

Dangers facing Shias, especially Hazaras, in Pakistan

Graeme Swincer OAM¹, March 2017

1. Introduction

My most recent update on the plight of the Shia population of Pakistan² was published in December 2015. Since then there have been significant new developments and three important articles by experts on the situation. What is clear is that the danger is ubiquitous and escalating. The notion that there might be safe and viable (“reasonable”) havens for deported Pakistani Shia asylum seekers anywhere in the country cannot be sustained.

2. Reports and commentary up to December 2015

a. **Factors entrenching danger for Hazaras across Pakistan**

The December 2015 update highlights the research of Raza Rumi³, senior fellow at the United States Institute of Peace. Rumi’s findings are so significant that they bear repetition here. He has identified 8 factors essential to fulfilment of the sinister agenda of the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and related jihadist groups⁴. Rumi indicates that these contextual factors are indeed operating unrelentingly in Pakistan, with the result that, in particular, the Hazaras of Pakistan face extreme danger on a daily basis, and there is no foreseeable chance that this will diminish. The factors are as follows:

- Successive governments have considered the existence of the LeJ and related groups to be an essential part of the larger ‘national security’.
- A majority of Pakistanis supported the Taliban government in Afghanistan in the 1990s on ideological grounds and that ideology, which included persecution of Hazaras, is still being promoted across Pakistan.
- The capacity of the criminal justice system has weakened during the past two decades with the result that a culture of impunity has become the norm.
- Regional conflicts since 2001 have fed into sectarian conflict. Al Qaeda, on retreat from Afghanistan and Pakistan’s tribal territories, has found reliable allies in sectarian militant networks. Therefore, today, al Qaeda, the Taliban and sectarian outfits have metamorphosed into a violent trinity, with growing grass roots strength.

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² <http://www.bmrsg.org.au/compassion/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/December-2015-update-on-the-plight-of-the-Shia-population-of-Pakistan.pdf>

³ “Pakistan’s beleaguered Hazaras”, The Express Tribune, Pakistan, November 16, 2014, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/791727/pakistans-beleaguered-hazaras/>

⁴ The Lashkar-e-Jhangvi issued the following proclamation in 2011 (as quoted in “Hunting The Hazara”, Khaled Ahmed, 11 March 2014, <http://newsweekpakistan.com/hunting-the-hazara/>):

“All Shia are worthy of killing. We will rid Pakistan of unclean people. Pakistan means ‘land of the pure’ and the Shia have no right to live in this country. We have the edict and signatures of revered scholars, declaring the Shia infidels. Just as our fighters have waged a successful jihad against the Shia Hazara in Afghanistan, our mission in Pakistan is the abolition of this impure sect and its followers from every city, every village, and every nook and corner of Pakistan.”

“As in the past, our successful jihad against the Hazara in Pakistan and, in particular, in Quetta is ongoing and will continue in the future. We will make Pakistan the graveyard of the Shia Hazara and their houses will be destroyed by bombs and suicide-bombers. We will only rest when we will be able to fly the flag of true Islam on this land of the pure. Jihad against the Shia Hazara has now become our duty.” [emphasis added]

- Pakistan has an enduring material-ideological alliance with Saudi Arabia and its regional agenda; the generous Saudi donations to Pakistan's state bank do not come without an ideological alliance.
- Since the late 1990s the state has chosen to adopt a policy of non-intervention against "hate speech" and other ways of promoting sectarian hatred. The result is that many mosques across the country preach sectarianism.
- Radicalisation of law enforcement officials is now a palpable reality. Across the country, the police, judges and other state functionaries demonstrate signs of bias, ideological posturing, and in rare cases, direct violence.
- The media has become increasingly supportive of the extremist Sunni agenda against minority groups.

The result is that:

"In contrast to the situation even a decade ago, there are now no safe places of refuge for Hazaras in Pakistan. Those Hazaras who are economically poor – the majority – are doomed to a life of constant fear. Other options are only available to those who can access substantial resources – to either pay excessive protection bribes on a continuing basis or seek asylum in other countries. The latter choice is proving increasingly alluring but also increasingly difficult."

b. Exposing the hidden unrelenting genocide

The December 2015 update also highlighted the significant June 2015 article "**Hazara Shia genocide and the evils we don't see**"⁵ published in Pakistan Today by Lahore-based political analyst and senior journalist Hassan Naqvi. This article spelled out the alarming history of targeted killing of Shias in Pakistan, using the expression "*the Hazara genocide*" and observing that "*the situation is yet to improve or even change*". Naqvi said "*In Pakistan, being a Shia is often enough for an unofficial, yet persistent, death warrant.*" He cited supporting statements by Rubab Mehdi H. Rizvi, chair of the International Association of Human Rights, and presented fresh statistics obtained by acclaimed Human Rights defender Ali Raza. Raza noted that in the first 5 months of 2015 there were 42 attacks on Shia communities resulting in hundreds dead and injured. Raza referred to major attacks in Peshawar, Islamabad and Shikarpur district of Sindh. He said:

43 Shias are killed every month on average, and these figures are high enough to fall in the definition of a 'systematic genocide'.

Raza is also reported as adding that the cities in which Shias are targeted the most include Karachi, Quetta and Peshawar, and that these are the places where the attackers easily manage to assail the besieged community without any fear of intervention by law enforcement agencies.

Naqvi emphasised that most of these events were either unreported or under-reported, whether those killed were gunned down (40 per cent), victims of suicide attacks (35 per cent), or casualties of bombings (24 per cent). Hence his title "*. . . the evils we don't see*".

⁵ Hassan Naqvi, JUNE 6, 2015, <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/06/06/national/hazara-shia-genocide-and-the-evils-we-dont-see/>

Naqvi's point about the continuing alarming trend was emphasised in another article published at the same time (*"It Is War Against The Hazaras In Quetta"*⁶):

" . . . the security situation in Pakistan does seem to be reflecting a dangerous trend toward the worse, no matter which data set is employed in the analysis."

Naqvi's use of the term "genocide" was replicated in a July 2015 editorial in the Daily Times (*"Unending killings"*⁷) which commented on recent targeted attacks on Hazaras in Quetta: **"This is not merely a sectarian conflict; it is a genocide"**.

c. Documenting the escalation of violence across the country

A June 2014 briefing paper⁸ by Farah Mihar of Minority Rights Group International⁹ remains relevant. The title **'Everything has shattered' – rising levels of violence against Shi'a in Pakistan**¹⁰ captures the mood perfectly. The paper reviews recent statistics and reports and draws on primary field research. It provides an analysis of the current [2013] situation of the Shi'a and Hazara communities in Pakistan, detailing the manner in which they are targeted and the nature of these incidents. It also discusses the role of the state, noting both failure to take sufficient action against the perpetrators, and even accusations of collusion. As indicated in the reports that follow, there is nothing to indicate that the situation has improved since then. The following statements are of special relevance:

*The recent attacks have mostly been carried out by three militant groups - Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Lashkare-Jhangvi (LeJ) and the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). All three follow an extremist Sunni Islamic ideology under which the Shi'a are deemed heretics and apostates, punishable by death. These groups are also engaged in anti-Shi'a propaganda and hate speech at every level of Pakistani society. **As a result, Pakistani Shi'a throughout the country are living in constant fear.** [emphasis added]*

The Shi'a community is not only affected by the wave of killings and suicide bombings. Shi'a have also been subjected to various forms of hate speech, most commonly as campaigns in mosques, schools, public spaces and increasingly on social media. Shi'a are vilified as a community for their religious beliefs and individuals are also picked out for criticism. The campaigns openly label them as apostates or heretics, and call on Sunnis to kill them.

Activists reported that graffiti inciting violence against Shi'a was now common and rarely removed, as both the police and general public were afraid to do so.

Social media such as Facebook have also become a platform for hate speech and incitement. The SSP and other extremist religious groups have their own sites and profile pages featuring violent campaigns against Shi'a. These feature public calls for the killing of Shi'a and the glorification of attacks against them. In one instance, the SSP called on other militant groups, including the TPP, to engage more actively in anti-Shi'a violence.

⁶ By The Citizen Bureau, June 8, 2015, <http://www.hazarapeople.com/2015/06/08/it-is-war-against-the-hazaras-in-quetta/>

⁷ Daily Times, July 08, 2015, <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/08-Jul-2015/unending-killings>

⁸ http://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/MRG_Brief_Pak_MRG.pdf

⁹ Minority Rights Group International (MRG) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) working to secure the rights of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities worldwide, and to promote cooperation and understanding between communities. MRG has consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and observer status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. MRG is registered as a charity, no. 282305, and a company limited by guarantee in the UK, no. 1544957.

Against a backdrop of rapidly deteriorating security and a sustained hate campaign, members of the Shi'a community live in constant fear for their lives. The government's failure to hold to account those responsible has helped foster a climate of impunity for perpetrators.

At the same time, the Pakistani government has completely failed to protect its Shi'a and Hazara populations and has not been able to successfully counter allegations that it is protecting militants.

More up to date information, confirming the trend indicated, is presented in the "United States Department of State Country Reports on Terrorism 2015 – Pakistan"¹¹.

3. DFAT report January 2016

The "DFAT Thematic Report – Shias in Pakistan" dated 15 January 2016¹² provides confirmation of the situation outlined above. For example:

4.4 Shias continue to face a threat from anti-Shia and militant groups, particularly Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) and Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) or Ahl-e-Sunnat Wal Jammāt (ASWJ). Most of these networks have broad agendas, which include strong anti-Shia sentiments. Various Pakistani Taliban groups operating under the banner of the Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) have also claimed responsibility for attacks on Shias.

1.41 Militants have historically targeted routes used by Shia pilgrims, including Hazaras – particularly those travelling to Iran through Balochistan. These attacks have occurred in Mastung, Bolan, Taftan, Khuzdar and Awaran. In 2014, for example, at least 29 Shia pilgrims were killed and a further 35 wounded when their bus was attacked on the Quetta-Taftan highway in Mastung district. Shias in these attacks are identifiable by their Shia names (displayed on their Computerised National Identity Cards (CNICs)) or flagellation marks if asked to raise their shirts.

4. Reports of continuing targeted violence in 2016

There were many reminders in 2016 that Pakistan Shias continue to face serious danger all over the country. Reports of specific incidents¹³ were complemented by three major articles. All three articles, together with the continuing reports of individual incidents, reinforce the conclusion that the danger is ever present. No Hazara in Pakistan is being allowed to forget the chilling 2011 proclamation of the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi: "***Jihad against the Shia Hazara has now become our duty.***"

a. In another comprehensive article (compare point 3.b. above), "***Shia persecution continues to spiral in Pakistan as the state acquiesces to genocidal violence***"¹⁴, political analyst Hassan Naqvi, makes the point that, because of the increasing danger,

¹¹ <http://www.refworld.org/docid/57518d9713.html>, 2 June 2016

¹² Seemingly unavailable on the internet, but copy obtained through a friend.

¹³ For example: "Four Hazara women killed as gunmen attack bus in Quetta", Zafar Baloch, 4 October 2016: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1193422/four-hazara-women-killed-gunmen-attack-bus-quetta/>; "Gunmen kill two Hazara Shias in Pakistan's troubled Balochistan", PressTV, 1 August 2016: <http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2016/08/01/477955/Pakistan-Hazara-Shia-Quetta-Balochistan>

¹⁴ 22 February 2016, <http://nation.com.pk/blogs/22-Feb-2016/shia-persecution-continues-to-spiral-in-pakistan-as-the-state-acquiesces-to-genocidal-violence>. Author Hassan Naqvi is a Lahore-based journalist who covers politics, economy and militancy.

The Shia have adopted self-segregation by living in clusters among themselves; however, this has only made them more vulnerable to mass scale attacks.

Naqvi identifies 2 key factors in the “spiralling persecution”: failings in the legal system and the influence of Sunni religious seminaries, including the vast amount of hate speech that emanates from the seminaries. He documents target killings of Shias in many parts of Pakistan, Sind (especially the cities of Shikarpur, Jacobabad, Hyderabad) and Karachi being the most hit areas. He states that

The extent of the persecution has increased so much, that due to daily harassment Shia children are scared to go school. The Shia have adopted self-segregation by living in clusters among themselves; however this has only made them more vulnerable to mass scale attacks.

Naqvi also highlights the problems Shias face with renting houses:

. . . non-Shia owners fear their home may be targeted and are intimidated by this possibility.

Undoubtedly this would apply to business premises as well.

Finally:

The barometer for violence against the Shia is ever increasing. All terrorists are roaming with impunity. . . . Meanwhile, all police protection from prominent Shias has been rescinded, making them more vulnerable to suicide attacks, and target killings.

- b. **“The Rising Threat Against Shia Muslims in Pakistan”**¹⁵ by journalist Uzair Hasan Rizvi¹⁶, highlights that

The efforts of various governments to counter the growing influence of extremist forces have not been effective. . . .

In Pakistan, the environment in which the minorities find themselves is characterised by hate speech, the invocation of blasphemy laws and a surge of vicious attacks on worshippers and sacred places. Pakistan is an Islamic country. However, Jinnah’s vision seems to have faded with the passage of time. Now, not only non-Muslims are being harmed but also sub-sects like the Sufis, Ahmadis and Shias.

Rivzi makes the point that

According to estimates, for every 10 Shias killed in Pakistan, 5 of them are Hazaras.

Rivzi agrees with other commentators in finding reasons for the violence both in “the great Shia-Sunni divide” and in “Pakistan’s long-standing support of Saudi Arabia”. As a consequence, the dangers for all the Shias of Pakistan are sure to continue for a long time.

- c. **“PAKISTAN: Ongoing Genocide of the Hazara Shia Sect”**¹⁷, is an article by Ishaq Mohammadi¹⁸ for the Asian Human Rights Commission¹⁹.

This article highlights the continuing lack of effective protections for Hazaras in spite of superficial symbols of high security such as numerous checkpoints staffed by

¹⁵ 11 June 2016, <https://thewire.in/41862/the-rising-threat-against-shia-muslims-in-pakistan/>

¹⁶ Uzair Hasan Rizvi is an independent multimedia journalist.

¹⁷ 29 August 2016, <http://www.ahrchk.org/ruleoflawasia.net/news.php?id=AHRC-ART-048-2016>

¹⁸ The writer is the press Secretary, Hazara Organization for Peace and Equality, New York.

¹⁹ The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) works towards the radical rethinking and fundamental redesigning of justice institutions in order to protect and promote human rights in Asia. Established in 1984, the Hong Kong based organisation is a Laureate of the Right Livelihood Award, 2014. The Commission is a regional non-governmental organisation that monitors human rights in Asia, documents violations and advocates for justice and institutional reform to ensure the protection and promotion of these rights.

paramilitary force (Frontier Corps) personnel, restrictions on the movement of the Quetta community, and establishment of a security shield around the area.

By making a ghetto of the Hazara community, the Pakistani government has not done any good for the terrorist-hit community. According to the Director of Human Rights Watch for Asia, it has deprived them of their basic rights.

“Rights” listed related to access to educational institutions, business viability, interaction with other communities, and access to workplaces,

The article mentions declared threats of more massive attacks following the 1 August 2016 shooting of 2 Hazara men. It also notes that the Human Rights Watch has written about continuation of the long and close relationship between the LeJ and Pakistan’s military and intelligence agencies and the fact that almost the entire leadership of the LeJ fought alongside the Taliban in Afghanistan, including participation in the 1998 massacre of thousands of Hazaras living in Mazar-e-Sharif.”

5. Targetted violence in 2017

At the end of February 2017 the South Asia Terrorism Portal (a very useful source of up to date information) published details of 23 “*major incidents of terrorism-related violence in Pakistan*” in the first 7 weeks of the year, leaving 254 people dead and 526 injured²⁰.

These incidents included a massive bombing on 16 February²¹, claimed by Islamic State, which killed 88 people and injured hundreds more at a crowded Sufi shrine in Sehwan, a town in southern Sindh province. The terror attack was described as “the country’s deadliest in years”. It

stunned the nation and raised questions about Pakistani authorities’ ability to rein in militant groups despite several military offensives targeting insurgents.

6. Considerations for relocation to Lahore, Multan or Karachi

Since 2014, DIBP and RRT/AAT decision makers have been suggesting that Hazara refugees from Pakistan (mainly Quetta) can easily relocate to Lahore, Karachi or Multan and even Islamabad. However it is becoming increasingly clear that this would not be a safe or practical possibility. This has been shown in the documents cited above. The following facts are especially significant:

a. Escalating danger

Persecution of Shias, and especially the highly recognizable Hazaras, continues to escalate all over Pakistan, as documented above. What may seem like a safe haven today may cease to be that tomorrow. The UNHCR guidelines on relocation emphasise that a proposed venue must offer **durable** safety. Such is not a reasonable expectation for Hazaras anywhere in Pakistan. In Pakistan it is impossible to live without an ID

²⁰ <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/majorincidents.htm>

²¹ Jon Boone in Islamabad, for the Guardian, 17 February 2017, “Pakistan launches crackdown as Isis shrine attack toll rises to 88”, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/16/thirty-killed-100-injured-isis-bomb-sufi-shrine-pakistan-sindh>

See also a primary report of the same incident: Syed Raza Hassan, Reuters, 16 February 2017, “Suicide attack on Pakistani shrine kills 72, claimed by Islamic State”, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-blast-idUSKBN15V233?feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews>

card, and this, along with facial appearance, immediately betrays a Hazara's ethnicity. Travel is therefore very difficult and risky and there would be constant demands for bribes together with exposure to other kinds of exploitation. The authorities offer no protection. Kidnapping for ransom and cold-blooded murder are so frequent that they generally pass unreported in the media and without the perpetrators being brought to justice. Even those who may survive for a while would be doomed to a life of constant fear.

b. Danger and cost of relocating a family from Quetta to any other major city.

Hazara men do not feel safe travelling outside their enclaves. But for a whole family, including women and children, the safety factor is even more significant. For them to make a long journey across the country is almost unthinkable, even if they should hire a private taxi for themselves. Risks are high and costs are high. DFAT has acknowledged this reality²²:

Some Hazaras in Quetta and Parachinar have relocated to other parts of Pakistan, including Lahore and Karachi, although the journey and the destinations were not without their own security risks. To mitigate these risks, many Hazaras able to afford the cost choose to fly from Quetta or Parachinar to other destinations in Pakistan.

Obtaining rental housing for a family in a strange context is not only difficult but also expensive compared with the Hazara enclaves of Quetta. There is no guarantee of income at the beginning and therefore savings would have to be used to cover rent and living expenses until a family member finds work; this could take a long time to happen.

As mentioned, an ongoing cost element is the need to pay protection money to local security officials. This applies to anyone with a business in Quetta and is known to be equally prevalent in other cities. Hazaras are very vulnerable and this reality is widely exploited. At the very least, Hazaras would be discriminated against by police and other authorities and subjected to extortion wherever they might live in Pakistan.

c. Experience of Hazaras who have attempted internal relocation

Whether citizens of Pakistan or refugees from Afghanistan, many Quetta Hazaras have attempted to find a safer location in Pakistan. This has been happening for several years, and especially following the extreme targeted violence of early 2013. Very few have been in a position to document their experiences, but there have certainly been reports of consequent difficulties and dangers. One example, "**A tough life for the displaced Hazaras in twin cities**"²³ contains testimonies of 5 people (and their families in some cases) who fled to Islamabad. Appendix 1 contains selected quotations. The consistent experience is that the possible improvement in security at that point in time – early 2014 – was at significant economic cost, apart from the actual relocation costs. Since then, as documented above, there is evidence that the security outlook for Shias has deteriorated across the country. One of the interviewees observed "**Life has become more difficult after the migration as Quetta was comparatively cheaper**".

²² DFAT Thematic Report – Shias in Pakistan, dated 15 January 2016

²³ Irfan Haider, 09 March 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1091921>

Another report from a displaced Hazara in Islamabad²⁴ affirms a widely held contention:

It's difficult to hide anywhere in Pakistan if you carry a Hazara face on your shoulders.

What is clear is that relocation is difficult, costly and lacking any guarantee of improved security.

d. Importance of family support in relation to accommodation, employment, opportunities and protection in a new location.

As is the case for Hazaras in Afghanistan, survival of internally displaced members of this group depends heavily on family and other well established connections. Ethnic or tribal identity alone is not adequate, let alone religious matching. Professor Alessandro Monsutti, the leading European specialist on Hazaras has emphasised that

*In a society where the state provides . . . little support, life is organised around social networks and face-to-face relations*²⁵

This statement was made in reference to Afghanistan, but it applies equally to Hazaras in Pakistan. It is why Hazaras in both Afghanistan and Pakistan live in enclaves.

Furthermore, the UNHCR consistently emphasises the importance of access to traditional support networks of family members in an area of prospective relocation, who would be willing and able to provide genuine support. Commenting on this guideline, Professor William Maley has pointed out²⁶ that the mere fact that there may be people of similar ethnic background living in a potential relocation destination does not overcome the problem of lack of social support. Ethnic identities do not in and of themselves give rise to the ties of personal affinity and reciprocity that arise from family connections.

In relation to Afghanistan, DFAT has long conceded this point – about the significance of family connections (as distinct from general reliance on ethnic networks)²⁷:

However . . . family or other connections are critical in regards to the ability to find both long-term shelter and employment.

The point has been reinforced in a more recent DFAT Country Information Report on Afghanistan (18 September 2015):

3.2 . . . kinship is central to identity and acceptance in the community, including for finding shelter and employment.

In Pakistan, where Hazaras are a much smaller minority, this issue is even more relevant. Many Hazaras who have lived in both Quetta and Sydney confirm this reality²⁸. Hazaras are like any other ethnic group: there are sub-groups, differences, tensions and jealousies, even among members who are not strangers. A newcomer or newly arrived family with no connections cannot count on being supported or protected, let alone embraced.

²⁴ "View of Jinnah Avenue from Uzbek Hotel", Masud Alam, 28 January 2013, <http://www.dawn.com/news/781959/view-of-jinnah-avenue-from-uzbek-hotel>.

(Masud Alam is an Islamabad-based writer, columnist and journalism trainer.)

²⁵ "The Situation for Hazaras in Afghanistan", 9 August 2010, para.55, quoted in William Maley, "On Relocation to Kabul of Members of the Hazara Minority in Afghanistan", 19 November 2012, www.facebook.com/labor4refugees/posts/382792781806801

²⁶ <http://www.scribd.com/doc/204142851/Maley-Hazaras-Kabul-Opinion-February-2014>

²⁷ DFAT Country Information Report Afghanistan, 31 July 2013

²⁸ Personal communication from numerous contacts

If a Hazara man had family or friends in another part of Pakistan it might be just possible this network could protect and support him. However that is rarely the case. Finding a job, even a very menial job, is almost impossible without family connections. Even well-educated and well qualified people have trouble getting jobs in Pakistan.

e. Case precedence: Immigration Assessment Authority

A very recent decision from the Australian Immigration Assessment Authority²⁹, dated 30 August 2016, relating to a Hazara man from Quetta with a typical profile, is worth noting. The Reviewer *stated* “*I am not satisfied that it would be reasonable for the applicant, given his particular circumstances, to relocate to an area of Pakistan such as Islamabad/Rawalpindi or Lahore*”. Details of the reasoning are quoted in attachment 2. This seems to reflect acceptance of significant changes in attitude over the past year or two, consistent with the information cited above.

7. Conclusion

There is compelling evidence of the alarming trend of danger for Shias, especially Hazaras, all over Pakistan and this has profound implications for forced relocation within Pakistan for both individuals and especially whole families.

²⁹ www.iaa.gov.au/IAA/media/IAA/Files/Decisions/IAA1600416_30August2016.rtf

Attachment 1

Examples of the difficulties faced by Hazaras who attempted internal relocation following targeted violence in Quetta, Pakistan.

Whether citizens of Pakistan or refugees from Afghanistan, Quetta Hazaras who have attempted to find a safer location in Pakistan, especially following the extreme targeted violence of past 6 years, have reported experiencing great difficulty as a result.

The following excerpts, quoting exiles in Islamabad, show that relocation is difficult, costly and lacking any guarantee of improved security.

A tough life for the displaced Hazaras in twin cities³⁰

- *“Asad” along with his family used to live in Quetta, but after the tragic death of his father in a suicide attack in 2011, his mother decided to move to Islamabad and settle here.
“Life has become more difficult after the migration as Quetta was comparatively cheaper. There we used to live in our own house,” he added.*
- *Like Asad, 28-year-old Ali Rizvi left Quetta along with his family after the death of his younger brother in a suicide attack in September 2010.
He said it was difficult for his family to stay in Quetta due to the ongoing target killings of Shia Muslims. It was not an easy decision to migrate from Quetta; “my father had to quit his government job”, he added.
Rizvi said his family sold their house at a throwaway price but it was the only option they had before migration.
“Although, I am doing a job in a university here, it is very difficult for my family to meet the monthly expense because Islamabad is very costly as compared to Quetta,” he added.
He said hundreds of families had left Quetta to secure their lives while thousands more wanted to move but poverty did not allow them.
“It is not possible for the poor people to get a house on rent in big cities like Rawalpindi or Islamabad.”*
- *Sadiq Hussain, 50, left his hometown Akhtarabad in Quetta along with his family some eight months ago out of fear of being killed for being a Shia Muslim.*
- *Sughra Sadiq, 18, daughter of Sadiq Hussain, said she left her college after the suicide attack on the bus carrying female students of Sardar Bahadur Khan Women University in Quetta in June 2013.
“Although, it was not easy for me to leave my childhood friends, I believe it was important for me to continue my studies without any fear,” she said.*
- *Alamdar Hussain, 22, lives in Sector I-10/1. He left Quetta along with his family three months back.
Alamdar said it was difficult for him to stay in Quetta as people from his community were constantly living in the shadow of death.
He said his elder brother had also left Pakistan for Australia due to constant threats to his life but he remains jobless there.
“I work as a salesman at a cloth shop at Commercial Market in Rawalpindi but it is not enough to meet my family’s monthly expense,” he added.*

³⁰ Irfan Haider, 09 March 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1091921>

Attachment 2

Extract from a decision of the Immigration Assessment Authority date 30 August 2016³¹, under the headings “Complementary protection assessment” then “Real risk of significant harm”

39. Overall, in the light of the available information, which is limited, I am not satisfied that it would be reasonable for the applicant, given his particular circumstances, to relocate to an area of Pakistan such as Islamabad/Rawalpindi or Lahore. I have taken into account the following factors. The applicant has no support networks in any of those locations. There is no information before me about the size of the Hazara Shia communities in those cities, or about whether broader Shia communities made up of other ethnic groups would provide the kind of social networks and support to a Hazara Shia that the applicant would need in order to find employment and accommodation. The applicant’s only work experience is as a [occupation] in [shops]. He does not appear to have any particular skills or experience that would equip him to find employment in a new city where he knows no one; and, in the case of Islamabad, where the cost of accommodation and of living is high.³² I accept that the applicant experienced psychological difficulties following the shooting attack on his employer. In conjunction with the personal difficulties which I am satisfied the applicant would face, I consider that the security situation in Islamabad and Lahore, while better than that in Quetta and Karachi, is not sufficiently stable or safe to support a finding that it is reasonable for the applicant to relocate there. While I consider that the risk of harm to the applicant does not rise to the level of a real chance, I consider that the level of insecurity in Islamabad or Lahore, considered in the light of the other obstacles to relocation faced by this applicant, render it unreasonable.
40. In relation to relocation I have considered those areas of Pakistan where relocation would, prima facie, appear to be reasonable. The delegate considered that these areas were Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore, and based on the country information that was before the delegate I likewise consider that these are areas where there is a Hazara Shia community and where there is no real risk of harm to Hazara Shias. Having considered all of the available information about the possibility of relocation for Hazara Shias within Pakistan, and specifically to Karachi, Islamabad or Lahore, including the security situation, the presence of a Hazara Shia community, the personal characteristics and qualifications of the applicant and the impact of those on his capacity to survive without his family, obtain employment and a place to live, I conclude that it would not be reasonable for the applicant to relocate to an area of the country where there would not be a real risk of significant harm for the purpose of s.36(2B)(a).
41. For all of the reasons above, s.36(2B) of the Act does not operate such that the applicant is taken not to have a real risk of significant harm in Pakistan.

Complementary protection: conclusion

42. There are substantial grounds for believing that, as a necessary and foreseeable consequence of being returned from Australia to a receiving country, there is a real risk that the applicant will suffer significant harm.

Decision

The IAA remits the decision for reconsideration with the direction that:

- there are substantial grounds for believing that, as a necessary and foreseeable consequence of the referred applicant being removed from Australia to a receiving country, there is a real risk that the referred applicant will suffer significant harm.

³¹ www.iaa.gov.au/IAA/media/IAA/Files/Decisions/IAA1600416_30August2016.rtf

³² "DFAT Thematic Report - Shias in Pakistan January 2016", 15 January 2016, CIS38A801265 at 5.5-5.6.