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Pakistan's Prison Population Reaches 110,513 as 75% Prisoners Await Trial

Islamabad, 8th October, 2026 – Pakistan's prison population has reached 110,513, with three in every four prisoners awaiting trial, according to the Annual Prisons Data Report 2026, launched today by the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) and Justice Project Pakistan (JPP) with the generous support of the European Union.

The report presents a comprehensive national picture of Pakistan's prison population and examines what is driving the country's prison crisis including arrest and detention practices, access to bail, delays in trials, criminalisation of offences and the availability and use of alternatives to imprisonment.

Now in its second edition, the Annual Prisons Data Report 2026 is Pakistan's only annual, published national compilation of prison data. It brings together the latest official data from across the country to provide a national picture of who is in Pakistan's prisons, why they are there and where the system is under the greatest pressure. The report provides an evidence base for policymakers, courts, oversight bodies, researchers and the public.

Key findings from the 2026 report show that Pakistan's prisons are operating at 160.6% of authorised capacity, holding 110,513 prisoners against space for approximately 68,832 - 41,681 more people than the system is designed to accommodate. Three in every four prisoners are awaiting trial: 82,988 people, or 75.09% of the national prison population, are under trial, and this population alone exceeds Pakistan's total authorised prison capacity by 14,156 people.

Drug-related imprisonment is another major driver of prison growth, with more than 28,000 people held under the Control of Narcotic Substances Act (CNSA) - more than one quarter of the entire prison population - representing a 43.4% increase since 2023. The report also shows that prison growth is not an inevitability: while Punjab and Sindh continue to face sharp increases and severe overcrowding, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan have reduced their prison populations and remain within their overall authorised capacity, with greater use of probation, parole, diversion and other alternatives to imprisonment contributing to this trend. The pressure is also unevenly distributed across vulnerable groups. The number of women in prison has increased by 45.96% since 2024, while 86.2% of children in prison are awaiting trial. By contrast, Pakistan's death-row population has fallen to 3,220, an 11.7% decline from 2024.



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“These are not just numbers. Behind every number is a person, a family and a life that has been disrupted,” said Sarah Belal, Executive Director of Justice Project Pakistan. “The purpose of this report is to give policymakers, criminal justice actors and donors the evidence they need to make better decisions, and to show that different approaches are possible. The tools we are launching alongside the report are about taking that evidence one step further: helping civil society and those working inside the system in their reform efforts.”

Jeroen Willems, Head of Partnerships at the European Union Delegation to Pakistan said: “Today’s event is important because how we manage our prisons is a reflection of how we treat people in our custody, as those are among the most vulnerable. This report highlights serious challenges, but also shows that progress is possible. The European Union is proud to support evidence-based reforms that strengthen access to justice and promote humane and rights-based approaches to imprisonment.”

“The data is serious, but they also show that change is possible,” said Chairperson Rabiya Javeri. “The task now is to turn these commitments into measurable reductions in unnecessary detention and improvements in conditions across Pakistan’s prisons.”

The challenge now is implementation. The report and the tools launched alongside it are designed to support that next step - translating evidence into practical action to reduce unnecessary detention, reform bail and surety practices, address case delays, expand non-custodial measures, improve prison oversight and conditions, and tackle laws and policies that drives unnecessary incarceration.

The full report and accompanying Key Findings are available at: [Report and Tools](#)

For further details, please contact:

Samar Saeed Akhtar
Press and Information Officer
samar-saeed.akhtar@eeas.europa.eu
Delegation of the European Union to Pakistan