

**UNITED NATIONS
COMMITTEE AGAINST TORTURE**

Eighty-Fourth Session

ALTERNATIVE REPORT

Submitted pursuant to Article 19 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel,
Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

**Concerning the
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN**

**Military Trials of Civilians, Enforced Disappearances, Torture Allegations,
and Denial of Remedies in the Aftermath of 9 May 2023**

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I. Executive Summary

Freedom and Justice Project respectfully submits this report to the Committee against Torture in advance of its review of Pakistan at the 84th Session. This submission focuses on the treatment of civilians prosecuted before military courts following the events of 9 May 2023, and on the resulting pattern of enforced disappearance, incommunicado detention, torture or ill-treatment, denial of legal safeguards, and absence of effective remedies.

Families of civilians currently detained following conviction by military courts report that their relatives were abducted by law-enforcement and intelligence agencies, disappeared for prolonged periods, held in solitary confinement, denied access to lawyers and medical care, subjected to physical and psychological torture, and later tried in closed military proceedings lacking transparency, independence, and due process. According to the families, all accused were convicted, some receiving sentences of up to ten years.

This report further notes that although the Supreme Court of Pakistan reportedly held in October 2023 that the trial of civilians by military courts was unconstitutional, this protection was later undermined through subsequent legal and constitutional developments. A short order of 7 May 2025 reportedly contemplated the creation of an independent appellate mechanism within 45 days; however, according to the families, no such mechanism has been established, leaving detainees in a state of legal limbo.

The practices described raise serious concerns under Articles 2, 11, 12, 13, 15 and 16 of the Convention.

II. The Submitting Organisation

Freedom and Justice Project, founded on 1 October 2025, is a civil society organisation standing for political prisoners in Pakistan, and around the world. This submission is based primarily on testimony and information provided by families of civilians currently confined in Kot Lakhpat Jail, Lahore following conviction by military courts, supplemented by publicly available reporting and legal background concerning the post-9 May 2023 crackdown in Pakistan.

III. Background and Context

On 9 May 2023, following the arrest of former Prime Minister Imran Khan, protests took place across Pakistan. In the aftermath, Pakistani authorities initiated a wide-ranging crackdown. Public reporting and family testimony indicate that thousands of civilians were arrested nationwide, and a number of civilians were abducted, forcibly disappeared for months and subsequently handed over to military authorities for investigation and prosecution.

The issue of military trials of civilians became a major constitutional and human rights concern. In October 2023, the Supreme Court of Pakistan ruled that trying civilians in military courts was unconstitutional. However, this protection was later bypassed through procedural and constitutional changes, culminating in a 7 May 2025 short order that conditionally allowed such trials to continue while envisaging the creation of an independent appellate forum. The promised appellate mechanism has not been established.

This report does not address the broader political landscape except where necessary to explain the context in which these civilian detainees were arrested, disappeared, prosecuted, and imprisoned.

IV. Military Trials of Civilians and Allegations of Torture

Families of detained civilians describe a consistent pattern after 9 May 2023. Civilians, including political workers, students, professionals, lawyers and ordinary citizens, were abducted by law-

enforcement and intelligence agencies; some were forcibly disappeared for weeks or months; they were reportedly held in solitary confinement and incommunicado detention; they were denied access to lawyers, family members, and adequate healthcare; and they were allegedly subjected to physical and psychological torture.

When eventually produced, they were brought not before ordinary civilian courts, but before closed military tribunals. The families state that these tribunals operated in secrecy, lacked independence, relied on coerced confessions, and produced no acquittals. They further state that many defendants received sentences significantly exceeding three years, with some sentenced to as much as ten years.

The alleged structure of these proceedings is deeply concerning. In the families' account, the complainant, investigator, prosecutor, adjudicator, and reviewing authority all effectively derive from the same institution; the military. Such a framework is fundamentally incompatible with the right to an independent and impartial tribunal and creates a serious risk of torture, coercion, and impunity.

V. Ongoing Detention Conditions and Absence of Remedies

The civilians convicted by military courts are now held in Kot Lakhpat Jail, Lahore, but remain under exceptional and discriminatory conditions. According to their testimony, detainees are kept in segregated blocks and excluded from the general prison population; they are denied basic prisoner rights; they face obstacles in accessing medical treatment, even in urgent cases; they cannot meaningfully seek bail; and they have no access to an independent appellate court.

Their purported appeals are reportedly reviewed internally within the military chain of command; petitions before civilian courts are dismissed on technical grounds; and no independent domestic or international observers have been granted access to them. The families describe their relatives as being in a condition of total legal abandonment.

These allegations indicate the absence of minimum safeguards against torture and ill-treatment and the absence of effective avenues for complaint, review, and redress.

VI. Relevant Violations of the Convention Against Torture

Article	Relevance to the present submission
Article 2	Allegations of enforced disappearance, secret detention, prolonged isolation, denial of counsel, and torture in custody indicate a grave failure to prevent torture and ill-treatment.
Article 11	The detention arrangements described by the families—including secret detention, incommunicado custody, denial of healthcare, and segregation—raise serious concerns requiring systematic review of detention practices.
Article 12	The information provided suggests no prompt, impartial, and effective investigation into allegations of torture, enforced disappearance, coerced confessions, or denial of medical care.
Article 13	Victims appear unable to make safe and effective complaints. Incommunicado detention, lack of access to lawyers, and the absence of an independent appellate mechanism obstruct the right to complain.
Article 15	The alleged use of coerced confessions in

	military proceedings directly engages Article 15. The lack of transparency and absence of independent judicial oversight heighten the risk that statements extracted under torture were used in evidence.
Article 16	Even where conduct may not be legally characterised as torture, the reported conditions of disappearance, solitary confinement, medical neglect, isolation, and legal black-hole detention clearly raise issues under Article 16.

VII. Suggested Questions for the State Party

- How many civilians were arrested, transferred to military custody, charged, tried, and convicted in relation to the events of 9 May 2023?
- What safeguards were in place to ensure that civilians in military custody had prompt access to lawyers, families, and medical care?
- What independent investigations have been opened into allegations of torture, enforced disappearance, and coerced confessions involving civilians tried by military courts?
- What is the legal basis for trying civilians in military courts, and how does Pakistan reconcile this with fair trial guarantees and its obligations under the Convention?
- Has the independent appellate mechanism reportedly envisaged in May 2025 been established? If not, why not?
- Will Pakistan allow independent monitors, including UN mechanisms, access to civilians imprisoned following military court convictions?

VIII. Recommendations

- Immediately end the trial of civilians before military courts.
- Release civilians convicted through proceedings that failed to meet fair trial guarantees, or, at minimum, ensure prompt retrial before ordinary independent civilian courts.
- Establish without delay an independent appellate mechanism with full judicial powers and access to effective remedies.
- Investigate all allegations of enforced disappearance, torture, incommunicado detention, coerced confessions, and denial of medical care connected to the post-9 May 2023 crackdown.
- Guarantee immediate and regular access to lawyers, family members, and independent medical professionals for all detainees.
- Permit independent domestic and international monitoring of all places where affected civilians are held.
- Exclude any evidence obtained through torture or coercion from all proceedings.

- Ensure that victims and families have access to redress, compensation, and rehabilitation.

IX. Conclusion

The military prosecution and imprisonment of civilians in Pakistan following 9 May 2023 raises urgent concerns under the Convention against Torture. The evidence presented by families of detainees suggests a pattern of disappearance, secret detention, torture or ill-treatment, denial of legal safeguards, closed military proceedings, and ongoing imprisonment without effective remedy.

These allegations require urgent scrutiny by the Committee and a clear recommendation that Pakistan end military trials of civilians and provide immediate protection and remedies to those affected.

Selected References

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