



Foreign &
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Rt Hon Alan Johnson MP
House of Commons
London
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Rev Alan,

I am writing to follow up on last month's Adjournment Debate on the Treatment of the Hazara people in Quetta, Pakistan. You raised two points during the debate which I promised to come back to you on.

During the debate you stated that there had been 600 Hazara deaths without a single conviction. While HMG's extremely limited access to Balochistan means we have been unable to confirm that figure, open source reporting does suggest that the Pakistan authorities' ability to bring the killers to justice has been extremely weak.

In October 2011 the chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) said "...these killings and the failure of the administration to stem the odious tide or to apprehend the culprits reveal a state of lawlessness no civilised government can countenance. That this is happening in a city swarming with Rangers and Frontier Constabulary personnel can only be attributed to the federal authority's failure to exercise due control."

Human Rights Watch also expressed its concerns in a June 2011 report on Balochistan where it stated that the Provincial Government "...should not remain a spectator as people are killed because of their religious beliefs or ethnic identity". As I said during the debate I am extremely concerned about the response of the Pakistani authorities. HMG officials and Ministers will continue to raise these concerns with the Government of Pakistan.

You also asked about the extent to which Hazaras are targeted by violent extremists above other ethnic and religious minorities in Pakistan. Once again we have needed to refer to open source reporting. Human Rights Watch research indicates that at least 275 Shias, mostly of Hazara ethnicity, have been killed in sectarian attacks in Balochistan since 2008. HRCP figures show that there were 288 deaths between 2008 and October 2011. The overall figure for sectarian (including Hazara) deaths in Pakistan since 2008, provided by the South Asia Terrorism Portal, who's reporting takes its statistics from press reporting, is over 1300.

It is clearly difficult to make direct comparisons between the treatment of different minority groups, but the statistics show that Pakistan is a country where a large range of minority groups can justifiably claim to be the target of discrimination and violence. These statistics

also make clear that the scale and number of attacks on Hazaras is alarming, and HRCP has highlighted Hazaras as being a particular target in Balochistan.

I hope that this letter has satisfactorily addressed the points you raised. Please let me assure you once more that HMG Ministers and officials will continue to raise our concerns on this matter with the Government of Pakistan.

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ALISTAIR BURT
Minister for South Asia