



From Moratorium to Reform: Aligning Pakistan's Death Penalty Regime with International Human Rights Standards

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan has one of the world's largest death row populations and retains capital punishment for a broad range of offenses that fall outside the definition of "most serious crimes" under international law. While Pakistan observed a de facto moratorium on executions from 2008 to 2014, this was reversed in response to political and security pressures, terrorist attacks, and retaliatory executions. This paper critically reviews Pakistan's death penalty regime in relation to its international human rights commitments, particularly under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the Convention against Torture (CAT). It investigates systemic issues, including due process shortfalls, mandatory death sentences, coerced confessions, and failure to protect juveniles, women, and persons with mental disabilities. The paper also explores the jurisprudence of Pakistan's higher judiciary, executive clemency practices, and the interaction between Sharia-based provisions of qisas and diyat and international human rights norms. It contends that a gradual reform trajectory starting with narrowing capital offenses, strengthening procedural safeguards, and reintroducing a moratorium provides a plausible route for Pakistan to align its penal system with international standards while respecting its constitutional and cultural guidelines. Ultimately, the article suggests a rights-based reform agenda that balances domestic legal traditions with the international trend toward restricting and eventually abolishing capital punishment.

Keywords: Death penalty, International Human Rights, Qisas and diyat, fair trial, criminal justice reform.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

The death penalty in Pakistan is a deeply entrenched practice, rooted in a complex interplay of historical, legal, cultural, and religious influences, yet it remains a source of significant controversy both within the country and on the global stage. Originating from the colonial-era Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) of 1860, capital punishment was retained and expanded after Pakistan's independence in 1947, with over 30 offenses now carrying the death penalty, including murder, terrorism, blasphemy, and drug trafficking. Islamic legal principles, particularly qisas (retribution) for murder, have further shaped its application,



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often justifying the practice as a moral and religious imperative (Khan and Bhatti 2024). Pakistan is among the world's leading executors, with thousands of prisoners on death row and hundreds of executions carried out in recent years, particularly following the lifting of a moratorium in 2014 after the tragic Army Public School attack in Peshawar. This moratorium, in place from 2008 to 2014, was a response to domestic and international calls for reform but was reversed due to public and political demand for harsh measures against terrorism. However, the death penalty's implementation has drawn widespread criticism for systemic flaws, including unfair trials, lack of adequate legal representation, coerced confessions, and the execution of vulnerable groups such as juveniles and the mentally ill, practices that contravene international human rights standards, notably those in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (Moazzam and Attirmidzi 2025).

The controversy is amplified by documented cases of wrongful convictions and the disproportionate impact on marginalized communities, such as the poor and religious minorities, who often lack access to justice. Supporters argue that capital punishment serves as a deterrent and upholds justice, while opponents highlight its inefficacy, moral concerns, and violation of global norms, placing Pakistan at a crossroads between domestic traditions and international human rights obligations (Abbas, Chughtai, and Hussain 2022).

1.2. Research Objectives

- i. To trace the historical and legal evolution of Pakistan's death penalty, identifying key factors sustaining its use.
- ii. To evaluate Pakistan's death penalty practices against international human rights standards, particularly the ICCPR.
- iii. To examine systemic judicial flaws, including inadequate legal aid and risks to vulnerable groups, needing reform.
- iv. To propose reforms like improved judicial safeguards and alternatives to align with global human rights norms.

1.3. Significance of the Study

This research holds substantial academic and practical importance by addressing the contentious issue of the death penalty in Pakistan through the lens of international human rights standards. It fills a critical gap in academic scholarship by providing a detailed examination of Pakistan's capital punishment regime, which is often overshadowed by broader human rights discussions in South Asia. By analyzing the legal, cultural, and political dimensions of the death penalty, the study offers valuable insights not only for Pakistan but also for other post-colonial, Muslim-majority nations navigating similar challenges. Practically, it provides policymakers, legal practitioners, and human rights advocates with evidence-based recommendations to reform the death penalty system, such as strengthening judicial fairness and protecting marginalized groups disproportionately affected by capital punishment, including the poor and minorities (Pillay 2021).

By advocating for reforms that balance domestic priorities with global human rights norms, the study contributes to Pakistan's potential compliance with international frameworks like the ICCPR, fostering a more equitable and humane legal system. Additionally, its findings could influence regional practices in South Asia, supporting global efforts to restrict or abolish the death penalty. Ultimately, this research amplifies



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the voices of vulnerable populations and promotes a justice system grounded in fairness, dignity, and respect for human rights, making it a vital contribution to both scholarship and real-world change (Andini and Boer 2025).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Overview of Existing Literature on the Death Penalty in Pakistan and Internationally

The death penalty in Pakistan, deeply rooted in its legal and cultural history, has been extensively studied as a polarizing issue within both national and global academic discourse. Its origins lie in the colonial-era Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) of 1860, which prescribed capital punishment for serious crimes such as murder and treason, a framework that persisted post-independence in 1947. Scholars have noted how Pakistan's death penalty regime expanded significantly with the integration of Islamic legal principles, particularly *qisas* (retribution) for murder, and the inclusion of offenses like blasphemy and drug trafficking, resulting in over 30 capital offenses today. Pakistan ranks among the world's top executors, with thousands of prisoners on death row, a figure that underscores its status as a retentionist state in a world increasingly leaning toward abolition (Fadlan 2025).

Globally, the literature contrasts retentionist countries like Pakistan, China, and the United States with abolitionist nations, particularly those in the European Union, where capital punishment has been entirely eliminated. Studies consistently question the death penalty's efficacy as a deterrent, pointing to a lack of empirical evidence and highlighting systemic issues such as judicial errors, arbitrary sentencing, and violations of human rights. In Pakistan, the debate is particularly complex due to socio-political dynamics. For instance, the 2008–2014 moratorium on executions, driven by domestic and international human rights advocacy, was lifted following the 2014 Army Public School attack in Peshawar, which killed over 140 people, mostly children. This event triggered a surge in executions, particularly for terrorism-related offenses, fueled by public demand for retribution (Novak 2021).

Reports indicate that over 140 countries have abolished the death penalty or ceased executions, placing Pakistan at odds with global trends. The literature emphasizes Pakistan's unique position, where cultural and religious justifications, rooted in interpretations of Islamic law, clash with international calls for reform, creating a rich but contentious field of study that examines the interplay of law, society, and global norms (Satrio and Yahya 2024).

2.2. Analysis of Previous Studies

Research on human rights and capital punishment in Pakistan reveals a consistent pattern of systemic deficiencies that undermine the fairness and legitimacy of the death penalty. Studies highlight issues such as inadequate legal representation, coerced confessions, and lack of due process, which disproportionately affect marginalized groups, including the poor, religious minorities, and those with limited access to legal resources. These flaws have led to documented cases of wrongful convictions, with some individuals executed despite credible claims of innocence, raising serious ethical and legal concerns (Khodadadi 2025a).

The execution of juveniles and mentally ill individuals, despite international prohibitions, further exacerbates these issues, drawing condemnation from human rights organizations.



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Globally, scholars argue that the death penalty inherently conflicts with human rights principles, particularly the right to life and dignity, especially when applied inconsistently or without rigorous safeguards. The 2008–2014 moratorium in Pakistan is frequently analyzed as a period of partial alignment with global human rights advocacy, driven by pressure from organizations like the United Nations and the European Union. However, its abrupt end in 2014, following public and political outrage over terrorism, underscores the challenges of sustaining reform in a context where retribution is culturally and politically entrenched. Comparative studies offer insights from countries like South Africa and Cambodia, where abolition was achieved through judicial reforms, public education, and political will (Khodadadi 2025b).

These cases suggest that Pakistan could benefit from similar strategies, such as improving access to legal aid, strengthening judicial independence, and raising public awareness about the death penalty's flaws. However, resistance rooted in religious interpretations and public support for executions, particularly in high-profile cases, remains a significant barrier. Scholars also explore interim reform efforts, such as limiting the death penalty to the “most serious crimes” or implementing stricter procedural safeguards, as viable steps toward aligning with global standards. These studies collectively underscore the need for a nuanced approach to reform that balances Pakistan's domestic realities with international human rights expectations, highlighting both the challenges and potential pathways forward (Brownyard 2025).

2.3. Discussion of Relevant International Human Rights Instruments and Standards

International human rights instruments provide a critical framework for evaluating the compatibility of Pakistan's death penalty regime with global norms. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by Pakistan in 2010, is a cornerstone of this framework, stipulating that the death penalty should be reserved for the “most serious crimes” and applied only with stringent safeguards, including fair trials, the right to appeal, and prohibitions on executing juveniles and pregnant women. Pakistan's application of capital punishment for non-lethal offenses, such as blasphemy and drug trafficking, violates these provisions, as does its record of executing individuals with questionable convictions. The ICCPR's Second Optional Protocol, which calls for the abolition of the death penalty, represents a global benchmark that Pakistan has not adopted, reflecting its retentionist stance (Pandey 2025).

The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), particularly Protocol 13, offers a model of complete abolition, having influenced regional and global norms against capital punishment. Since 2007, UN General Assembly resolutions have repeatedly called for a global moratorium, urging states to ensure transparency, fair trials, and compliance with international standards. Pakistan's practices, however, fall short, with issues like secret executions, lack of transparency in clemency processes, and sentencing of juveniles contradicting commitments under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which Pakistan has ratified. These violations highlight a significant gap between Pakistan's international obligations and its domestic practices. Scholars argue that compliance requires systemic reforms, including judicial training, improved legal aid, and mechanisms to ensure fair trials (Bessler 2025).

The literature also points to the role of international pressure, such as sanctions or diplomatic advocacy, in pushing retentionist states toward reform, though Pakistan's sovereignty concerns and cultural context complicate such efforts. The interplay of these



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instruments underscores the global consensus on restricting or abolishing the death penalty, providing a roadmap for Pakistan to align its practices with human rights principles (A. Butt 2024).

2.4. Identification of Research Gap

Despite extensive literature on Pakistan's death penalty and global human rights standards, there is a lack of research integrating these perspectives to propose context-specific reforms for Pakistan. Studies often focus on judicial flaws or global abolitionist trends without addressing Pakistan's unique cultural, religious, and political barriers. This study fills this gap by analyzing Pakistan's death penalty regime and offering tailored recommendations, such as judicial training and alternative sentencing, to align with international standards like the ICCPR while navigating domestic realities.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design to comprehensively explore Pakistan's death penalty regime and its alignment with international human rights standards. A qualitative approach is well-suited to this research as it allows for an in-depth examination of the complex socio-legal, cultural, and political factors influencing capital punishment in Pakistan. By focusing on interpretive and contextual analysis, this design facilitates a nuanced understanding of the systemic issues, stakeholder perspectives, and potential reform pathways.

The qualitative framework enables the study to delve into the historical evolution of the death penalty, its current application, and the barriers to aligning with global human rights norms, such as those outlined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). This approach prioritizes depth over breadth, aiming to capture the intricacies of Pakistan's legal system and societal attitudes toward capital punishment. Through this design, the study seeks to generate rich, descriptive data that can inform both academic discourse and practical policy recommendations, ensuring a holistic exploration of the topic.

3.2. Data Collection Methods

The data collection methods for this study involve a multi-faceted approach, combining document analysis with semi-structured interviews to gather comprehensive insights. First, the study will analyze primary legal documents, including the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997, and relevant provisions under Islamic law, to understand the legal framework governing the death penalty. Additionally, court decisions, particularly those from the Supreme Court and High Courts, will be examined to assess judicial trends, sentencing practices, and instances of procedural irregularities. Policy documents, such as government reports and statements on the death penalty moratorium (2008–2014) and its subsequent lifting, will provide context on political influences.

To complement this, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with key stakeholders, including legal experts, human rights activists, policymakers, and representatives from non-governmental organizations involved in death penalty reform. These interviews aim to capture diverse perspectives on the challenges and opportunities for aligning Pakistan's practices with international standards. By integrating documentary analysis with qualitative interviews, the study ensures a robust dataset that reflects both the legal and



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human dimensions of the death penalty, offering a balanced view of systemic issues and reform potential.

3.3. Data Analysis Method

The data collected will be analyzed using thematic analysis, a method well-suited for identifying patterns and themes within qualitative data. This approach involves systematically coding and categorizing data from legal documents, court rulings, and interview transcripts to uncover recurring themes related to the death penalty's application, human rights violations, and reform barriers.

For instance, themes such as judicial fairness, cultural influences, and compliance with international norms will be explored to understand the systemic factors at play. The process begins with familiarization of the data, followed by coding to identify key concepts, such as "inadequate legal representation" or "public support for executions." These codes will be grouped into broader themes to construct a coherent narrative about Pakistan's death penalty regime and its alignment with global standards. Thematic analysis allows for flexibility in interpreting complex data while maintaining rigor, ensuring that findings are grounded in the evidence. This method will enable the study to draw meaningful conclusions about the gaps between Pakistan's practices and international human rights expectations, as well as propose targeted reforms (Colmenares 2023).

3.4. Limitations of the Study

This study faces several limitations that may impact its scope and findings. First, access to data, particularly sensitive court records and government policies on executions, may be restricted due to confidentiality or bureaucratic barriers in Pakistan. This could limit the depth of analysis for certain cases or policies. Second, potential biases may arise from the selection of interviewees, as stakeholders like human rights activists may lean toward abolitionist perspectives, while government officials may defend retentionist policies, potentially skewing the data.

Efforts will be made to ensure a balanced sample, but achieving complete neutrality may be challenging. Third, the scope of the study is limited to Pakistan's death penalty regime and its alignment with international human rights standards, which may exclude broader socio-economic factors influencing crime rates or public opinion. Additionally, the qualitative nature of the study prioritizes depth over generalizability, meaning findings may not fully represent all contexts within Pakistan. Despite these limitations, the study aims to provide a robust analysis by triangulating data from multiple sources and maintaining transparency about its constraints, ensuring credibility and relevance in its findings (Amrullah 2024).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Presentation of Findings

4.1.1. Analysis of Pakistan's Current Death Penalty Laws and Practices

The analysis of Pakistan's death penalty regime reveals a complex legal framework rooted in the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) of 1860, supplemented by Islamic legal principles and statutes like the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997. Over 30 offenses, including murder, blasphemy, terrorism, and drug trafficking, carry the death penalty, positioning Pakistan among the world's top executors, with thousands on death row and hundreds of executions annually since the 2014 lifting of a moratorium (M. Butt 2021).



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The study found systemic flaws in the judicial process, including inadequate legal representation, coerced confessions, and inconsistent application of due process, particularly affecting marginalized groups such as the poor and religious minorities. Cases of juveniles and mentally ill individuals sentenced to death were identified, highlighting violations of procedural safeguards. The reliance on *qisas* (retribution) under Islamic law often prioritizes retributive justice over rehabilitation, while public and political support for executions, especially post-terrorism incidents, sustains the practice. These findings indicate a death penalty regime deeply embedded in cultural and legal traditions but marred by significant procedural and ethical shortcomings (Imran, Murtiza, and Shahzad 2023).

4.1.2. Comparison with International Human Rights Standards and Best Practices

When compared to international human rights standards, particularly the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Pakistan's death penalty practices fall short in several critical areas. The ICCPR restricts capital punishment to the "most serious crimes," yet Pakistan applies it to non-lethal offenses like blasphemy, contravening this principle. The study found violations of ICCPR Article 6, which mandates fair trials and prohibits juvenile executions, as evidenced by documented cases of underage offenders on death row (Islam 2024).

In contrast, best practices from abolitionist countries like those in the European Union, where the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) Protocol 13 bans the death penalty, emphasize alternatives like life imprisonment and robust judicial safeguards. Countries like South Africa demonstrate successful transitions to abolition through public education and judicial reform, offering models for Pakistan. The lack of transparency in Pakistan's clemency processes and secret executions further deviates from UN General Assembly resolutions calling for moratoriums and accountability. These comparisons highlight a significant gap between Pakistan's practices and global standards, underscoring the need for alignment with human rights norms (Azam and Airout 2024).

4.1.3. Identification of Areas for Reform and Improvement

The findings pinpoint several areas for reform to align Pakistan's death penalty regime with international standards. First, restricting the death penalty to only the "most serious crimes," such as intentional murder, would reduce its scope and align with ICCPR guidelines. Second, strengthening judicial safeguards, including mandatory legal aid and independent oversight, could address issues like coerced confessions and unfair trials. Third, prohibiting the execution of juveniles and the mentally ill, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), is critical to meeting international obligations. Fourth, public awareness campaigns could shift societal attitudes away from retribution toward rehabilitation, drawing on successful models from other countries.

Finally, reinstating a moratorium as an interim step could provide space for legislative and judicial reforms while signaling commitment to global norms. These reforms aim to balance Pakistan's cultural context with human rights imperatives, offering a pathway toward a more just system.

4.2. Discussion of the Results

The findings have profound implications for human rights, the rule of law, and Pakistan's international obligations. The systemic flaws in Pakistan's death penalty regime, such as inadequate legal representation and juvenile executions, undermine the right to life and



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fair trial guaranteed under the ICCPR, eroding trust in the judicial system. These violations disproportionately harm marginalized communities, exacerbating social inequalities and weakening the rule of law by perpetuating arbitrary justice. The broad application of capital punishment to non-lethal offenses like blasphemy risks entrenching religious and social divisions, further straining Pakistan's human rights record. Internationally, Pakistan's non-compliance with the ICCPR and CRC damages its global standing, potentially inviting diplomatic pressure or sanctions from bodies like the UN.

However, the identified reforms restricting the death penalty's scope, enhancing judicial safeguards, and exploring alternatives could strengthen the rule of law by ensuring fairer trials and reducing wrongful convictions. These steps would also signal Pakistan's commitment to its international obligations, enhancing its reputation as a state striving for human rights compliance. By drawing on global best practices, such as those in abolitionist countries, Pakistan could gradually shift toward a rehabilitative justice model, fostering social cohesion and aligning with global trends toward abolition or restriction of capital punishment. The findings underscore the urgency of moving from temporary moratoriums to sustainable reforms, balancing domestic demands with human rights principles to uphold justice and dignity.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Summary of the Main Findings

This study has comprehensively examined Pakistan's death penalty regime, revealing a legal and cultural framework deeply rooted in colonial legacies and Islamic principles, yet fraught with systemic flaws that misalign it with international human rights standards. The analysis of Pakistan's current laws, particularly the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) and the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997, shows that over 30 offenses, including non-lethal ones like blasphemy, carry the death penalty, positioning Pakistan among the world's leading executors with thousands on death row. Systemic issues such as inadequate legal representation, coerced confessions, and the sentencing of juveniles and mentally ill individuals highlight significant violations of due process and fairness.

The comparison with international standards, notably the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), underscores Pakistan's non-compliance, particularly in applying capital punishment to non-serious crimes and failing to ensure fair trials. The 2008–2014 moratorium, lifted after the 2014 Army Public School attack, reflects the tension between public demand for retribution and global calls for reform. Areas for improvement include restricting the death penalty to the "most serious crimes," enhancing judicial safeguards, prohibiting executions of vulnerable groups, and promoting public awareness to shift attitudes toward rehabilitation. These findings illustrate a death penalty regime entrenched in socio-political dynamics but in dire need of reform to align with global human rights norms, offering a clear pathway for change that balances domestic realities with international obligations.

5.2. Implications of the Study for Policy-Making and Reform Efforts

The findings of this study carry significant implications for policy-making and reform efforts in Pakistan, offering a roadmap for aligning the death penalty regime with international human rights standards while addressing cultural and political sensitivities. Policymakers can prioritize legislative reforms to limit capital punishment to intentional murder, in line with ICCPR guidelines, thereby reducing the scope of death-eligible



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offenses and mitigating risks of arbitrary application. Strengthening judicial safeguards, such as ensuring access to competent legal representation and independent oversight, would address systemic flaws like coerced confessions and unfair trials, enhancing the rule of law.

Prohibiting the execution of juveniles and the mentally ill, as mandated by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), is a critical step to fulfill Pakistan's international commitments and protect vulnerable populations. The study also suggests reinstating a moratorium as an interim measure to allow time for judicial and legislative reforms, signaling Pakistan's intent to engage with global human rights norms. Public awareness campaigns, drawing on successful models from abolitionist countries like South Africa, could gradually shift societal attitudes away from retribution toward rehabilitative justice, addressing the cultural barriers to reform. These policy measures would not only reduce human rights violations but also enhance Pakistan's global standing, potentially easing diplomatic pressures and fostering cooperation with international bodies like the UN. By implementing these reforms, Pakistan can move toward a more equitable and humane justice system, balancing public demand for security with the principles of fairness and dignity.

5.3. Contribution to Existing Literature and Research Gap

This study makes a significant contribution to the existing literature on Pakistan's death penalty regime by addressing a critical research gap: the lack of context-specific, actionable recommendations for aligning Pakistan's practices with international human rights standards. While prior studies have explored the judicial flaws and global abolitionist trends, they often fail to integrate Pakistan's unique cultural, religious, and political dynamics into reform proposals. This research bridges this gap by offering a nuanced analysis that combines an examination of legal frameworks, stakeholder perspectives, and international norms, providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities for reform.

By identifying specific areas for improvement such as limiting the death penalty's scope, enhancing judicial safeguards, and promoting public education this study offers practical solutions tailored to Pakistan's socio-legal context, unlike broader studies that focus solely on abolition without addressing domestic realities. The findings enrich academic discourse by situating Pakistan within the global debate on capital punishment, drawing parallels with successful reform efforts in other nations while acknowledging the unique barriers posed by public support and religious interpretations.

Furthermore, the study amplifies the voices of marginalized groups disproportionately affected by the death penalty, contributing to discussions on social justice and equity. By proposing incremental steps like moratoriums and judicial reforms, this research fills the gap in literature by providing a actionable framework that policymakers and advocates can use to move Pakistan toward compliance with international standards, thereby advancing both scholarship and real-world change in the pursuit of a more just legal system.

6. Recommendations

6.1. Specific Recommendations for Reforming Pakistan's Death Penalty Regime to Align with International Human Rights Standards

To align Pakistan's death penalty regime with international human rights standards, several targeted reforms are essential to address systemic flaws and ensure compliance with



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frameworks like the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). First, the scope of capital punishment must be narrowed to apply only to the “most serious crimes,” such as intentional murder, as stipulated by ICCPR Article 6, excluding non-lethal offenses like blasphemy and drug trafficking. This would reduce the number of death-eligible cases and align with global norms. Second, robust judicial safeguards must be implemented, including mandatory provision of competent legal representation for all defendants, particularly indigent and marginalized groups, to address issues like coerced confessions and unfair trials. Establishing independent oversight committees to review death penalty cases for procedural errors could further ensure fairness. Third, Pakistan must enforce a strict prohibition on executing juveniles and individuals with mental illnesses, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and ICCPR, by introducing mandatory age verification and mental health assessments before sentencing. Fourth, reinstating a moratorium on executions, as seen from 2008 to 2014, would provide a critical window to enact legislative and judicial reforms while signaling commitment to international standards.

Finally, introducing alternative sentencing options, such as life imprisonment without parole, could shift the focus from retribution to rehabilitation, drawing on best practices from abolitionist countries like South Africa. These reforms, while respecting Pakistan’s cultural and legal context, would significantly reduce human rights violations and move the country closer to global expectations.

6.2. Suggestions for Policy-Makers, Lawmakers, and Human Rights Organizations

Policy-makers, lawmakers, and human rights organizations play a pivotal role in driving the reform of Pakistan’s death penalty regime. Policy-makers should prioritize legislative amendments to the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) and Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997 to eliminate the death penalty for non-lethal offenses and codify safeguards against arbitrary application. They should also allocate funding for legal aid programs to ensure access to qualified defense counsel, particularly for marginalized communities disproportionately affected by capital punishment. Lawmakers should engage in bipartisan efforts to draft and pass bills that enforce ICCPR and CRC obligations, such as mandatory judicial training on international human rights standards and protocols to prevent juvenile executions. Establishing a parliamentary committee to oversee death penalty cases and monitor compliance with global norms could enhance accountability.

Human rights organizations, both domestic and international, should launch public awareness campaigns to educate communities about the flaws of the death penalty, including its lack of deterrent effect and risk of irreversible errors, drawing on successful models from countries like Canada. These organizations can also advocate for transparency by pressuring the government to publish data on executions and clemency processes, aligning with UN resolutions. Collaborative efforts between these stakeholders could include forming task forces to draft reform proposals and engage with international bodies like the UN Human Rights Council to secure technical assistance for judicial reforms. By working together, these actors can foster a gradual shift in public and political attitudes, creating a conducive environment for sustainable change.

6.3. Areas for Future Research and Study

Future research is critical to further refine and advance the reform of Pakistan’s death penalty regime, addressing gaps and building on this study’s findings. First, researchers



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should explore the socio-cultural factors driving public support for capital punishment, particularly in the context of terrorism and religious offenses, to develop targeted strategies for shifting attitudes toward rehabilitation. Studies could employ surveys and focus groups to gauge public perceptions and test the effectiveness of awareness campaigns. Second, in-depth case studies of wrongful convictions and executions in Pakistan could provide concrete evidence to bolster reform advocacy, highlighting the human cost of systemic flaws. Third, comparative analyses of retentionist countries in South Asia, such as India and Bangladesh, could offer insights into regional reform strategies, identifying best practices adaptable to Pakistan's context. Fourth, research should investigate the feasibility and impact of alternative sentencing options, such as life imprisonment, on crime rates and public safety, providing data to counter arguments for the death penalty's necessity. Finally, examining the role of international pressure, such as sanctions or diplomatic advocacy, in influencing Pakistan's death penalty policies could inform strategies for global engagement. These research areas would deepen the understanding of Pakistan's unique challenges, contribute to the global discourse on capital punishment, and provide evidence-based support for policymakers and advocates working toward a human rights-compliant justice system.

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