



MEMBER PROFILE

SINDH

World Sindhi Congress



Last updated: January 2018

Population: 47.88 million, mainly Sindhis

Capital: Karachi - since 1936 (previously Hyderabad & Thatta)

Area: 140,914 km²

Language: Sindhi, Urdu and English are the official languages of Sindh

Religion: Islam (80%), Hindu (15%)



UNPO REPRESENTATION

The World Sindhi Congress (WSC) is committed to bringing the world's attention to the persecuted status of Sindhis in Pakistan and the Sindhi people's struggle for human rights, including the right to self-determination.

WSC adheres to the principles of nonviolence, democracy, separation of state and religion and nuclear disarmament. Being based in the UK, USA, Canada and Sindh, the UNPO member brings together Sindhis of all religious and geographical backgrounds, supporting in a proactive and progressive movement the fight for human rights and opposing environmental atrocities along the Indus River.

WSC believes that societal stability and sustainability can only be established in Sindh with the help of an empowered and resilient civil society that is based on equality for women and allows for the free expression of the Sindhi culture and language.

OVERVIEW

Sindh forms Pakistan's most southeastern province, located on the northern shore of the Arabian Sea, girdling the fertile lower reaches of the Indus River over almost 41,440 km² and bordering the Pakistani provinces of Punjab and Balochistan to the north and the west, and the Indian states of Rajasthan and Gujarat to the east and southeast. Sindh has a population of over 47.88 million.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The region received its name, Sindh, from the River Sindhu (Indus) and the people living in the area are referred to as Sindhi. Dating back to the ancient Indus River civilisations of Harappa and Mohenjo Daro, this major river has been the lifeline of the Sindhi people. Each year its floods from the Himalayan Mountains carry rich sediments to its densely populated valley, enriching the soil.

Settled in a region prosperous with natural resources, in its thousands of years of history, the Sindhi nation has come under attack and, for periods, remained under control of outside forces and rulers, such as the Persians, Greeks, Arabs, Mughals, Afghans and the British. Motivated by a desire to gain control of the abundant resources of Sindh, invasions have been an ill-fated aspect of the Sindh history. However, historically Sindhis have been successful in regaining their independence from colonial rulers time and again and consequently have maintained independence for a significant majority of the last 5,000 years.

In the medieval era, the Sindh region was occupied by several different dynasties. In 711 AD Arab invaders captured Sindh and their rule over the region was the longest lasting, spanning over almost three centuries. Under the Arab rule, religious values were imposed on the local population who were mainly Buddhist and Hindu. This would produce a fusion of cultures that would persist into the modern age. After the fall of the Arab rule, Sindh would fall under the rule of many dynasties and empires until the British took over in 1843. Under the British rule, the Sindh nation was eventually granted provincial status in 1936. Although the British would continue to rule until 1947, their provincial status would allow their people to pursue their secular, pluralist and democratic world view. Today, Sindhi Sufism, Hinduism and Christianity make up the greater part of an even broader mix of religions, whose adherents live together in mutual respect.

Sindh joined Pakistan under the understanding of the 1940 Lahore Resolution of the All-India Muslim League, recognising Sindh as an autonomous and sovereign entity. However, since its inception Pakistan has relegated Sindh to a colonial status, defying the Resolution's promise. With its inclusion in Pakistan, Sindhis have been systematically oppressed, suffered an exodus of Sindhi Hindus and marginalisation of their culture, language and heritage. Over the last five decades, the Sindhi people have nonetheless never ceased the righteous struggle to regain their human rights, including the right to self-determination.

CURRENT ISSUES/POLITICAL SITUATION

The people of Sindh have recently been hit hard by widespread and severe human rights violations - in particular enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings and suppression of religion - perpetrated by Pakistani security forces

Enforced Disappearances

In pursuing the suppression of the ethnic Sindhi peoples whom reside in the Sindh region of Pakistan, authorities often utilize the practice of enforced disappearances. These are civilians whom are abducted by force or kidnapped by state or police forces and whose whereabouts remain undetermined. In other words, authorities refuse to investigate or provide any assistance to the friends or family of the victims.



Investigative reports by the United States Department of State and the UN Working Group on enforced disappearances have confirmed that not only do enforced disappearances persist, but shockingly more than 14,000 persons remain missing and unaccounted for in Pakistan.

Torture and Death Penalty

In addition to failing to address enforced disappearances in its national policy, Pakistan has also yet to follow through on its commitment to the UN Convention Against Torture. Today, Pakistani security forces continue to utilize methods of torture to coerce confessions and to punish prisoners. In 2015, the Faisalabad District Standing Medical Board concluded that 76 percent of examined cases indicated signs of torture. In fact, a report by Human Rights Watch uncovered that Pakistani police officers openly admitted to routinely using a whole range of torture methods. Sadly, political activists, women

and children in the regions of Sindh and Balochistan remain the most vulnerable to such brutalities.

Suppression of Religion

Furthermore, during the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization's 13th General Assembly (UNPO) in 2017, the Assembly passed a resolution on the deteriorating Human Rights situation in Sindh. Within the resolution was emphasized the suppression of religion that persists in the region. The intensification of State violence using Islamic militancy against non-Muslim and Muslim non-Sunni sects has been especially alarming. According to some sources there have been as many as 20,000 new madrassas opening in Sindh during the last few years, which teach intolerance and bigotry towards non-Muslim beliefs. In addition, Pakistan's penal code has designated a list of religious offences, which are referred to as blasphemy laws. These strict laws are too often used against religious minorities and even made punishable by death.

Forced Conversions of Girls and Women



Aside, from imposing religion through state funded education, forced conversions by either physical force or psychological abuse afflict the people of Sindh. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Sindh was emphasized as a very vulnerable region to forced conversions, with girls being the most at risk. Their report estimated that 20 or more Hindu girls are abducted and converted every month in Pakistan. The two most common methods used for such forced conversion are bonded labor or forced marriage. Bonded labor is used to enslave those who owe a debt, particularly girls or women, as their labor is used as a form of payment. Often times the work is physically strenuous and the women become frequently subjected to sexual violence. In this manner and under the rule of abusive landlords, enslaved individuals lose the right to practice the religion of their choosing. In other instances, non-Muslim girls are forced to marry Muslim men in the state sponsored madrassas, after which they are prohibited from contacting their families. The few who are able to escape from forced marriages are immediately labeled "traitors of faith", a

crime punishable by death. Unfortunately, those in the Sindh region continue to be especially susceptible to these practices of forced conversion due to the extreme poverty and social alienation of the region.

Environmental issues

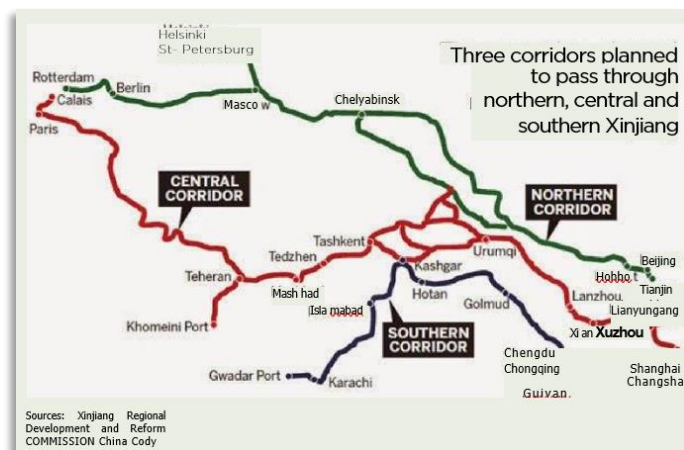
Today the inhabitants of the Indus River valley have their livelihoods threatened by man-made changes in weather patterns, which has already resulted in a decrease of water flow by 90% compared to in the 1970s. This water flow change paired with a stark decrease in indispensable mangrove forests in the river's estuary, which has decreased to one fifth of its original size due to rising sea levels, threatens to inundate the province's capital city of Karachi by 2060. Climate change has also led to the formation of hundreds of glacial lakes which experts worry could devastate villages with unprecedented flooding. In light of this new environmental challenge, several international organizations have proposed highly controversial projects that involve the construction of dams, artificial ponds and waterways. However, geographical experts voice concern that the regions nearness to fault lines could increase the risk of earthquakes and cause subsequent damages.

Although the proposed dams may help control the growing concern of flooding, it would be at the expense of water supply and fishery in the Sindh region. Unfortunately, the rivers running through this region would experience higher precipitation levels and salinization that could be detrimental to the ecological system.



Economic issues

To cap it all, the once thriving economic and cultural powerhouse of Sindh has been degraded to a rural and energy producing existence. As a result, its people are experiencing unprecedented poverty, featuring Pakistan’s highest rate of food insecurity in 2016 with 75% of Sindhi people living below the poverty line. This in itself is extremely shocking as the province accounts for 70% of the country’s productivity. Additionally, Sindh are experiencing the negative externalities of closer Pakistan-China economic ties. With no consultation of local stakeholders, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) arranges for ten highly polluting coal power projects to be built in Sindh. Furthermore, China and Pakistan have already introduced their security forces into the region to secure the transfer of Chinese and Punjab businessmen who will operate this mega infrastructure project, isolating the Sindh people from any participation.





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