible to the authorities, which ensures travelers with safety and visibility ahead of their travels. In the long term, an investment in building alternative access routes linking Parachinar to Peshawar would reduce reliance on single highway. Additionally, making the Kurram airport in Parachinar operational for regular commercial flights would significantly increase connectivity.
3. **Empower the Land Commission**: The primary livelihood for the people of Kurram is derived from land and its resources, making land ownership and its control a highly sensitive issue. Empower the land Commission to survey and provide clear verdicts on disputed lands. Land boundaries, both formal and informal, should be traced and documented. Ensure actionable implementation of ownership decisions, supported by the provincial government, as well as the Jirgas.
4. **Strengthen the administrative Framework**: The provincial government must address the gaps in transitioning Kurram from a traditional tribal framework to a formal bureaucratic district administration. This shift from the jirga system to governance by Deputy Commissioners (DCs) and police institutions necessitates comprehensive training for former Khasadar personnel to effectively integrate them into the roles of police officers and DC staff.
5. **Strengthen Law Enforcement institutions**: Strengthen law enforcement institutions by equipping the police and FC with the resources needed to patrol and respond in conflict-stricken regions. Deploy impartial security forces --that don't align with any specific sect -- including the Frontier Corps, Police and intelligence agencies along focal points of the Highway which is only 27 km long to ensure neutral and unbiased protection.
6. **Ban on Hate speech and Material:** Prohibit the dissemination of inflammatory content that has the potential to incite sectarian tensions. Regularly monitor sermons in religious worship places, and use of social media by individuals inciting populations should be prosecuted immediately.
7. **Curb terrorism:** Terrorist attacks must be addressed with zero tolerance, ensuring thorough investigations and holding perpetrators accountable to set a strong precedent. Advanced drone technology should be utilized to monitor and track suspected militants with precision, minimizing harm to civilians. Cyber intelligence can play a crucial role in tracing external funding for sectarian militant groups and

dismantling these financial networks. Additionally, engaging the local population is essential to gain their support and foster a united front against militancy.

REQUIRED MEDICINE LIST FOR DHQ HOSPITAL PARACHINAR

S #	Detail of Items	Quantity	S #	Detail of Items	Quantity
1	IV Cannulas V. Sizes	1000 each Size	2	Anti Rabies Vaccine	1000 Vials
3	D/Syringes 5 cc	10000	4	Silk 2/0 , 3/0	30 Dozen
5	Cotton Roll	200	6	Creep Bandage 4 "	2000
7	Gauze Roll 20 m	1000	8	Creep Bandage ,6 "	2000
9	Examination Gloves	200 Box	10	Inj Hyzonate 500 mg	1000
11	IV Sets	10000	12	Inj Tramal	4000
13	Proline 2/0 & 1	30 Dozen	14	Inj Lignocane Plain	1000
15	ECG Roll 3 Channel Size	100 NOs	16	Inf; Ringer lactate 1000 ml	2000
17	Gypsona 4 " & 6 "	1000	18	Catgut V Sizes	40 Dozen each size
19	Inj 2 Sum 2 g	1000	20	Tab Nezkil 600 mg	10000
21	Inf; Haemaccl 500 ml	200	22	Tab Diclofenac 50 mg	20000
23	Inj Lignocane + Adrenalin	1000	24	Inj Streptokinase	100
25	Inf Normal Saline 1000 ml	5000	26	Anti Snake Venom	50
27	D/Syringes 10 cc	7000	28	Cap Cefixime 400 mg	10000
29	Sticking Plaster	5000	30	Tab Moxifloxacin 400 mg	10000
31	Gauze Roll 40 m	4000	32	Cap .Naproxin	10000
33	Ray band 15x15	1000 Box	34	Tab Tramal SR	20000
35	Inj; Isoflurane	200	36	Inj Ketamin	100
37	Inj Propofol	100	38	Inj Succinyl	100
39	X ray Films 8x10 Size Fuji	100 Packets	40	Inj; Insulin 70/30	1000
41	Pyodine solution 450 ml	500 Btl	42	Inj Omeprazole 40 mg	2000
43	Inf; Pladex 100 ml	5000	44	Syp; Augementum DS	10000
45	Syp; Caricef DS & Plain	5000	46	Syp Claretek 125 / 250 mg	6000 each
46	Syp; Zytro	5000	47	Syp Panadol	20000
48	Syp Brufen	10000	49	Syp Ceclor 125 / 250 mg	10000
49	Syp Neucef 125 mg /250 mg	10000	50	Syp; Orelox/ Prelox	15000
51	Syp Vomilox/ Motillium	10000	52	Syp; Coperb	20000
53	Syp; Acefyl	20000	54	Syp Zytopine	5000
55	Syp Ventolin	10000	56	Inj Gracil 250 mg	500
57	Inj Fortum 500 mg 1g	2000 each	58	Inj Claforon 1 g	5000
59	Inj Decadron 4 mg	10000	60	Inj Epigram	500
61	Inj Onset 8 mg	5000	62	Inj Metomide	5000
63	Inj Gravinate	5000	64	Inj Toradal	5000
65	Inf Flabolyte	2000	66	Inj Meoranamc 1g	4000
67	Inj Lasix	5000	69	Inj Imatat	1000
68	Vantolin Solution	2000	70	Inf Provos	10000
71	Syp Mucaine	10000	72	Tab Rolif Eaz 10/10 mg	10000
73	Tab Ascard 75 mg /Plus	10000 Each	74	Tab Lowplate Plus	10000
75	Inj Claxane 6000 IC	1000	76	Inj Spadix	4000
77	Tab Esso 40 mg	20000	78	Tab Herbessor 60 mg	10000
79	Tab Damacron MR 60	10000	80	Tab Gabica 75 mg	30000
81	Tab Cienew 10 mg	10000	82	Tab Metronidazol	30000
83	Tab Panadol	50000	84	Tab Moti get 10 mg	30000
85	Tycre/Comivire Inhalaor	20000	86	Tab entecavir	10000
87	Tab Velocef 500 mg	20000	88	Inj Transamin	1000
89	Tab Atenolol 50 mg	20000	90	Tab Concor 5 mg	10000
91	Tab Eptval 500 mg	10000	92	Inf Manitol	200
93	Tab Dipof 6/25 mg	1000	94	Depricap	2000
95	Tab Movax 2 mg	5000	96	Tab Caflam 50 mg	10000
97	Tab Levofloxacin	6000	98	Tab Alp	Rooou-

Medical Superintendent
District Head Quarter Hospital
District Parachinar
Dated ____/____/20

Annex-1: Medicine Requested by the DHQ Hospital Parachinar

051 9216771
5th Floor Evacuee
Trust Complex, Agha Khan Road,
Islamabad
www.nchr.gov.pk