



Pakistan 2016 Crime & Safety Report: Islamabad

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Religious Violence; Rape/Sexual Violence; Kidnapping; Assault; Theft; Stolen items; Financial Security; Fraud; Religious Terrorism; Anti-American sentiment; Political Violence; Bombing; Riots/Civil Unrest; Earthquakes; Floods; Intellectual Property Rights Infringement; Drug Trafficking; Bribery; Employee Health Safety

South Central Asia > Pakistan; South Central Asia > Pakistan > Islamabad

3/29/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Medium

Crime Threats

Crime can happen anywhere and at any time. Crimes against persons, including gender-based violence and kidnapping, remain a concern for U.S. citizens and Westerners throughout Pakistan. There is no evidence that Americans or U.S. government employees are being directly targeted for any criminal activity in Islamabad. In 2015, U.S. Embassy Islamabad received reports of American citizens being victims of sexual assaults and robberies. Low-level criminal activity takes place in Islamabad but not more than in any other large city around the world. Petty theft and vehicle break-ins do occur but are not commonplace in the Embassy community. Aggressive pan-handling tends to take place at busy vehicle intersections and in the vicinity of the larger marketplace areas.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



A comparative analysis of figures from police/security entities operating throughout Pakistan indicates that incidents of crime are inaccurately- and under-reported. Islamabad is a security controlled environment with permanent and impromptu police and military checkpoints throughout the area.

Cybersecurity Issues

Islamabad has minor cybersecurity concerns in regards to ATM/credit card scams. Crime of this nature seems to be directed mostly at locals and rarely affect Chief of Mission (COM) personnel or Westerners.

Other Areas of Concern

The security situation in many rural areas is extremely hazardous. U.S. citizens who do not also possess Pakistani citizenship, including Embassy officials, are required to obtain advance permission from local or federal authorities to travel to the FATA, large parts of KP province, and Balochistan province. U.S. officials in Islamabad are instructed to restrict the frequency as well as minimize the duration of trips to public markets, restaurants, and other locations. U.S. citizens are strongly urged to avoid hotels that do not apply stringent security measures and to maintain good situational awareness, particularly when visiting locations frequented by Westerners.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Road conditions differ significantly from those found in the U.S. Road conditions in urban areas (Islamabad) tend to be better than the rural parts.

Traffic drives on the left side of the road. Roads tend to be very crowded; drivers are often aggressive and poorly trained. Vehicles operated on the roads include large trucks and buses, and many of them are poorly maintained. Donkeys, cattle, horse carts, and even an occasional camel can pose roadside hazards in some areas. Overland travel can prove to be dangerous. Roads including most major highways also suffer from poor maintenance and often contain significant potholes, sharp drop-offs, and unmarked barriers. Drivers should use extreme caution when traveling at night by road, as many vehicles do not have proper illumination. Most of the roads lack proper illumination and signage as well. Driving without experienced local drivers or guides is not recommended.

Driving can be extremely hazardous. Expect the unexpected and drive defensively. Road signs and traffic lights are often non-functional. Traffic lights at intersections are often out. Proceed through intersections with caution. Drivers will encounter many checkpoints throughout the city. Drivers are cautioned to slow down and do not proceed through checkpoint until directed to do so. Always wear your seatbelt, ensure all doors are locked, and insist that a safe speed is maintained. Vehicle maintenance, driver skills, and general lack of

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



road safety awareness by operators are all of significant concern. The Mission reminds its personnel that they should be aware of their surroundings to ensure their personal security.

Police and emergency response to traffic accidents, especially in rural areas, may take a significant amount of time. As a result, accident victims rely on bystanders as “first responder.” For this reason, and considering the lack of medical care in rural areas, travelers should maintain equipment and training to provide first aid in the event of an emergency. Finally, drivers should be conscious that vehicle accidents may draw angry and potentially violent crowds. It is recommended that anyone involved in an accident immediately notify the police.

Public Transportation Conditions

Public transportation can be extremely hazardous. All forms of public transportation are off limits to U.S. Mission personnel in Pakistan. It is strongly advised that all U.S. citizen travelers avoid public transportation throughout Pakistan. For safety and security reasons, personnel under the authority of U.S. Embassy and Consulates are prohibited from using any form of public transportation. Taxis, buses, shared ride vehicles, and “tuk-tuk’s” are often poorly maintained, overcrowded, and lack any form of safety equipment. Drivers are poorly trained and often drive in an over-aggressive fashion.

Aviation/Airport Conditions

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Airport and aviation conditions in Islamabad are less than ideal. All COM personnel are required to travel to/from the airport in armored vehicles and are required to have an airport expeditor while moving through the airport during arrival and departure procedures.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Critical

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

The government of Pakistan continues its efforts to combat terrorism and improve security. While the level of security in Islamabad remains higher than other areas of Pakistan, the prevalence of Pakistani government buildings, government officials, and foreigners also make it a high profile target for terrorist attacks. Pakistani military forces continue to conduct military action against extremist elements throughout the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) and parts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province. In response, terrorists have increased their operational tempo and carried out significant attacks against civilian and government targets across Pakistan.

The largest and most significant attack occurred in December 2014 when terrorists attacked an Army Public School in Peshawar, murdering over 140 people, mainly children, and injuring scores of others. The Pakistani Taliban publicly claimed responsibility. The attack was condemned across Pakistan and the world. As a result of the attack, the government responded by reinstating the death penalty for terrorism and carrying out new anti-terror

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



operations. Militants will likely use Pakistan's counter-insurgency campaign as justification to carry out additional future terrorist attacks.

Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

In certain areas of Pakistan, anti-American sentiment is high, and individuals should remain cognizant of this as they travel to Pakistan. U.S. citizens and U.S. interests continue to be a target for the numerous transnational and indigenous terrorist organizations operating in Pakistan. Terrorist organizations carry out and demonstrate a willingness to conduct attacks against U.S. and Western interests. There has been no evidence of a decreased terrorist threat against U.S. interests in Pakistan in 2015.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Post Political Violence Rating: Critical

Political violence, assassinations, and bombings occur throughout the country on a regular basis, often targeting government authorities (police checkpoints, military installations). Public areas, shopping centers, mosques and other places of worship have been, and will likely continue to be, targets. Here is a short summary of some of the incidents that occurred throughout Pakistan in 2015. This is not an all-inclusive list, as there were hundreds of separate distinct terror incidents occurring throughout Pakistan in 2015.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



January 9: Eight people were killed and 25 wounded in a bomb blast in Rawalpindi.

January 30: 23 people killed in a gun and suicide attack at the Imamia Mosque in Peshawar.

February 13: At least 22 people were killed and 50 were injured during a gun and bomb attack in Peshawar when suicide attackers and gunmen dressed in police uniforms attacked worshippers following Friday prayers.

February 18: An armed suicide bomber killed three people at a mosque on Kuri Road in Islamabad.

March 15: Suicide bombers targeted two churches in a Christian neighborhood in Lahore. 14 people were killed, and another 70 were injured.

April 15: Militant gunned down 20 laborers and injured three others in the Turbat's Gigidan area in Balochistan.

May 29: 35 people were forced off of a bus and kidnapped by members of the United Baluch Army in Mastung. 23 of them were killed.

May 29: A suicide bomber riding in a rickshaw blew himself up, killing a policeman and injuring four policemen and a civilian near Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore. The blast took place at 9pm while a cricket match between Pakistan and Zimbabwe was being played at the stadium.

June 8: Seven soldiers were killed by a suicide bombing in North Waziristan.

October 19: 11 people were killed and 22 were wounded in the bombing of a bus in Quetta.

October 23: A suicide bomber killed 22 and wounded 40 during a religious procession in Jacobabad.

December 13: A bombing at a clothes bazaar in the Kurram Valley killed 23 and wounded 30.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



December 29: A suicide bombing at the National Database and Registration Authority in Mardan killed 26 and wounded 50.

Civil Unrest

Impromptu and planned political demonstrations occur frequently. These demonstrations can be very large and can be crippling to the infrastructure. Clashes can occur between protestors and police, resulting in property damage and injury to people. Civil unrest is always a major concern. Anti-U.S. and Western protests have occurred and are more than likely to continue.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

Pakistan is subject to earthquakes in the northern and western regions. The most recent earthquake that caused significant damage took place in October 2015. The epicenter was in Afghanistan, but Pakistan's northern mountain region sustained significant damage and approximately 260 fatalities. Earthquakes of smaller magnitude can be felt on a regular basis throughout the country.

Seasonal and monsoonal rains, inadequate public works infrastructure, and a lack of adequate disaster preparedness continues to overwhelm government response. Water- and

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



insect-borne diseases tend to increase in the aftermath of disasters (flooding, earthquakes). International donations and humanitarian assistance are often affected by widespread corruption and the lack of transparency. Charities with ties to Islamic militants are often quick to step in to provide assistance, effectively undermining the governments fight against groups (Taliban).

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

Industrial safety does not meet U.S. standards.

Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

It is strongly recommended to not purchase counterfeit or pirated goods, even if they are widely available and locally accepted. These items are illegal in the U.S. and may also be in violation of local laws.

Personnel-Background Concerns

U.S. Embassy Islamabad also received an abundance of incidents of domestic violence and family abductions against women, particularly women who are dual-nationals but also women who are visiting or residents with a Pakistani background.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Drug-related Crimes

Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs are severe.

Kidnapping Threat

U.S. citizens have been kidnapped and will continue to be a high-profile target for terrorist and criminal elements. The kidnapping of Pakistani citizens and other foreign nationals, usually for ransom, continues to increase dramatically nationwide. U.S. citizens and other foreigners have been kidnapped for ransom from several different regions.

Early occurrences include the 2010 kidnapping of a U.S. citizen child in Karachi and the 2009 kidnapping of a U.S. citizen with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in the Balochistan district.

Additional reported incidents include two separate kidnappings in the summer of 2011; a Swiss couple was kidnapped while travelling in Balochistan's Loralai district, 170km (105 miles) east of Quetta.

In January 2012, a British employee of the International Committee of the Red Cross was kidnapped in Quetta.

In August 2012 a U.S. citizen in Karachi was kidnapped from a car outside of a friend's house.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



In May 2013, a U.S. citizen was rescued by local police after being kidnapped and held for ransom.

In December 2013, a U.S. citizen was released after being kidnapped and held for two months from his neighborhood outside of Peshawar.

In November 2014, a U.S. citizen was released after being kidnapped and held for over five months near Hangu.

Police Response

The under-reporting of crime is due in large part to insufficient police presence, response capabilities, and the public's negative perception of the police. Police services are below Western standards and are non-existent in some areas. Police records are not computerized, so there is no national database for criminal records. Traditional crime fighting, community policing campaigns, and other regular police services face severe deficiencies due to the security services' focus on counter-terrorism activities.

Corruption within the police and security services, especially the lower levels, is widespread. The country is consistently rated very low when it comes to corruption at all levels of government. The major cause for corruption in this sector is the lack of accountability and low salaries. Payment of bribes to avoid charges is commonplace. The U.S. Embassy strongly discourages the payment of bribes.

Pakistani laws can differ greatly from those in the U.S. and other Western nations. In some places, it is common practice to detain people for failure to produce identification (passports).

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Additionally, it is illegal to take pictures of government and military buildings, but the law on this topic is vague and not applied uniformly. For more information, please review OSAC's Report "Picture This: Dos and Don'ts for Photography."

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

While some countries will automatically notify the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate if a U.S. citizen is detained or arrested, that is often not the case in Pakistan. If detained, immediately request the police/prison officials notify the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. A consular officer might not be able to visit you for 20 working days or longer after your arrest.

Crime Victim Assistance

American citizens should report crimes committed against them, when possible, to the local police (emergency line is 15) and especially to the U.S. Embassy's American Citizen Services (ACS) section at (92-51) 208-0000.

Medical Emergencies

Emergency medical care is only available in major cities. Most hospitals possess limited advanced life support equipment, and the level of care does not meet U.S. standards.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

Shifa and Kulsum are the main hospitals used by U.S. Embassy personnel in Islamabad. Shifa International is the preferred hospital in Islamabad because of its overall capabilities and proximity to the U.S. Embassy. It is a well-equipped Western-style hospital with a 24-hour emergency room staff. It is located approximately 3 miles (15 minutes) west of the Embassy. Many of the physicians have been trained in the U.S. or the UK. Shifa International is a good resource for general medical, surgical and trauma problems.

Shifa International Hospital

Sector H 8/4

Phone: (92-51) 460-3666

Emergency Room ext. 3010 / 3090

Kulsum Hospital is closer to the U.S. Embassy and located in the Blue Area of Islamabad. It is a good choice for minor medical problems; however, their emergency department is not as well equipped as Shifa Hospital.

Kulsum International Hospital

Blue Area, Jinnah Avenue

Phone: (92-51) 844-6666

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Available Air Ambulance Services

Several air ambulance companies may provide service to Pakistan. Air ambulance information is offered only as a guide and is not a recommendation of one service or another. Travelers are encouraged to research the availability of air ambulance services and to make an informed choice based on individual needs/requirements. Many air ambulance services are available, and it is recommended to conduct research to identify an adequate air ambulance provider.

State Department has utilized SOS International (<https://www.internationalsos.com/en/>) and Europe Assistance (http://www.worldwideassistance.com/pages/contact_us.html).

Recommended Insurance Posture

Travelers should arrange for medical evacuation insurance personally or through their sponsoring organization prior to arriving.

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Pollution from raw sewage and industrial waste in the water and air is widespread. Air pollution, exacerbated in the winter months, is at levels that may cause severe irritation and discomfort to individuals who suffer from asthma or other respiratory disorders.

For information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at:
http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/pakistan?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-ducible-001.

OSAC Country Council Information

The Regional Security Office at U.S. Embassy Islamabad is working with the private sector to establish a long-term viable Country Council in Pakistan. RSO Islamabad actively communicates with the American business community and is available to provide security briefings to U.S. private sector business personnel when requested. The Consulates in Lahore and Karachi benefit from much closer ties to the business community through the American Business Council (Karachi) and the American Business Forum (Lahore). As such, the RSOs in those cities are traditionally more engaged with OSAC constituents.

To reach OSAC's South and Central Asia team, please email OSACSCA@state.gov.

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Embassy Islamabad

Diplomatic Enclave, Ramna 5

Embassy Contact Numbers

Telephone: 011 92-51 201 4000

Consular Section Telephone: 011 92-51 201 5718

FAX: 011 92-51 233 8044

Emergency Contact Information: 011 92-51 201 4000

Regional Security Office: 011 92-51 201 4400 / Marine Post One: 011 92-51 201 4911

Website: <http://islamabad.usembassy.gov/>

Nearby Posts

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Consulate Karachi: <http://karachi.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Lahore: <http://lahore.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Peshawar: <http://peshawar.usconsulate.gov/>

Embassy Guidance

For updated information, please contact the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, the Consular Section of the U.S. Consulate in Karachi, the Consular Section of the U.S. Consulate in Lahore, or the Consular Section of the U.S. Consulate in Peshawar, or consult the websites of the Consular Bureau of the Department of State (www.travel.state.gov) or of the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Situational Awareness Best Practices

Situational awareness and common sense are imperative for personal safety. Always avoid the appearance of carrying large sums of money, dress conservatively, and try not to draw attention to yourself. Avoid high risk areas, crowds, and civil disturbances. Do not be time/place predictable. Varying routes and departure/arrival times is vital to safety. If you feel that you are being followed or threatened, go immediately to a safe place (a government

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



building that has police/security forces). Maintaining a low profile is important. Avoid wearing clothing that identifies you as an American.

Fire-fighting resources are lacking, so it is advised to stay in lower floors of high-rise hotels.

Many Americans and other Westerners employ private security-guard services for their residences and offices. They are less trained than those in the U.S. The following deficiencies are typical of security services: poor quality of personnel attributed to low wages, little training, and limited supervision. What the private security firms fail to provide in the way of equipment, the individual guards look to the occupant to provide (i.e. heaters, fans, water, and even supplemental income).

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.