

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on minority issues and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism

Ref.: AL PAK 1/2026

(Please use this reference in your reply)

22 July 2026

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacity as Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences; Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Special Rapporteur on minority issues and Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 59/20, 61/22, 61/15 and 58/14.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning the alleged targeting, harassment, arbitrary detention, intimidation, and threats against Ms. Syed Bibi Baloch. Ms. Baloch is a woman human rights defender in the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC), a human rights movement established in response to alleged violations committed by the State of Pakistan against the Baloch community in Pakistan.

As Special Procedures mandate-holders, we have raised our concerns regarding the situation of human rights defenders during counter-terrorism operations in the province of Balochistan (PAK 1/2025). We have also raised our concern regarding the impacts of counter-terrorism measures on fundamental rights and freedoms, particularly in relation to members of the Baloch minority, as well as human rights defenders and civil society organizations advocating for their rights (PAK 6/2024, PAK 4/2024 and PAK 6/2025). More recently, we have expressed concern about the recent amendments to the 1997 Anti-Terrorism Act, as well as similar legislation enacted in Balochistan (PAK 12/2025). We note with regret that no response has been received to the communications in which various Special Procedures mandate holders have raised continuous concerns about the numerous serious human rights violations (PAK 6/2024, PAK 4/2024 and PAK 6/2025) and would welcome a response from your Excellency's Government.

According to the information received:

Ms. Syed Bibi Baloch is a resident of the Shahi Tamp area of Turbat, Kech District, Balochistan. She is a widow, the sole provider for her family through traditional embroidery work, and the mother of two young children. She is associated with the Baloch Yakjehti Committee.

It is alleged that, around October 2025, authorities placed Ms. Baloch on the Fourth Schedule of Pakistan's Anti-Terrorism Act, requiring her to report regularly to the Counter Terrorism Department in Turbat. Although she reportedly complied with these reporting obligations, her bank accounts were

allegedly frozen, causing severe economic hardship and affecting her ability to support her family and maintain her embroidery business.

Information received further indicates that in March 2026, plainclothes individuals believed to be linked to intelligence agencies allegedly entered and searched her home without presenting a judicial warrant.

According to the information received, on 1 July 2026 at approximately 9.30 p.m., Counter Terrorism Department personnel reportedly entered Ms. Baloch's residence by force and detained her without presenting a warrant or legal documentation.

She was allegedly transferred to the Women's Police Station in Turbat, where authorities reportedly informed her that her detention was preventive in nature and connected to restrictions imposed under section 144 in Kech District ahead of a peaceful demonstration planned by the BYC for 2 July 2026. The planned protest was reportedly intended to express opposition to the imprisonment of prominent BYC leaders.

Ms. Baloch was reportedly released at approximately 10.00 p.m. on 2 July 2026, after nearly twenty-four hours in custody. Following her release, Ms. Baloch allegedly received communications demanding that she present herself for questioning by Military Intelligence later that same night. She reportedly declined to do so.

Subsequently, security personnel are alleged to have repeatedly raided her residence during the night, damaging property and causing fear among family members. Similar actions reportedly occurred at her mother's residence, where relatives were allegedly intimidated and efforts were allegedly made to detain or remove a bedridden family member.

According to the information received, the cumulative effect of these actions forced Ms. Baloch and her two children to flee their home during the night of 2 July 2026. Fearing for their safety, they reportedly spent the remainder of the night in a local graveyard near the grave of her late husband.

Witnesses reportedly observed security personnel returning to her residence several times after her departure.

On 3 July 2026, Ms. Baloch reportedly held a press conference at the Turbat Press Club during which she publicly described the alleged threats, harassment, and intimidation directed against her and her family. She reportedly stated that she feared further reprisals and violence.

Without prejudging the accuracy of these allegations, we would like to express our concern at the reported pattern of intimidation and harassment directed against Ms. Syed Bibi Baloch and her family members. These measures appear to be in reprisal for her legitimate human rights advocacy in Balochistan, as well as for the exercise of her rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association as well as her work to promote, protect and defend human rights. We are also concerned about the

misuse of unsubstantiated public order offences against Ms. Syed Bibi Baloch. Such criminalization risks perpetuating a climate of intimidation and isolation that may have a chilling effect not only on Ms. Baloch but also on the work of other women human rights defenders in Pakistan.

We also wish to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government communication AL PAK 1/2025, in which Special Procedures mandate holders expressed concern, inter alia, regarding the alleged misuse of administrative and legal counter-terrorism measures against Baloch activists and organizations, including asset-freezing measures and other restrictions that may have a significant impact on individuals' livelihoods and socioeconomic well-being. The communication also highlighted concerns regarding the adverse impact of counter-terrorism measures on the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms, the vague and overly broad definition of terrorism under the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997, and the apparent incompatibility with international human rights standards of the listing and delisting procedures applicable to individuals designated as "proscribed persons" under the Fourth Schedule of that Act. We refer your Excellency's Government to the detailed analysis contained in that communication and reiterate that counter-terrorism legislation and measures must not be used to restrict or penalize individuals for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association.

We are concerned that these events do not appear to have occurred in isolation and reflect a pattern of harassment and intimidation against human rights defenders from Balochistan, with a particular focus, and ensuing differentiated and gendered harms, against women human rights defenders. As a woman human rights defender, Ms. Baloch, who belongs to a minority, may be exposed to gender-based attacks, harassment and intimidation that seek to discredit her not only because of her work, but also on the basis of discriminatory stereotypes, thereby exacerbating the risks she faces.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and any comment you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please inform of the immediate measures taken to ensure Ms. Syed Bibi Baloch's physical and psychological integrity.
3. Please provide information on what steps have been taken to investigate the violations against Ms. Baloch and to hold accountable any perpetrators, including through criminal prosecutions. In case no investigations have been undertaken, please provide information on the reasons thereof.

4. Please indicate what measures have been implemented to ensure that Ms. Syed Bibi Baloch, as a woman human rights defender belonging to a minority, can effectively continue to exercise her right to promote, protect and defend human rights in Pakistan as well as her international advocacy work in the field of human rights.
5. Please also indicate what measures have been taken to ensure that human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, journalists and activists in Pakistan, are able to carry out their legitimate work and exercise their right to promote, protect and defend human rights in a safe and enabling environment, without fear of threats or acts of intimidation, gender-based violence, harassment and violence of any sort.
6. Please provide detailed information on the legal and factual grounds for the inclusion of Ms. Baloch on the Fourth Schedule, including the evidentiary basis supporting such designation. Please indicate the restrictions, obligations and consequences arising from her inclusion on the Fourth Schedule, including any asset-freezing measures or other administrative, financial or movement-related restrictions, and whether she has been promptly informed of the reasons for her listing. Please also indicate whether Ms. Baloch has access to effective administrative and judicial mechanisms to challenge her inclusion on the Fourth Schedule and provide details of the procedures available to seek review, appeal or removal of her designation, including applicable time limits, procedural safeguards, and measures to ensure access to an effective remedy in accordance with international human rights standards.
7. Please provide detailed information on the measures being undertaken to reform Pakistan's counter-terrorism laws to ensure full compliance with the principle of legality, necessity, proportionality and non-discrimination as required under international human rights standards and as set out in previous communications (see AL PAK 1/2025). In particular, please explain how these reforms will address concerns about overly broad definitions and the potential misapplication of such laws to activities that do not constitute genuine acts of terrorism.

This communication, and any response received from your Excellency's Government, will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) at the 60 days mark. Should Your Excellency's Government respond within 60 days, both the communication and the response, may be published before the 60 days mark. The communications and responses will also be made available in the subsequent periodic report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge your Excellency's Government to ensure that all necessary interim measures be taken to prevent any irreparable damage to the personal integrity of Ms. Syed Bibi Baloch, and, in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to halt the alleged violations and to prevent their re-occurrence and to ensure the accountability of any person responsible of the alleged violations.

We may publicly express our concerns in the near future as, in our view, the information upon which the press release will be based is sufficiently reliable to indicate a matter warranting immediate attention. We also believe that the wider public should be alerted to the potential implications of the above-mentioned allegations. The press release will indicate that we have been in contact with your Excellency's Government's to clarify the issue/s in question.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Reem Alsalem

Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences

Andrea Bolaños Vargas

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Nicolas Levrat

Special Rapporteur on minority issues

Ben Saul

Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism

Annex

Reference to international human rights law

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, we would like to refer to your Excellency's Government to its legal obligations under the international treaties it has ratified and to broader international human rights standards. Should these allegations prove to be accurate, they would constitute violations of articles 9, 10, 17, 19, 21 and 22 read alone and in conjunction with article 2.3, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) ratified by Pakistan on 23 June 2010, which guarantee the right to liberty and security of person, right to privacy and family life, freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to an effective remedy.

We would also like to refer to the fundamental principles set forth in the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, also known as the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. In particular, we would like to refer to articles 1 and 2 of the Declaration, which state that everyone has the right to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels and that each State has a prime responsibility and duty to protect, promote and implement all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Additionally, we would like to stress that article 5(c) of the Declaration establishes that everyone has the right, individually and in association with others to communicate with non governmental or intergovernmental organizations and that to the same end, article 9(4) sets out that in accordance with applicable international instruments and procedures, everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to unhindered access to and communication with international bodies with general or special competence to receive and consider communications on matters of human rights and fundamental freedoms. In addition, article 12(2) and article 12(3) of the Declaration set out that the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of everyone against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the Declaration.

With respect to the Fourth Schedule, we emphasise that the designation of "terrorist" individuals or organizations must meet the requirements of due process and judicial protection under international human rights law, as set out by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, including legality, timely notification, procedural rights, the right to judicial review and automatic lapsing of listing unless renewed (A/HRC/16/51, para. 35; see also annex). We recall that in its Concluding Observations on Pakistan in 2024, the Human Rights Committee expressed concern at the frequent use of the Fourth Schedule list to restrict the movement of dissenting persons, journalists, activists, members of ethnic minorities and human rights defenders, including in Balochistan (para. 34). It called on Pakistan to review and amend its legal framework and policies to comply with article 12 of the ICCPR, ensure that it does not restrict freedom of movement on unjustified grounds, and establish independent and effective oversight

mechanisms, including access to courts, to prevent arbitrary restrictions to the freedom of movement (para. 35)

Moreover, we would like to remind your Excellency's Government of the General Assembly resolution 68/181, on the protection of women human rights defenders (A/RES/68/181). Specifically, we would like to refer to articles 7, 9 and 10, whereby States are called upon to, respectively, publicly acknowledge the important role played by women human rights defenders, take practical steps to prevent threats, harassment and violence against them and to combat impunity for such violations and abuses. We would further like to draw your attention to Human Rights Council resolution 31/32 (A/HRC/RES/31/32), in which States expressed particular concern about systemic and structural discrimination and violence faced by women human rights defenders. States should take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of women human rights defenders and to integrate a gender perspective into their efforts to create a safe and enabling environment for the defense of human rights. Furthermore, and as mentioned by the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls, some women in politics that may be more exposed to gender-based violence than others include human rights defenders and members of minority groups, and those voicing dissenting views. Such violence consists of any act of gender-based violence or threat of violence against women in politics because they are women and that affects women disproportionately and aims to preserve traditional gender roles and stereotypes and maintain structural as well as gender-based inequalities. In her report, the Special Rapporteur highlighted the many barriers to justice that women in politics faced, including re-victimization during the reporting and complaint process, resistance from law enforcement officials and inadequate legal protection or access to integrated services. She further noted that women who are mothers, including widows, are particularly vulnerable to violence and discrimination (A/73/301).

Stigmatization, harassment and outright attacks are used to silence and discredit women who are outspoken as leaders, community workers, human rights defenders and politicians. The Working Group on discrimination against women and girls has called upon States to eliminate all forms of violence against women in order to fulfil women's human rights and to improve the enabling condition for women's participation in political and public life (A/HRC/23/50). The Working Group has also underlined the increasing risk faced by women human rights defenders of criminalization and detention as a result of their legitimate work. Women who work specifically to combat gender stereotypes and advance women's rights are most likely to be targets for criminal persecution and imprisonment. Certain laws, including 'complicity' laws, 'public order' laws and anti-terrorism laws, may be particularly instrumentalized to target women human rights defenders. The Working Group recommended States to eliminate any laws or policy measures designed to criminalize the public roles of women (A/HRC/41/33).

The State of Pakistan also has an international obligation to investigate all instances of human rights violations and to refrain from exercising reprisals against families or relatives of the victims of such crimes, as well as any other person, witness or others involved in the effort to clarify these cases and seek justice. The State has a positive duty to protect these individuals against any intimidation, harassment, threat or act of violence of any kind.