

U4 Expert Answer



Pakistan: Overview of corruption and anti-corruption efforts

Query

Please provide an overview of corruption, including the sectors/areas of government which have the highest corruption risks, and anti-corruption efforts in Pakistan.

Purpose

Preparation for an upcoming in-country workshop in Pakistan.

Content

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Summary

Pakistan has regularly featured near the bottom of international indices for corruption. Despite relatively strong legislation, the country is currently lacking in key areas, in particular regarding whistleblower protection and freedom of information. There is also a large gap between the legislative framework and the implementation, with a poorly funded police force and an anti-corruption agency struggling with a lack of competent staff.

The newly democratically elected government has pledged to make fighting corruption one of its priorities. Recent anti-corruption efforts have included setting up new regional offices for the national anti-corruption agency and proposing draft laws on whistleblowing in government departments.

However, political interference in public institutions prevents independent and effective investigations into corruption. There is little indication of a firm political will to address and challenge undue influence across the public sector.

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U4 is a resource centre for development practitioners who wish to effectively address corruption challenges in their work. Expert Answers are produced by the U4 Helpdesk – operated by Transparency International – as quick responses to operational and policy questions from U4 Partner Agency staff.

1. Overview of corruption in Pakistan

Background

Since its foundation in 1947, Pakistan has embarked upon a long and difficult journey towards parliamentary democracy. This has led to numerous regime changes, with power alternating between military and democratically elected governments.

In 1999, Nawaz Sharif's government was overthrown in a military coup led by General Pervez Musharraf.

2008 saw democratic rule restored, with Asif Ali Zardari (the widower of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto) becoming president. The government made a number of landmark changes to the constitution, including the 18th Amendment in 2010, which reduced the power of the president whilst strengthening parliamentary democracy (European Union Election Observation Mission 2013). Despite this reform, feudal power structures remain in place in rural areas, and tribal structures continue to hold veto powers over state authority (Bertelsmann Foundation 2014).

In 2007 President Musharraf instituted the National Reconciliation Ordinance. This created an amnesty mechanism for public officials accused of corruption between 1986 and 1999. Following the return to democracy, the Supreme Court declared the ordinance void and directed the prime minister to reopen all cases against the officials who received amnesty (U.S. Department of State 2013).

Pakistan's economy was badly hit by the international financial crisis of 2008, from which it has struggled to recover. Public debt was at 54.9 per cent of GDP in 2008, but had soared to 64.3 per cent in 2015 (Trading Economics 2015). The agricultural sector remains the largest employer in the country, but is characterised by low productivity and is hampered by the feudal structures which remain in place. At the same time, levels of foreign direct investment have decreased dramatically since 2008 (US\$5.44 billion down to US\$1.31 billion in 2011).

The years between 2010 and 2012 also saw the country repeatedly devastated by floods which destroyed much of the rail and road infrastructure.

Alongside this, terrorist and rebel activities on the border with Afghanistan and in Baluchistan province have led to growing levels of insecurity, severe human rights violations and disruption of government services, and the security situation in the capital, Karachi, has also deteriorated following clashes between armed groups and the military (Bertelsmann Foundation 2014).

In 2013 over 55 per cent of the eligible population participated in a general election and elected the Muslim League Party (PML-N). The election returned former prime minister Nawaz Sharif to power, and marked the first time a government had seen out its full term. The election was marred by violence and allegations of vote rigging, but was praised by the European Union Election Observation Mission for the increase in female voters and an increased turnout compared to the 2008 election, as well as a decrease in violent acts surrounding the election (European Union Election Observation Mission 2013).

Sharif's new government has pledged to fight corruption as one of its top priorities (Business Anti-Corruption Portal 2014).

Corruption Trends

Pakistan has consistently performed poorly on international indicators measuring corruption, and this is still the case despite recent the government commitment to deal with the issue. Corruption is perceived to be widespread and a serious issue for the country.

Pakistan has featured in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index since 1995, and has consistently ranked among the countries perceived to be most corrupt. In the [2014 edition](#), Pakistan scored 29 out of 100 (from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean)), up one point from 28 in 2013.

In line with these findings, the World Economic Forum's [Global Competitiveness Report \(GCR\) 2014-15](#) finds that corruption is the second most problematic factor for companies doing business in the country, followed closely by poor infrastructure.

The World Bank's [Worldwide Governance Indicators \(WGI\) 2013](#) show similarly poor results. After more than a decade of rapid decline in the indicator for political stability (from 14.4 in 2000 to 0.5 in 2010), Pakistan has consistently scored

poorly, with a score of 0.9 in 2013. A similar trend is evident in the control of corruption indicators, with the 2013 score of 17.7 only a slight improvement on the 2010 score (13.3).

The [Global Corruption Barometer \(GCB\) 2013](#) conducted by Transparency International represents a snapshot of public opinion in Pakistan and highlights that petty bribery is a major issue. Additionally, 72 per cent of Pakistanis perceived that corruption had increased since the previous GCB was published in 2011. This number has remained consistent since 2007 and shows that Pakistanis are not yet convinced by the new government's capacity to tackle corruption.

Forms of corruption

Corruption in Pakistan takes many forms. Petty and bureaucratic corruption is widespread. Political corruption is also an issue, with a deeply entrenched patronage system.

Petty and bureaucratic corruption

Paying bribes is commonplace in Pakistani society. Bribes enable citizens to circumvent bureaucratic delays, and are also solicited by public servants. There are many reports of bribery on the [I Paid A Bribe website](#) – a civil society organisation in Pakistan that allows citizens to file an anonymous report whenever they pay (or refuse to pay) a bribe. Bribes are mainly paid to speed up bureaucratic practices, from applications for new passports and airport customs checks, to receiving tax clearance certificates needed to file tax returns and gaining water connections for newly built properties.

According to the Bertelsmann Foundation (2014), while Pakistan has infrastructure to cover all administrative duties, they are poorly implemented and delivered. Effectiveness is limited by a lack of public resources and the politicisation of government apparatus by the political parties. Salaries for public officials are low, providing them with incentives for extracting bribes and informal payments for services that are formally free.

The switch to parliamentary democracy in 2010 also saw more power given to the provincial governments. The provincial administrations tend to suffer from overstaffing and a lack of professionalism, which further undermines the quality of services that Pakistani citizens receive from the state. This issue is most acute in the

Baluchistan and inner Sindh provinces, as well as in the federally administered tribal areas (FATA), where neither federal nor provincial government influence is strongly felt (Bertelsmann Foundation 2014).

Political corruption and political parties

Corruption in Pakistani politics has increased since the return of a democratic government (Bertelsmann Foundation 2014). Several high-level officials have been involved in corruption scandals. Former president Asif Ali Zardari and the son of former prime minister Gilani are just two examples of how Pakistan's political elite have been accused of corruption (Transparency International Pakistan 2014).

Patronage is common practice within Pakistani politics. Election victories are frequently used to hand out roles to loyal supporters. These roles are frequently in government institutions, leading to a lack of professionalism and partisan politicisation of public institutions (Bertelsmann Foundation 2014).

The World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2014-2015 confirms the prevalence of a deeply entrenched system of patronage, giving Pakistan a score of 2.6 out of 7 (1 = worst; 7 = best) for favouritism in government decisions.

Elections in Pakistan are regularly marred by poll rigging, militant threats and candidates acting illegally (Bertelsmann Foundation 2014). The 2013 election suffered from vote rigging by political parties, particularly in certain provinces in which monitoring is weak. The European Union Election Observation Mission (EUEOM) found in particular that there was a "concerning" level of ballots that were discounted as invalid. In some stations as many as 20-38 per cent of ballots were counted as invalid, indicating possible problems with voter understanding, polling station malpractice and/or attempts to distort the process. One party admitted that all parties in Pakistan attempt to rig votes in such cases, in order to counter balance the effect of other parties also rigging votes (European Union Election Observation Mission 2013).

Constant disruption of the democratic process in Pakistan since independence has prevented political parties from developing fully modern and coherent party structures. Parties in the country tend to be dynastic, without internal structures that

encourage internal development of future party leaders (Zain 2010). After its 2013 election victory, the Pakistan Muslim League (N) had no internal structures in place for a consultative process to decide who should be chosen as president or provincial governor, offering further opportunity for patronage to occur (Transparency International Pakistan 2014).

Political parties are also not required to disclose their income and expenditures to the public, although they do have to provide the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) with their assets (Transparency International Pakistan 2014).

Parties are also highly centralised. A much higher proportion of parties' funding comes from donations by rich individuals than from local communities. This system leaves parties open to influence and blackmail from their benefactors (Zain 2010), and increases the likelihood that after an election win supportive individuals expect and receive rewards. Indeed, political parties directly contribute to the politicisation of Pakistani bureaucracy by treating public administration jobs as gifts with which to reward loyal individuals (Bertelsmann Foundation 2014).

Interestingly, curbing corruption is a common theme within the manifestos of every major party. However this appears to simply be an attempt to gain popularity (Mustafa 2013 and Transparency International Pakistan 2014).

Sectors vulnerable to corruption

The 2013 Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) identifies the police, public officials and political parties as the three most corrupt institutions in Pakistan. Over 80 per cent of respondents perceived the police and public officials to be corrupt, whilst 76 per cent said the same about political parties.

75 per cent of respondents reporting having paid a bribe to Land Services whilst 65 per cent have paid a bribe to the police.

Transparency International Pakistan also conducted its own corruption surveys, focusing specifically on corruption in Pakistan between 2007 and 2011. The most recent edition of these [National Corruption Perception Surveys](#), published in 2011, identified Revenue and Property Registration as the most corrupt institution in Pakistan, overtaking the police at the

top of the list for the first time since the studies began in 2002.

Police

Police were perceived to be the most corrupt institution in Pakistan in the 2013 Global Corruption Barometer, with 82 per cent of respondents stating that they believe the institution to be either corrupt or extremely corrupt. Similarly, 65 per cent of respondents who had contact with the institution in the year preceding the survey reported having paid a bribe to members of the police. Transparency International Pakistan's National Corruption Perception Survey, which was conducted between 2002 and 2011 also consistently found that citizens in Pakistan perceived the police to be the most corrupt institution in the country (Transparency International Pakistan 2011).

This is also supported by the information available on the [I Paid A Bribe website](#), where a large number of reports filed by the public in Pakistan centre around bribes being paid to police – in particular, traffic police. There are many reports of traffic police soliciting bribes in return for ignoring minor infringements. Indeed the police's reputation has created a vicious circle whereby citizens actively offer to bribe officers in the knowledge that they will be able to avoid spending time filling out police reports if they ignore the charges in exchange for a bribe.

The police force suffers from underfunding and a lack of qualified personnel. It lacks effective accountability mechanisms, has difficulty attracting qualified personnel due to low salaries, and there is little political will to improve the conditions (Transparency International Pakistan 2014). There are claims that the police have been exploited by feudal elements in rural areas, and used for torturing political opponents and rigging elections (Transparency International Pakistan 2014).

Public officials

Pakistan's administrative institutions suffer from a lack of efficiency and coordination. Civil servants lack integrity and whilst Pakistan has adopted a number of codes of ethics, reform has been piecemeal and so far proven ineffective in curbing corruption in the public sector (Transparency International Pakistan 2014). The public sector remains affected by political interference, chronic low wages and a lack of transparency, and doesn't have appropriate mechanisms for

supervising staff (Transparency International Pakistan 2014).

Civil servants' pay is determined by grade, but salary structures are too low to support a good standard of living (Transparency International Pakistan 2014).

Within this context, there are a number of reports that officials attempt to solicit bribes from the public to speed up or circumvent official processes and provide access to services that should be freely accessible.

This situation is evident in all public services. In 2012, income gained from circumventing government regulation and taxation (the shadow economy) accounted for 35.7 per cent of Pakistan's GDP in 2007 (Schneider 2012), reflecting a huge source of lost tax revenue for the government. The Asian Development Bank has specifically noted that Pakistan needs to improve its tax revenue systems (Asian Development Bank 2015).

Despite the healthcare system being relatively well funded, there have been reports of delayed payment of wages, and in 2012 young doctors protested about the low level of their salaries.

There are also reports of judicial staff requesting small-scale facilitation payments in the lower courts (Business Anti-Corruption Portal 2014).

Judiciary

In the 2013 Global Corruption Barometer, 42 per cent of respondents perceived the judiciary in Pakistan to be either corrupt or extremely corrupt, and 36 per cent of people reported having paid a bribe to members of the judiciary in the year preceding the survey.

According to the Bertelsmann Foundation (2014), Pakistan's judiciary has historically been split along political lines, with some even actively participating in anti-president Musharraf activities.

In 2009, the Chief Justice of Pakistan announced the National Judicial Policy (NJP), which sets targets for the completion of cases, and made efforts to increase the independence of the higher levels of the judiciary. It also outlines the internal mechanisms for tackling corruption within the judiciary. The NJP has made some progress in cutting the backlog of cases. The judiciary is hampered by insufficient resources,

underqualified staff and a lack of judges. As a result of this lack of funding, the court system is notoriously slow and inefficient. In 2012 there was a backlog of cases numbering over a million (Transparency International Pakistan 2014), and some civil cases can take as long as 20 years to be completed.

2. Governance structure and anti-corruption efforts in Pakistan

Data from the Global Corruption Barometer shows that in 2013, 69 per cent of the public perceived government anti-corruption measures to be ineffective.

Indeed, few public officials are prosecuted for corruption and many of the institutions tasked with fighting corruption are subject to attempted political interference.

The National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2007 guides the anti-corruption work of the National Accountability Bureau in Pakistan. The strategy is based on the pillars of Transparency International's National Integrity System and aims to improve accountability and transparency in the country. Its core objective is to combine enforcement with prevention and awareness raising (National Accountability Bureau 2002).

Regarding political will, it has been argued that since the transition back to democracy in 2008, elected politicians have been hesitant to renew and improve anti-corruption legislation as they themselves might then have to face charges (Freedom House 2011).

Legal framework

International legislation and initiatives

In 2001 Pakistan endorsed the Asian Development Bank/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Anti-Corruption Initiative. This initiative defines a series of objectives to help countries develop sustainable legal and institutional frameworks for tackling corruption, and consists of three pillars:

- to develop public service integrity systems
- to strengthen anti-bribery actions and take effective measures to actively combat bribery

- to take effective measures to encourage public discussion on the issue of corruption

Pakistan ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) in 2007 and is also a signatory of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime. It has currently not ratified the latter.

National legislation

There are two dedicated anti-corruption laws in Pakistan; the Prevention of Corruption Act (1947) and the National Accountability Bureau Ordinance (1999).

Overall, anti-corruption legislation in Pakistan is strong in theory. Global Integrity (2010) scores the anti-corruption legislation relatively highly noting that extortion, active and passive corruption, and money laundering (amongst other offences) are criminalised. However, it is let down by ineffective implementation and a lack of legislative resources (Transparency International Pakistan 2014).

Despite this, the current legal framework has been viewed as inadequate in the past, and a replacement law was put to the parliament. This was widely criticised as an attempt to narrow the accountability stipulated by the earlier laws, as well as a transgression of the UNCAC guidelines regarding commencement periods. The new law was eventually rejected in 2012 (Soofi 2010, PILDAT 2012).

The National Accountability Bureau Ordinance is the most important piece of anti-corruption legislation in Pakistan, as it creates and outlines the authority the National Accountability Bureau, the primary anti-corruption body in the country.

Alongside laws directly targeting corruption, Pakistan's laws also govern other areas at risk of corruption. Citizens of Pakistan have a right to access information under the Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002 (FIO). This includes rights to court decisions and appointments, but it does not cover all aspects of transparency in law enforcement agencies and is considered inadequate.

The government is currently considering a new right to information bill which would provide citizens with more specific and wide-ranging rights (Transparency International Pakistan 2014). In 2013, the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces were the first to enact the freedom of

information law (Express Tribune 7 Dec 2013, Express Tribune 12 Dec 2013). These laws make it affordable for members of the public to make a request to access information. However the law in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa exempts the local judiciary (Peshawar High Court, PHC) from having to produce information on request, as it is not included in the definition of a "public body" as defined in the new law (Freedom Info 2014).

Codes of conduct have been adopted in every law enforcement agency, all of which are related to specific laws and which can be punished accordingly.

One gap in Pakistan's anti-corruption legislation relates to the lack of formal legal protection against recrimination for whistleblowers, although some institutions do offer limited protection.

In June 2015, a draft law on whistleblowing was approved within government departments. The draft law offers whistleblowers the right to file a complaint of any wrongdoing to their department head or to the disclosure commissioner, who would then forward the complaint on for investigation and action. The draft law also states that no action would be taken against the whistleblower, and incorrect reporting would not be an offence (Hanif 2015). This law must be placed before the legislature before it can be enacted.

Institutional framework

National Accountability Bureau

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) is charged with investigating and prosecuting corruption, as well as awareness raising. The NAB can investigate almost anyone in Pakistan – except the judiciary and military personnel, both of which have their own internal anti-corruption mechanisms. It also actively works to recover corrupt assets from abroad, can scrutinise public projects and contracts, and can examine any law in search of loopholes that may allow corruption to occur.

The NAB also offers some minor protections for whistleblowers. The NAB chairman is able to protect witnesses and the bureau has a hotline for anonymous complaints. Despite this, fear of recrimination often prevents citizens from complaining (Global Integrity 2010).

Under former president Musharraf, the bureau was regularly criticised for being partisan, as it was made up of by members of the partisan civil service (Freedom House 2011). Indeed others have claimed that politicians siding with the regime ceased to be investigated by NAB officers (Ahmad 2004). Its chairman serves a non-extendable four-year term, and can only be removed according to the same criteria that applies to Supreme Court judges. This provides the NAB with some degree of independence, although it has not stopped accusations of political interference and it should be noted that only one of the chairmen has completed his full four-year term. The influence of the military is also felt strongly, as five of the eight chairmen have previously held senior military positions (Transparency International Pakistan 2014).

Transparency International (2014) claims that the NAB suffers from a lack of political will, budget cuts and a human resources gap. However, official statistics show an increase in resources allocated to the NAB under the new regime. The [NAB's Annual Report 2014](#), shows that the bureau received over 2 billion rupees (US\$19.5 million) in 2014-15, up from 897 million rupees (US\$8.8 million) in 2007-08, and in January 2015 it opened two new regional offices in the cities of Sukkur and Multan (National Accountability Bureau 2014).

The bureau has increased its activities, handling 19,997 complaints in 2014-15, up from 3,324 in 2007-08. It has also had some success in prosecuting high profile public and government officials (Transparency International Pakistan 2014).

Anti-Corruption Establishments

Anti-Corruption Establishments (ACEs) investigate offences relating to corruption committed by public officials in Pakistan's provinces. There are currently four provincial offices in Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

ACEs were created to compliment the NAB and work against public service corruption at a provincial level by holding preliminary enquiries into corruption cases.

The ACEs are under-resourced and frequently have to borrow employees from police departments and other agencies. These employees are not specially trained, which affects

the quality of their investigations (Transparency International Pakistan 2014).

There is also an issue with the independence of many ACEs. They fall under the control of their respective provincial governments, who oversee key appointments, service conditions and salaries. This leads to appointments being politically influenced and awarded without merit (Transparency International Pakistan 2014).

Federal ombudsman

The Office of the Ombudsman (also known as *Wafaqi Mohtasib*) deals with complaints from individuals, rather than systematically dealing with the causes of corruption. It investigates and rectifies injustices caused to a person through the maladministration of a provincial agency or government official within 60 days of receiving a complaint.

It is ranked relatively highly by Transparency International Pakistan's recent National Integrity System report (2014). It is well-resourced, independent and has a number of regional offices.

After the office concludes an investigation, it submits its reports to the president, and the reports are then released to the press and the public.

The ombudsman's office offers a minor whistleblowing function, as any citizen or member of civil society can lodge a complaint up to three months after they were aggrieved. However this is not effective for protecting whistleblowers, as anonymous complaints are not investigated.

The office has not been successful in promoting good practice, and is not held in high regard by the Pakistani people. It also suffers because once it has conducted an investigation, it can only refer matters to other institutions to continue the investigation of a case (Global Integrity 2010).

Auditor General

The Office of the Auditor General of Pakistan (AGP) has the authority to inspect official accounts and all officials must provide any information and documents that the AGP requests. Despite this, the AGP cannot force a department to have their accounts audited, and it can only report such cases to the Public Accounts Committees.

Its reports are made available to parliament and can be released to the public upon request. However, this can be a lengthy process, sometimes taking up to two months (Global Integrity 2010).

The AGP is another institution that Transparency International Pakistan ranks highly (2014). It is comparatively independent, despite the fact that its funding must be sanctioned by the Ministry of Finance. The head of the AGP can only be removed by the Supreme Court.

The AGP has found over US\$3.8 billion of irregularities across a number of federal ministries, but its reports are regularly ignored and even low level cases rarely reach prosecution or conviction (Freedom House 2011).

The Public Procurement Regulatory Authority

Corruption is pervasive in public procurement in Pakistan. As a consequence, the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) has moved to reform the process. This has included standardising and streamlining procurement procedures to increase transparency. In particular, the PPRA now requires tenders worth over 2,000,000 rupees (US\$18,000) to be listed on the PPRA website. Any company found guilty of corruption in public procurement is blacklisted from future procurement processes. Such companies are published on the [PPRA website](#), which is kept up to date.

The PPRA published a document entitled *Public Procurement Rules* in 2010. This document is regularly updated and explains how companies should act in compliance with the law and lists the sanctions that are applicable should the law be broken.

The PPRA also created the National Institute of Procurement (NIP) in 2009, which is tasked with providing training, courses and professional certification in public procurement and related areas. These training sessions are held regularly, but rarely take the form of anything more than orientation, as opposed to teaching participants practical skills. Training is not mandatory for all procurement staff; instead, sessions are attended by staff who are nominated by their department (Global Integrity 2010).

Public Accounts Committees (PACs) are active at the federal and local levels, and hold regular reviews of reports from the Auditor Generals of

ministries, divisions, corporations and other independent and semi-autonomous bodies. These reviews consist of an examination of the expenditures, administration, delegated legislation, public petitions and policies of the ministry concerned.

Federal Investigation Agency

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) was created under the FIA Act in 1974 and also carries out some functions of an anti-corruption agency. The Anti-Corruption and Economic Crime wing of the FIA has a mandate that includes economic crime and police corruption. Its work therefore overlaps slightly with the work of the National Accountability Bureau (Global Integrity 2010). It is unclear how effective the FIA is at countering corruption, particularly as the [official website](#) does not list any cases post-2009.

Other actors

Civil society

Pakistani civil society is relatively open and there are a number of civil society organisations (CSOs) active in the country that focus on transparency and anti-corruption measures (Freedom House 2013). There are no legal barriers to limit the expressive activities of CSOs and they can publish critical material within reasonably defined restrictions (Transparency International Pakistan 2014).

CSOs are generally not harassed by government bodies, although this varies from region to region. There are a number of legal acts that allow an organisation to register itself, and tax exemptions and benefits are available to all CSOs, including foreign NGOs (Transparency International Pakistan 2014).

It can take as little as two weeks for a CSO to register as a society, trust or social welfare agency, whilst it can take up to a year to register as a non-profit organisation (USAID 2012).

Previous governments have made efforts to bring CSOs under their control, but so far these have been unsuccessful. In 2013 the cabinet's Economic Coordination Committee set up a committee to review the regulatory framework and registration requirements for CSOs (Transparency International Pakistan 2014).

Between 2002 and 2011, Transparency International Pakistan published their National Corruption Perception Survey, which measures the perceived levels and frequency of corruption in different government departments. Transparency International Pakistan also runs and maintains an anti-fraud hotline for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which allows citizens to report fraud and corruption in USAID funded projects.

Other prominent organisations active in Pakistan include *I Paid A Bribe*, an initiative that started out in India and provides a platform for citizens to report when they have had to pay a bribe to officials, and the *Anti-Corruption Force Organisation Pakistan (AFCOP)*. AFCOP is active in raising awareness among poor members of Pakistani society by conducting seminars that help people to identify corruption risks in their own lives.

Media

It is possible to criticise the government in the media and there are no direct prohibitions on media outlets, with the exception of some religious matters (Bertelsmann Foundation 2014). Despite this, Freedom House ranks the media in Pakistan as “Not Free” (Freedom House 2014). Similarly, Reporters without Borders ranks Pakistan at 159 out of 180 countries in terms of press freedom, with a rating of 50.46 out of 100 (Reporters without Borders 2015).

Media outlets regularly face pressure from state and non-state actors, including militant groups. At least three journalists and media workers were killed in 2014, and in March 2014 there was an assassination attempt on a television anchor as he left the studio in Lahore (Freedom House 2015).

The constitution and other legislation such as the Official Secrets Act authorise the government to impose limitations on free speech, particularly regarding the military, judiciary and religion (Freedom House 2014). For example, over 200,000 websites have been banned or partially banned, including YouTube. Blasphemy laws can be used to restrict the press and journalists (Freedom House 2015).

Despite the challenges facing the media in Pakistan, there are now over 100 TV channels, with at least five operating in English, and there are a multitude of newspapers which are

published in local/regional languages and enjoy larger circulations than papers published in English. An increase in twenty-four hour news channels and daily talks shows have helped to hold politicians to account (Bertelsmann Foundation 2014).

It has been suggested that coverage of corruption, particularly in English language print media, could be improved in order to provide more effective understanding of corruption issues. This includes recommendations to increase the focus on institutions rather than simply turning individuals into scapegoats, and of promoting cooperation between the Urdu and English speaking sections of society (Abid and Shah 2011).

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