



5.5. Anti-Terrorism Acts

The term 'terrorism' is defined in section 6(1) of the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), 1997, as 'the use or threat of action [...] to coerce and intimidate or overawe the Government or the public or a section of the public or community or sect [...] for the purpose of advancing a religious, sectarian or ethnic cause'.[1132](#) According to section 7(a), acts of terrorism causing the 'death of any person [...] shall be punishable, on conviction, with death or with imprisonment for life, and with fine'.[1133](#) Similarly, 'kidnapping for ransom or hostage-taking [...] shall be punishable, on conviction, with death or imprisonment for life' (section 7(e)).[1134](#)

In August 2025, President Zardari signed into law the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Act 2025 [1135](#) which reintroduces powers granted to the security forces under the expired sub-section (1) of section 11EEEE of the ATA, 1997.[1136](#) This amendment allows the government and, if relevant, the armed and civilian forces to impose up to three months of preventive detention on individuals suspected of terrorism-related offences[1137](#) (e.g., targeted killing, kidnapping for ransom, or extortion), provided that 'sufficient grounds' exist.[1138](#) This sub-section section 11EEEE is to remain in effect for a period of three years.[1139](#) This enactment followed the passing of the Punjab Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Act, 2025, in May 2025 and the Anti-Terrorism (Balochistan Amendment) [Act, 2025](#), in June 2025, which amended the ATA by allowing preventive detentions on similar grounds[1140](#) Pakistani authorities were reported to frequently invoke the ATA to detain dissenters,[1141](#) protesters and human rights defenders.[1142](#) For further information, see section [6.1.7. Critical voices and individuals perceived as opposing the state.](#)

- [1132](#)

Pakistan, Anti-Terrorism Act (as amended up to 2025), 1997, [url](#), section 6(1)(a), (b), (c)

- [1133](#)

Pakistan, Anti-Terrorism Act (as amended up to 2025), 1997, [url](#), section 7(a)

- [1134](#)

Pakistan, Anti-Terrorism Act (as amended up to 2025), 1997, [url](#), section 7(e)

- [1135](#)

Express Tribune (The), Zardari assents 'draconian' anti-terror amendment into law, 31 August 2025, [url](#)

- [1136](#)

Express Tribune (The), ATA rearmed with preventive detention clause, 14 August 2025, [url](#)

- [1137](#)

Pakistan, Anti-Terrorism Act (as amended up to 2025), 1997, [url](#), section 11EEEE(1); UN OHCHR, Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, 18 November 2025, [url](#), p. 2

- [1138](#)

Pakistan, Anti-Terrorism Act (as amended up to 2025), 1997, [url](#), section 11EEEE(1)

- [1139](#)

Pakistan, Anti-Terrorism Act (as amended up to 2025), 1997, [url](#), section 11EEEE(2A)

- [1140](#)

UN OHCHR, Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, 18 November 2025, [url](#), p. 2

- [1141](#)

Amnesty International, Pakistan: Inclusion of Baloch activists on terrorist watchlist an affront to human rights, 23 October 2025, [url](#)

- [1142](#)

Malikzada, N., The True Cost of Enforced Disappearances in Balochistan, The Diplomat, 14 October 2025, [url](#)