

POLICY BRIEF

# Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Pakistan: Why Policewomen Must Have a Role

March 31, 2014 By Allison Peters

*SUMMARY: Pakistan’s law enforcement agencies struggle to combat militant violence that contributes to political, economic, and social instability. To improve the operational effectiveness of Pakistani forces, the government of Pakistan and international donors must prioritize the recruitment, retention, and professionalization of women in the police. This policy brief summarizes research conducted in Pakistan in October 2013 and February 2014 that documents why and how increasing the number and expertise of women in the police force would improve security and counter violent extremism.*

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## Introduction

Violent extremism continues to plague Pakistan, as the government struggles to combat militant groups that contribute to political, economic, and social instability. Numerous terrorist organizations operate within the nation’s borders, launching attacks on the Pakistani population and in neighboring Afghanistan and India.<sup>1</sup>

Since its independence in 1947, Pakistan has relied predominantly on its military to shoulder much of the burden for internal security. Military forces have conducted large-scale operations against militant groups with limited success,<sup>2</sup> while Pakistan’s police forces and other law enforcement institutions remain under-resourced and weak.

Research has shown that police operations are more effective at combating terrorism than military force.<sup>3</sup> Police are trained and equipped to fight domestic,

as opposed to foreign, enemies. They offer distinct advantages over the military in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism efforts, as they “have a permanent presence in cities, towns, and villages; a better understanding of the threat environment in these areas; and better human intelligence.”<sup>4</sup> Police are also better positioned to execute a citizen-centric approach to fighting militant groups—a strategy shift that could more effectively counter a growing Pakistani insurgency.

A key component in this approach is strengthening Pakistan’s police force.<sup>5</sup> For law enforcement to fulfill a counterterrorism role it must be adequately equipped, properly trained, and representative of the population it is tasked to protect. Pakistan currently falls short on all three counts. While the government and international donors have attempted to address deficits in infrastructure and training, they consistently overlook the force’s composition—more specifically, the conspicuous absence of women.

Policewomen improve the operational effectiveness of these forces by building trust with local communities, more effectively de-escalating violence,<sup>6</sup> and collecting vital intelligence that men could not. Due to prohibitive norms, only women in the police can serve as first responders to care for female victims of terrorist attacks.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, female civilians are more likely to report cases of gender-based violence to women officers.<sup>8</sup> These roles help cultivate a more collaborative relationship between the police and citizens, who otherwise typically see the country’s police forces as corrupt and inefficient.

While international donors, particularly the US, have invested tremendous resources in Pakistan’s law enforcement sector, this funding has not resulted in a large improvement in the recruitment and retention of policewomen. The US Congress has appropriated more than \$6.9 billion in security-related assistance since Fiscal Year 2002 to Pakistan, including \$774 million for law enforcement and counternarcotic activities.<sup>9</sup> However, none of the funding prioritizes the recruitment and retention of women in Pakistan’s police forces. Currently, women still remain vastly underrepresented and undervalued in these forces.

To improve the effectiveness of Pakistan’s police forces in countering insurgency and terrorism, the Government of Pakistan and its international donors must shift

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the way they think about law enforcement. They must commit to changing current legal barriers and resource distributions to promote the recruitment, retention, and professionalization of policewomen, who have the potential to more effectively counter terrorism and violent extremism, creating a more secure Pakistan.

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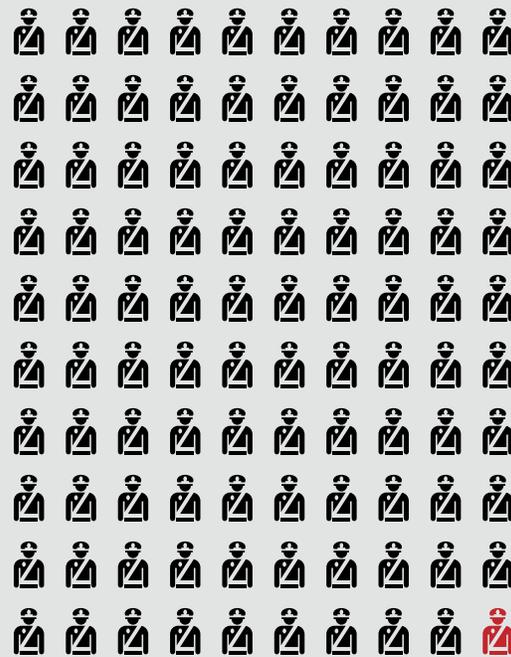
## *The Current State of Women in Pakistan's Police Forces*

Women are under-recruited by Pakistan's police and underrepresented in decision-making roles. Statistics released by the National Police Bureau of Pakistan in 2011 state that out of 453,901 members of the police forces, only 4,027 were women. **This represented only 0.89 percent of the total police strength of Pakistan.** Most of them served in lower ranks, from constable to inspector level. Only 85 of these policewomen served in higher ranks, and the majority were from one province—Punjab.<sup>10</sup>

Consultations in October 2013 and February 2014 led by Inclusive Security, in collaboration with Pakistani organization PAIMAN Alumni Trust,<sup>11</sup> with policewomen, high-ranking police officials, and security experts in Pakistan, as well as international donors,<sup>12</sup> yielded similar findings. Respondents noted that women recruited into Pakistan's police forces are rarely given positions with decision-making capacity and typically serve in administrative and support roles. Many of the policewomen, however, stated that they're helping combat violence that plagues their communities.

Historically, Pakistani leaders have not prioritized the recruitment and retention of policewomen, with a few exceptions. In 1994, former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto established the first Women Police Station (WPS) in Rawalpindi. Staffed exclusively by female police officers, the station served women civilians with the goal of increasing the reporting of crimes.<sup>13</sup> Twenty such WPS's now exist in Pakistan,<sup>14</sup> as well as some women-staffed units or wings in regular police stations. However, the WPS's rarely receive support from senior policing officials, often making it challenging for female officers to record and investigate crimes.<sup>15</sup> Legal

*Approximately one in 100  
Pakistani police is a woman*



*SOURCE: National Police Bureau of Pakistan (December 2011)*

barriers in certain provinces have also prevented policewomen at WPS's from registering crime reports known as First Information Report, the first step in the criminal justice process.

In consultations, some suggested the WPS's have limited gender mainstreaming in the police forces, preventing male colleagues from seeing women as capable of performing critical, conventional police functions. A lack of training and prioritization of training for policewomen by senior police officials are other barriers to professionalization. When training is provided, the duration of courses and length of travel are major impediments to women's participation.

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## *US and Pakistan Policy Recommendations*

In coordination with PAIMAN Alumni Trust, Inclusive Security conducted a series of consultations with policewomen, high-ranking police officials, and security experts in Pakistan, as well as meetings with US officials in Islamabad. The outcomes of those discussions, in addition to extensive research, guided development of the following recommended actions for the US and Pakistani governments.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** *Ensure high-level engagement by and between US and Pakistani government officials on the issues of recruitment, retention, and professionalization of women in Pakistan's police forces.*

- 1. US Department of State, Department of Defense, and Agency for International Development** should use the resumption of the US-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue<sup>16</sup> to highlight the importance of recruitment, retention, and professionalization of policewomen under the counterterrorism pillar.
- 2. Members of US Congress** should utilize delegation trips to Pakistan and meetings with Pakistani government and security officials to stress the importance of increasing the number of policewomen. Congressional hearings on Pakistan, specifically, or counterterrorism, more broadly, should incorporate questions on the subject with witnesses who can speak about the importance of women's inclusion.
- 3. US Ambassador to Pakistan** should urge Pakistani government officials, on both the federal and provincial levels, to commit increased resources and initiate policies related to these efforts. The Ambassador should push for the development and implementation of merit-based opportunities for the

professional advancement of women in the police.

**4. Pakistani Prime Minister and Cabinet** should use meetings and discussions with US officials and international donors to stress resourcing and/or technical assistance for advancing the recruitment, retention, and professionalization of policewomen.

**5. Pakistani Inspector Generals (IGs)<sup>17</sup> and Deputy Inspector Generals (DIGs)** should implement policies on a provincial level that enhance the recruitment, retention, and professionalization of women in their forces. IGs and DIGs should engage with Pakistani government officials and donors to fund and develop initiatives that support these efforts and highlight why policewomen are an untapped and vital resource for countering terrorism and extremism.

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**OBJECTIVE 2:** *Increase the number of women in Pakistan's police forces by investing in targeted recruitment and community trust-building initiatives.*

**1. US Department of State:**

**a. Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL)** should:

- i. Create and fund a pilot program, in coordination with local civil society organizations, which engages policewomen and university students to discuss the importance of women in the forces and benefits to joining; and
- ii. Support the development of recruitment guides for women entering police service, providing information on roles, recruitment process, benefits, and professional development opportunities (in coordination with Pakistan's National Police Bureau, IGs, and DIGs).

**b. Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs** should support a sustained media campaign to enhance the profile of Pakistani policewomen countering violent extremism.

**2. Pakistani Prime Minister and Cabinet** should encourage and incentivize IGs and DIGs to set yearly recruitment targets for policewomen and increase the number of positions for women at senior levels. Yearly targets for Assistant Superintendent of Police level should meet the 10 percent Government of Pakistan recruitment quota for women in federal service over the next decade.

**3. Pakistani Inspector Generals and Deputy Inspector Generals** should:

- a. Develop a police recruitment process that accounts for gender-sensitive qualifications and ensure selection committees have female representation;
- b. Improve infrastructure of police stations and training institutes to accommodate women, including women's hostels, lavatories, and changing facilities; and
- c. Remove impediments to policewomen's recruitment and retention by providing child care, adequate maternity and paternity leave, and flexible work hours, for example.

**OBJECTIVE 3:** *Address structural and cultural barriers, resourcing, and policies that prevent the retention and advancement of women in Pakistan's police forces.*

**1. US Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL)** should:

- a. Ensure US police trainers in Pakistan have experience building the capacity of female police by developing induction, promotion, and refresher courses for women. Trainers should create specialized policing courses in areas such as forensics and investigations for select women police to provide them with unique skills. Trainers should also design new curriculum that incorporates gender-sensitized material for policemen and women;
- b. Increase the advocacy capability of policewomen by funding training that propels them to push for improved services including regular training, mentorship programs, childcare, and maternity and flexible leave policies;

- c. Support regional and international exchanges, including funding the participation of select Pakistani policewomen in conferences for international policewomen, as well as organize and fund a delegation of policewomen from other regional countries to visit Pakistan and discuss areas of mutual concern; and
- d. Continue to evaluate and fund the reform of infrastructure and policies that hinder the retention of policewomen, including lack of office space, transportation, bathrooms, and flexible working hours.

**2. Pakistan Prime Minister and Cabinet** should:

- a. Encourage IGs and DIGs to designate senior-level police officials, if they have not already done so, to promote the interests of women in the police forces;
- b. Develop and implement standardized police training curricula, in coordination with international donors and IGs, with a particular focus on integrating gender sensitization and violence against women as key topics. Such curricula should also emphasize positive contributions of women countering violent extremism; and
- c. Evaluate the effectiveness of WPS's in filing and investigating criminal reports in comparison to women units or wings within regular stations. This evaluation should serve as a guide for corollary resourcing and policy changes.

**3. Pakistani Inspector Generals and Deputy Inspector Generals** should:

- a. Coordinate with federal government officials to support the evaluation of WPS's and women's units and cells;
- b. Evaluate the impediments to women's participation in mandatory training courses, including feasibility assessments to develop shorter courses and local training venues; and
- c. Organize exchanges between civil society groups that work with female officers and/or provide advocacy training to these civil society groups and policewomen on how each sector can advance the recruitment, retention, and professionalization of females in the police forces.

**OBJECTIVE 4:** *Legislate implementation and oversight measures designed to recruit, retain, and professionalize women in Pakistan’s police forces.*

- 1. US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor** should fund a capacity-building program for Pakistan’s Women’s Parliamentary Caucus with a focus on women’s inclusion in police forces, enabling them to play a leadership role in promoting the recruitment and retention of policewomen, particularly through legislative action.
- 2. US Congress should:**
  - a. Include in any extension of the “Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act,”<sup>18</sup> or subsequent legislation, a specific authorization for funding the recruitment, retention, and professionalization of Pakistani policewomen, as well as inclusion of these efforts in any reporting requirements for the monitoring of US aid to Pakistan; and
  - b. Require a portion of law enforcement funding for Pakistan in future appropriations bills be utilized for the recruitment, retention, and professionalization of women in the Pakistani police forces.
- 3. Parliament of Pakistan** should update existing policing laws to support the recruitment, retention, and professionalization of women in the police forces.
- 4. Women’s Parliamentary Caucus** should elevate its role in pushing for reforms to policing laws that address the myriad issues challenging women in the police force by:
  - a. Building off its report on “The State of Women Policing in Pakistan,” work with civil society groups and the Women’s Police Network to develop legislation addressing these barriers; and
  - b. Advocate for the Senate and National Assembly Standing Committees of Interior to hold regular hearings on the legislative reforms needed to increase the recruitment, retention, and professionalization of women in the police force.

## Endnotes

- 1 For an overview of the groups operating on and from Pakistan's territory: K. Alan Kronstadt, *Major Islamist Militant Groups in Pakistan*, (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, February 2013) <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/pakmil.pdf>.
- 2 Seth G. Jones and C. Christine Fair, *Counterinsurgency in Pakistan*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008) xiv, [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND\\_MG982.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND_MG982.pdf).
- 3 RAND Corporation, *How Terrorist Groups End: Implications for Countering al Qaeda*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008) 1, [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_briefs/2008/RAND\\_RB9351.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_briefs/2008/RAND_RB9351.pdf).
- 4 Seth G. Jones and Martin C. Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al Qaeda*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008), xiv, [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND\\_MG741-1.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG741-1.pdf).
- 5 Seth G. Jones and C. Christine Fair, *Counterinsurgency in Pakistan*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008) xv, [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND\\_MG982.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND_MG982.pdf).
- 6 Dr. Kim Lonsway et al., *Hiring & Retaining More Women: The Advantages to Law Enforcement Agencies*, (National Center for Women & Policing, Spring 2003), 2, <http://womenandpolicing.com/pdf/newadvantagesreport.pdf>.
- 7 Based on focus group discussions held by Inclusive Security in October 2013 with current and former Pakistani security officials, civil society organizations, and academics.
- 8 Amalia R. Miller and Carmit Segal, *Do Female Officers Improve Law Enforcement Quality? Effects on Crime Reporting and Domestic Violence Escalation* (February 16, 2014), 4, [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2335990](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2335990).
- 9 Susan B. Epstein and K. Alan Kronstadt, *Pakistan: U.S. Foreign Assistance*, CRS Report R41856 (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, July 1, 2013), 25, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41856.pdf>.
- 10 National Police Bureau of Pakistan, Police HQ Punjab & FIA, (December 2011), in Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) Gender Responsive Policing Project, *Gender Strategy of Police 2012-2016: Equality in Perspective*, (Pakistan: 2012), 18-19.
- 11 PAIMAN Alumni Trust is a leading Pakistani nonprofit organization promoting sociopolitical and economic empowerment of marginalized Pakistanis. Its Executive Director, Mossarat Qadeem, is the national coordinator of a coalition of Pakistani women leaders working to counter violent extremism.
- 12 Based on focus group discussions held by Inclusive Security in Islamabad in October 2013.
- 13 Asad Jamal, *Police Organisations In Pakistan*, (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, May 2010), 31, [http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/publications/police/police\\_organisations\\_in\\_pakistan.pdf](http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/publications/police/police_organisations_in_pakistan.pdf).
- 14 *Women police problems highlighted*, (Dawn, October 16, 2012), <http://www.dawn.com/news/757250/women-police-problems-highlighted>.
- 15 "Reforming Pakistan's Police," *International Crisis Group Asia Reports*, no. 157, July 14, 2008.
- 16 The US-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue is an ongoing series of ministerial-level discussions and technical working groups aimed at strengthening the bilateral relationship between the two countries. The first ministerial-level meeting of the Dialogue was held in January 2014 after the talks were suspended in 2011.
- 17 In Pakistan, the Inspector General serves as the head of a provincial police force and reports directly to their respective provincial government ministers.
- 18 This law (P.L. 111-73) is commonly known as the Kerry-Lugar-Berman bill. Signed by President Obama in October 2009, this law authorized the US to provide \$1.5 billion in annual nonmilitary aid to Pakistan, including funding for police reform efforts, from FY 2010 to FY 2014.

## About The Institute for Inclusive Security

The Institute for Inclusive Security's bold goal is to change the international security paradigm. Sustainable peace is possible only when those who shape policy include women and other affected groups in the prevention and transformation of violent conflict. Guided by this belief and vision, Inclusive Security, a program of Hunt Alternatives Fund, supports women's leadership as an essential tool to prevent violence, stop war, and restore communities after deadly conflicts. We also provide expert advice to policymakers grounded in research that demonstrates women's contributions to peacebuilding. For more information, visit <http://inclusivesecurity.org>.

## Inclusive Security in Pakistan

In coordination with Pakistani partner organization PAIMAN Alumni Trust, The Institute for Inclusive Security has been working with female civil society leaders over the last three years to explore women's role in moderating violent extremism. The Institute has held numerous workshops with this diverse group in Pakistan to build their advocacy skills and develop policy recommendations aimed at combating violent extremism. They identified the lack of women police in Pakistan as one of the largest gaps that domestic and international policymakers must address.

The policy recommendations in this brief were informed by extensive research, meetings, focus groups, and workshops conducted in Pakistan in October 2013 and February 2014 with women in the Pakistani police forces, members of provincial police leadership, the federal Women's Parliamentary Caucus, international donors, civil society, and security sector experts.

## Allison Peters

Allison Peters is Policy Adviser at Inclusive Security, where she shapes the organization's strategies and outreach initiatives concerning the global women, peace, and security agenda. In particular, she leads the organization's policy work in Pakistan, working with Pakistani women leaders to conduct research and develop recommendations concerning women's inclusion in efforts to counter violent extremism and terrorism. Previously, she spent six years on Capitol Hill as Foreign Policy and Defense Advisor to the late Senator Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ), co-chair of the Senate National Security Working Group and member of the State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee. She holds a bachelor's degree in political science and psychology from Rutgers University and is completing a master's degree in International Security from the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University.



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