

Statement on Balochistan

A situation akin to 1971 is brewing in Balochistan. Radical nationalists advocating a separate state of Balochistan are steadily gaining popularity at the expense of those who continue to look for a solution within the federal framework.

The reasons for this surge in separatism are quite apparent. The people of Balochistan have a long list of grievances, and next to none have been addressed over the last 60 years. Instead of negotiations and redressing the wrongs, successive Pakistani governments have resorted to brute force in the form of five military operations starting as early as 1948.

The 1973 constitution provided for complete provincial autonomy within ten years. To date, this remains a meaningless promise on paper.

In fact, Balochistan continues to be ruled as a colony, its resources benefiting the federal government and dominant provinces. Grueling poverty and deprivation defines much of the province. 88% of the population of Balochistan is under the poverty line. Balochistan has the lowest literacy rate, the lowest school enrollment ratio, the lowest educational attainment index, and the lowest health index relative to the other provinces. 78% of the population has no access to electricity, and 79% has no access to natural gas. The federal government's presence is made apparent not through public welfare activities, but through violence and aggression. A large number of military and paramilitary troops (upwards of 37,000) have been stationed in different parts of the province and state-perpetrated violence has become a common feature of the political landscape of Balochistan. Disappearance of political activists and extrajudicial killings has become all too common. It is stating the obvious that such a situation has given rise to alienation, extreme resentment, and a feeling of enslavement to the Pakistani state.

As the injustices, crimes, rapes and genocide of 1971 unfolded before our eyes, too many Pakistanis were silent. Today, as Balochistan treads down the same path, we are again silent. We are, as were then, beneficiaries of the economic exploitation. Sui gas is available in our homes but there is none in most of Balochistan. Revenues collected from goods and services originating in Balochistan are spent elsewhere.

As conscious citizens who recognize the injustice, and indeed the danger, in this, we demand that the following steps be taken by the federal government so as to end the oppression of the people of Balochistan.

1. An immediate and complete cessation of military and paramilitary actions in all parts of Balochistan, withdrawal of the military and paramilitary forces to their barracks, and reduction of military and paramilitary forces to the level of the year 2000. No more cantonments should be built in Balochistan.
2. An immediate end to the torture, harassment, abduction and murders of the activists of Balochistan. All activists must be released unconditionally, and total amnesty should be declared for those who took up arms to defend their right and honour. Over 1300 people of Balochistan have been 'disappeared' – they must be produced in court as per the directives of the Supreme Court, and judicial inquiry made into their 'disappearances', their conditions during the period of 'disappearance', and the legality or illegality of these acts.
3. The provisions of 1973 constitution pertaining to provincial autonomy should be enacted immediately, giving Balochistan and all other provinces control over all but four areas of governance (defense, communications, currency, and foreign affairs). The Concurrent Lists should be abolished.
4. The people of Balochistan should be the first beneficiaries of their resources. Oil and gas originating in the province should first benefit the people of the province and then the rest of the country. A formula for sharing resources should be worked out to the satisfaction of all provinces.

5. Comprehensive public infrastructure including schools, colleges, hospitals, water supply systems, roads, etc, must be built. Special attention must be given to creating a skilled labour force among the people of Balochistan that is capable of assuming professional responsibilities at every level'

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6. Land owned or acquired by the armed forces for 'strategic' purposes should be handed over to the provincial government. Construction of all new cantonments should cease immediately. Likewise, all large 'development' projects, including Gwadar, should be put on hold until the conflict is resolved and reservations of the people of Balochistan have been addressed.

7. The 80,000 or so people reportedly displaced by successive military operations should be rehabilitated immediately.

8. Political manipulation at all levels by the federal government and intelligence agencies, including pitching tribes and political groups against each other, should cease immediately.

9. Priority should be given to the people of Balochistan in staffing all institutions, particularly government, in Balochistan. The federal quota for the people of Balochistan should also be increased.

10. The people of Balochistan should be compensated for the economic exploitation that they have been subject to for the past 60 years.

The situation in Balochistan is grave and demands for independence are growing stronger. The above steps are the minimum that must necessarily be taken if justice is to be done. If they are not taken, then self determination will be the logical and justified demand of the people of Balochistan. It is high time that Pakistan woke up.

We sign this to express our agreement with the above statement and demands.

Signature	Name	Address + Phone (optional)

Please post the signed statement to P. O. Box 3395, GPO Islamabad