



General Assembly

Distr.: General
XX January 2024

English only

Human Rights Council

Fifty-fifth session

26 February–5 April 2024

Agenda item 5

Human rights bodies and mechanisms

Written statement* submitted by Centre for Gender Justice and Women Empowerment, 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.

[22 January 2024]

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

The Phenomenon of Staged Encounters in Balochistan

The Centre for Gender Justice and Women Empowerment urgently brings to your attention the recurring cases of custodial and extrajudicial executions of Baloch people in Balochistan, Pakistan.

For over the past two decades, the Pakistani state has persistently engaged in gross human rights violations in Balochistan, with a focus on targeting students, intellectuals, socio-political activists, professionals, and human rights defenders. In recent years, the crisis in Balochistan has taken a distressing turn, with the military establishment in Pakistan adopting tactics involving the orchestrated killings of Baloch activists and students in staged encounters.

In almost every case, individuals forcibly disappeared or arrested by security forces, and held in the custody of security agencies, are subsequently killed after a period of detention and torture in these staged encounters. These encounters are often claimed by the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) of the police. The CTD, in turn, releases public statements suggesting a confrontation and indicating that the victim had resisted arrest.

A discernible pattern emerges wherein detainees are taken from custody and subsequently shot dead in staged encounters. The bodies of these victims are then disposed of secretly. This consistent pattern strongly indicates that the victims are, in fact, being killed while in custody. Below are some cases that corroborate the pattern.

On November 23, 2023, four individuals, previously confirmed to be in the custody of security forces, were killed in a staged encounter by the CTD in Turbat, Balochistan. Family members of one victim, Balach Mola Bakhsh, reported that he was taken from his home by the CTD on the night of October 29th. Later, on November 21st, the Counter-Terrorism Department presented him in court and secured a 10-day remand.

On November 19, 2023, Shah Jan, Adil, and Nabi Dad were among those abducted individuals ruthlessly assassinated by the security forces in Balgatar, Kech. Their bodies were placed in a vehicle, which was subsequently detonated with explosives. They were identified as having been abducted along with many of their family members in August 2023 by the Pakistani security forces.

In November 2022, the CTD claimed to have raided militant hideouts in Mastung and Nushki districts of Balochistan, stating that members of a banned military organization were killed due to resistance during the arrest. The identified victims included Abdullah Satakzai, Mushtaq, Ali Ahmad, Habib Ur Rehman, Muhammad Dawood, Tabish Waseem, Salal, Fareed, and Niyaz. Some of the victims had been violently arrested in the past in the presence of eyewitnesses and remained in the custody of security forces before their announced murder.

On January 18, 2021, the Eagle Force of Balochistan Police claimed to have arrested Jameel and Sami Pirkani, two cousins, for allegedly failing to stop during a routine check. Two hand grenades were reportedly found in their possession. Despite legal proceedings, they maintained their innocence. On March 7, 2021, the CTD announced the killing of five members of a banned militant group, including Jameel and Sami Pirkani, in a shootout near Mastung.

In August 2020, in a CTD operation in Rajan Pur, five Bugti tribesmen, previously reported missing, were killed. They were later identified as Dost Mohammad, Ghulam Hussain, Master Ali, Ramzan, and Atta Mohammad Bugti.

It is imperative to initiate an independent and impartial investigation to collect testimonies regarding these extrajudicial executions in detention, assess the extent of the abuses, and identify the perpetrators responsible for these actions. We have repeatedly emphasized that the silence of the international community and the UN has incentivized Pakistan to commit crimes against humanity in Balochistan without fear of accountability. Investigating, prosecuting, and ultimately convicting the perpetrators of these crimes against humanity is essential in combating impunity in Balochistan.

We urge the UN to take the following actions:

1. Dispatch a UN Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) to Balochistan to thoroughly investigate human rights violations committed by Pakistani security forces including the CTD.
 2. Press Pakistan to cease custodial and extrajudicial killings of Baloch people, and insist on presenting all abducted individuals before a court of law.
 3. Call for the dismantling of all death squads involved in the abduction and extrajudicial killings of Baloch people, followed by prosecution of those responsible.
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