



Pakistan 2019 Crime & Safety Report: Peshawar



This is an annual report produced in conjunction with the Regional Security Office at the U.S. Consulate General in Peshawar, Pakistan.

The current U.S. Department of State [Travel Advisory](#) at the date of this report's publication assesses most of Pakistan at Level 3, indicating travelers should reconsider travel due to terrorism. Some areas have increased risk: Do not travel to Balochistan province and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province, including the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), due to terrorism and kidnapping; or to the Azad Kashmir area due to terrorism and the potential for armed conflict.

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

The U.S. Consulate in Peshawar does not assume responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of the persons or firms appearing in this report. The Consulate cannot recommend a particular individual or location and assumes no responsibility for the quality of service provided.

The critical terrorist threat touches all aspects of life in northwest Pakistan and dominates the overall security environment. Street robbery, burglary, extortion, revenge/honor killings, political violence, terrorist attacks, kidnapping, sectarian killings, targeted killing of security personnel, military actions, and civil disturbances are prevalent in Peshawar and northwest Pakistan.

Review OSAC's [Pakistan-specific webpage](#) for proprietary analytic reports, Consular Messages, and contact information, some of which may be available only to private-sector representatives with an OSAC password.

Crime Threats

There is considerable risk from crime in Peshawar. Northwest Pakistan, consisting of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province, which includes the provincial capital Peshawar and the Merged Areas (formerly known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas – FATA) along the border with Afghanistan, is a dangerous region for all foreigners, especially U.S. citizens.

While data is difficult to verify independently, statistics published by Peshawar's Inspector General of Police and Pakistan's 2018 Annual Security Report appear to demonstrate a reduction in violence in KPK. In 2017, there were 414 murders in KPK, while in 2018 there were 386. In addition to these statistics, the Consulate's security and law enforcement contacts, Pakistani media, and trusted private contacts anecdotally report a growing trend that Peshawar is becoming a slightly more permissive environment compared to the past several years. Several contacts highlight that, while acts of violence continue to plague the city and surrounding areas, significant acts of terrorism in Peshawar have decreased overall, and especially when compared to previous years where daily explosions were the norm in Peshawar and the rest of KPK, including the Merged Areas.

These positive trends – a reduction in crime, an increase in police arrests, and an overall decrease in incidents of militant activity within Peshawar– do not reduce the nature of the threat environment significantly. The continued use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and vehicle-borne IEDs (VBIEDs) in the region, and the threats of violent attacks against various establishments in KPK serve as examples. Other attacks, such as a suicide vest attack on University Town and the assassination of a senior ranking Pakistani Security Forces leader in late 2017 also serve as constant reminders that, despite successful police operations, the likelihood of the next large-scale militant attack remains a concern that affects daily activities.

Other Areas of Concern

Pakistani government authorities restrict access to the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and selected districts in the KPK province by non-Pakistani citizens. Travel requires official permission from the government; failure to obtain permission can result in arrest and detention.

Transportation-Safety Situation

For more information, review OSAC's report, [Security in Transit: Airplanes, Public Transport, and Overnights](#).

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Traffic in Pakistan moves on the left; the opposite of U.S. traffic. Apart from the main highway system, road safety is generally poor due to the decrepit physical conditions of road surfaces, lack of basic maintenance and markings, flood washouts, and unimproved roads. Traffic safety is poor, and government regulation of vehicle and bus transportation is ineffective. Weather conditions, particularly fog and smog, frequently cause road closures due to poor visibility. Local traffic patterns are chaotic, with many drivers ignoring common rules of the road and operating unsafe, run-down vehicles. There is little to no reliable access to services for breakdowns or repairs while traveling outside Peshawar. However, over the past five years, the federal and provincial governments have constructed or significantly improved over 600 km of highways and major roads in KPK.

Police and military checkpoints present targets for militants to stage bombings or armed assaults. Impromptu checkpoints have become more frequent, often causing significant delays and traffic backups. For more information on self-driving, review OSAC's report, [Driving Overseas: Best Practices](#).

Public Transportation Conditions

Avoid all trains, taxis, and other forms of public transportation or online taxi services. For security reasons, U.S. government personnel may not use any forms of public transportation.

Aviation/Airport Conditions

The U.S. Embassy has restricted U.S. government personnel from travel on certain Pakistani military aircraft due to issues with safety and maintenance. Exercise caution when traveling within Pakistan on such official aircraft; verify the airworthiness of aircraft in planned flights, or avoid this means of conveyance until verification.

In 2014, in two separate incidents, gunmen fired on aircraft during approach to Bacha Khan International airport; one incident resulted in the death of a passenger. Throughout 2017, intermittent news reports highlighted periodic concerns of militant attacks against Peshawar's Bacha Khan International Airport (PEW). No attack materialized; however, the possibility endures. No incidents of firing at aircraft occurred in 2017 or 2018.

Terrorism Threat

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

There is serious risk from terrorism in Peshawar. Pakistan continued to experience significant terrorist threats in 2018, although the number of attacks and casualties has decreased from previous years. Major terrorist groups focused on conducting terrorist attacks in Pakistan include the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA), and the sectarian group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi al-Alami (LJA). The Islamic State's Khorasan Province (ISIS-K) claimed several major attacks against Pakistani targets, some of which may have occurred in collaboration with other terrorist groups. Separatist militant groups in Balochistan and Sindh conducted terrorist attacks against governmental, non-governmental, and diplomatic targets. Groups located in Pakistan, but focused on conducting attacks outside the country, included the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani Network (HQN), Lashkar e-Tayyiba (LeT) and its affiliated front organizations, and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM). Terrorists used a range of tactics – stationary and VBIEDs, suicide bombings, targeted assassinations, and rocket-propelled grenades – to attack individuals, schools, markets, government institutions, and places of worship.

Pakistani authorities have only minimal control of many areas of KPK province and the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), including Khyber and North and South Waziristan. These areas offer terrorists, extremists, and militant groups a safe haven to prepare, train, and carry out attacks.

The following examples from 2018 include some of the more destructive and high-profile attacks, and show the variety of methods, targets, and perpetrators.

- On March 14, a suicide bomber killed nine people and injured 35 others in Raiwind, near Lahore in Punjab province. TTP claimed responsibility for the attack.
- On July 13, a suicide bomber killed at least 149 people and injured at least 186 others at a pre-election campaign event in Mastung, Balochistan province. ISIS-K claimed responsibility for the attack.
- On November 23, a suicide bomber killed at least 33 people and injured at least 56 others in Hangu, Orakzai District, KPK province. ISIS-K claimed responsibility for the attack.
- Also on November 23, three individuals from the Balochistan Liberation Army armed with guns and suicide vests attacked the Chinese consulate in Karachi, Sindh province, killing four consulate guards before being killed by law enforcement.
- On January 5, 2019, a VBIED detonated near the Kali Bara market in the Saddar neighbourhood of Peshawar, injuring six persons and causing extensive damage to area buildings.

In 2014, Peshawar had seen a decline in militant activity and a relatively stable period that was shattered on December 16, when seven Taliban gunmen killed 141 children and teachers at the Army Public School inside a military-controlled area of Peshawar. The government of Pakistan implemented a National Action Plan to focus its efforts on targeting militants and their sanctuaries across the province. As reported by the Office of the Inspector General of Police, this concerted effort has resulted in the capture or killing of thousands of militants and the seizure some 20,000 weapons and thousands of kilograms of explosives. In 2013, terrorist incidents in Peshawar killed or injured 1,169 people, while in 2014 approximately 830 died or sustained terrorism-related injuries. Following the National Action Plan, the number of terrorism-related deaths dipped to 190 in 2015, 165 in 2016, 129 in 2017, and 94 in 2018.

In March 2016, two Pakistani employees of U.S. Consulate Peshawar died while on official travel in Mohmand Agency, FATA, during a drug eradication mission. TTP claimed responsibility for the remotely-detonated blast, which also wounded four Pakistani soldiers.

The presence of al-Qa'ida, ISIS-K, Afghan and Pakistani Taliban elements, and other indigenous militant sectarian groups, as well as geographic proximity to the Afghanistan border, all pose a significant danger. Targeted attacks against government officials, property, military, law enforcement, judicial, and other soft targets (educational facilities) are common. U.S. Consulate Peshawar receives reports that indicate IED strikes, targeted assassinations, and bombings occur throughout the region on a frequent basis.

The threat of violence against U.S. citizens and Westerners remains critical. A minimal Western presence, infrequent movements, and limited engagement with Pakistanis by Western personnel in the region may have made militant targeting more difficult; or militants may have simply chosen not to target Western interests in 2018. Instead, governance, law/order, and judicial targets were the most frequently targeted in 2018. Militants, terrorists, and criminal organizations in Peshawar and throughout the region that have targeted Westerners for attacks and kidnappings remain active. Although the National Action Plan disrupted militant operations and diminished the capacity of these groups to conduct daily attacks, militants and extremists continue to demonstrate their ability to inflict massive casualties in catastrophic attacks.

Anti-U.S./Anti-Western Sentiment

Current and historical threat reporting indicates that terrorist groups will continue to carry out attacks against U.S. interests/persons throughout Pakistan if given the opportunity.

Between 2012 and 2015, there were no protests at the Consulate, and no reported demonstrations against U.S. interests. In 2016, an increase in protests and anti-U.S. sentiment was noted, although, none occurred at the U.S. Consulate. In December 2017, approximately 500 protestors demonstrated peacefully near the Consulate against the announcement that the U.S. Government would recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and relocate its Embassy to Jerusalem. In 2018, there were no anti-U.S. demonstrations at the U.S. Consulate. Historical evidence suggests that this trend could change following any event that local residents perceive as an affront to Islam, Pakistani culture, or national interests.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Civil Unrest

There is considerable risk from civil unrest in Peshawar. Planned and spontaneous protests and demonstrations do occur; in 2018, police and security forces effectively controlled these gatherings. There were no significant acts of violence related to civil unrest. Most protests and demonstrations are antigovernment in nature, with student issues, utility/fuel shortages, and political grievances as the most common reasons for protest.

Religious/Ethnic Violence

A few religious traditions include marches or parades. In past years, there has been violence associated with these events.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

Earthquakes continue to be a concern in the region. In April 2017, a 7.1-magnitude earthquake hit parts of KPK province, which resulted in six deaths and 27 injuries from landslides, and damage to dozens of houses. On January 31, 2018, a 6.1-magnitude earthquake hit Peshawar. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the epicenter of the earthquake was 35 kilometers south of Jarm, Afghanistan. Proper stocks of supplies and an earthquake plan are necessary in this region. For more information, review OSAC's report, [Central Asia Earthquake Preparedness](#).

Flooding and landslides in mountainous areas are also environmental hazards. In 2017, floods and landslides resulting from heavy rains closed roads and displaced families from their homes. Pakistani government and NGO services are limited in their capability to provide relief. Regional refugee migrations from flooded areas can quickly overwhelm local resources and result in an increase in communicable diseases. Pakistani authorities designed Contingency Plan 2018 to respond more effectively to different flood scenarios in the region.

Critical Infrastructure

Inadequate emergency services exacerbate the consequences of industrial and transportation accidents.

Economic Concerns

Intellectual property rights are openly violated in Pakistan. Consumers can easily obtain pirated books, DVDs, brand-name computer software, and other digital media at any video store for a fraction of the legal production price.

Privacy Concerns

Unauthorized access to personally identifiable information (PII) is quite possible. Few holders of information have adequate safeguards and access controls to prevent dissemination of sensitive personal information. Official intrusions into personal privacy are also common.

Personal Identity Concerns

Wear conservative attire that blends in and does not easily identify you as being a Westerner. Avoid wearing clothing that is military in nature or displays Western sports teams or immediately associates you with the U.S. Women should keep their arms and legs covered, and wear headscarves when visiting any religious site. When in public, avoid carrying or displaying large sums of money or valuables. Avoid crowded areas, markets, and areas of civil disturbances, particularly protests and demonstrations.

There are reports of U.S. citizen women of Pakistani heritage tricked by their families into traveling to Pakistan and forced into marriage. The U.S. Government considers [forced marriage](#) to be a violation of basic human rights and, in the case of minors, a form of child abuse. Forced marriage is one in which one or both parties have not consented to the marriage (or are incapable of providing meaningful consent), and differs from arranged marriage. International laws and conventions support a minimum age for marriage, and the individual's right to choice in marriage. Pakistani civil law – as well as Sharia law – requires the consent of both parties for a legitimate marriage. Often, victims of forced marriage are subjected to non-consensual sex, physical and emotional abuse, isolation, and threats of violence. Persons who refuse a forced marriage are sometimes threatened with violence and being disowned by their families, who also often confiscate their belongings (including passports).

Consensual same-sex sexual conduct is a criminal offense; however, the government rarely prosecutes cases. LGBT persons rarely reveal their sexual orientation in Pakistan. No laws protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Discrimination against LGBT persons is widely acknowledged privately, but insufficient data exists for accurate reporting on these forms of discrimination, due in part to severe societal stigma and fear of recrimination for those who have come forward. Find more detailed information about LGBT rights in Pakistan in the [State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#).

Individuals with disabilities will find accessibility and accommodation very different from what is generally found in the U.S. Access for individuals with physical disabilities to public facilities is very limited in major cities, and almost non-existent outside major population centers. The law provides for equality of the rights of persons with disabilities, but the legal provisions are not always implemented. Families typically care for most individuals with physical and mental disabilities.

Drug-Related Crimes

Regional organized crime networks (narcotics/other contraband smugglers) are pervasive throughout northwest Pakistan and often involve terrorist and extremist activity.

Illegal drug use among the local population is widespread and underreported due to cultural sensitivities. Peshawar has been at the crossroads of trade for centuries, including drugs (e.g. opium, hashish, marijuana, and methamphetamines).

Kidnapping Threat

Police statistics for KPK province reflected 174 kidnapping cases in 2016. There were twelve reported kidnapping incidents reported in 2017 and four in 2018. No national police database exists, and independent verification of these statistics is not possible. Kidnapping plots for ransom targeting foreigners usually involve regional and transnational terrorist activities. Other reports note kidnapping of Pakistani citizens for monetary and political motives. Family members who refuse to pay ransoms often encounter violence and other intimidation tactics. For more information, review OSAC's report, [Kidnapping: The Basics](#).

Police Response

The security agencies in northwest Pakistan are composed of civilian and military forces. Security forces are generally professional; nonetheless, they lack equipment, communications technology, and training. In general, police response to criminal incidents is inconsistent. Police and government forces are common targets of terrorist attacks, and the local threat environment requires authorities to prioritize counter-terrorist activity, force protection, and infrastructure security. As a result, police often neglect routine law enforcement work against criminals.

Ensure that travel documents and visas are valid. Authorities have arrested, deported, harassed, and detained U.S. citizens for overstaying their visas or traveling with an inappropriate visa classification.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

In the event of police harassment or detention, remain calm, cooperate with the police, and insist on contacting the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad at (+92) 51-201-4000 or (+92) 51-201-5000.

Crime Victim Assistance

If you are the victim of a crime, report the crime to the nearest police station. Call local police and emergency services by dialing **1122** on any phone.

The U.S. Consulate General in Peshawar does not have an American Citizen Services section. U.S. Embassy Islamabad or U.S. Consulate Karachi handles Consular assistance to U.S. travelers in Peshawar. Call Islamabad (+92) (51) 201-4000 or Karachi: (+92) (21) 3527-5000. From the U.S., call 1-888-407-4747.

Medical Emergencies

Call local emergency services at **1122** from any phone. There is no centralized, coordinated ambulance response in Peshawar. The majority of local ambulances are not able to offer adequate care in transit. First responders have little or no medical certification or training.

Contact Information for Available Medical Services

Due to security restrictions, the Post Medical Officer cannot conduct surveys to assess local medical capabilities and cannot verify the competency of any local medical facilities. For medical assistance, refer to the Consulate's [Medical Assistance page](#).

Country-Specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

Because of recurrent terrorist attacks against polio vaccination teams, polio cases continue to emerge in the northwest region of Pakistan.

Take steps to avoid tainted food and water. Water is not potable in Lahore, and sanitation in many restaurants is inadequate. Gastrointestinal illness is common and can be life threatening. For more information, refer to OSAC's report, [I'm Drinking What in My Water?](#)

The CDC offers additional information on vaccines and health guidance for [Pakistan](#).

OSAC Country Council Information

There is currently no active Country Council in Peshawar. Please contact OSAC's [South & Central Asia team](#) if you are interested in private-sector engagement in Pakistan or have questions about OSAC's Country Council programs.

U.S. Consulate Location and Contact Information

Consulate Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Consulate General Peshawar: 11 Hospital Road, Peshawar Cantonment, Peshawar
Monday-Friday, 0800-1630

Consulate Contact Numbers

Switchboard: (+92) 91-526-8800

Regional Security Office: Extension 8833

Website: <https://pk.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/peshawar/>

Nearby Posts: [Embassy Islamabad](#), [Consulate Karachi](#), [Consulate Lahore](#)

Consulate Guidance

U.S. citizens should register with the U.S. Embassy's [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) prior to travel. Consular services are not available at the U.S. Consulate General in Peshawar.

Additional Resource: [Pakistan](#) International Travel Information