

PAKISTAN'S DRUG POLICY JOURNEY

major developments in Pakistan's drug law and policy landscape

1997 - CONTROL OF NARCOTICS SUBSTANCES ACT

Pakistan promulgates the Control of Narcotics Substances Act (CNSA), section 9(c) of which carries the death penalty for anyone found possessing or trafficking narcotic drugs in excess of one kilogram.

2017 - ICCPR REVIEW

The Human Rights Committee, in its Concluding Observations on Pakistan's compliance with the ICCPR, notes with concern that the death penalty is applied to crimes other than the "most serious crimes" such as drug trafficking.

2009 - GHULAM MURTAZA V. THE STATE

The Lahore High Court expresses concern over the arbitrary nature of punishments in narcotics cases. The judgement *Ghulam Murtaza v. The State* sets out sentencing guidelines for narcotics offences.

2019 - ANTI-NARCOTICS POLICY

The National Anti-Narcotics Policy focuses on limiting drug supply & demand leading to frequent crackdowns. However, these efforts often target low-level carriers rather than drug networks and the policy reinforces stigmatisation and criminalisation of personal drug use.

2022 - INTRODUCTION OF MANDATORY MINIMUM SENTENCES

The Control of Narcotics Substances (Amendment) Act 2022 eliminates the possibility of probation, parole, and bail for people charged with narcotics offences (except women & children) and imposes mandatory minimum penalties. As a result number of prisoners under narcotics offences increases by 11.95% in year 2024-25.

2023 - REMOVAL OF THE DEATH PENALTY

The Control of Narcotics Substances (Amendment) Act 2023 eliminates the death penalty for narcotics offences enhancing Pakistan's compliance with its obligations under the ICCPR and the GSP+.



2024 - REIMAGINING JUSTICE

Justice Project Pakistan's Reimagining Justice Conference launches Pakistan's first national dialogue on drug policy reform, bringing together key allies from the provincial and federal bureaucracy, law enforcement, judiciary, civil society, and NHRIs. Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar announces the inclusion of rehabilitation measures in the CNSA and commits to rolling back the 2022 amendment.

2024 - PROSECUTOR GENERAL VISIT

JPP facilitates the Prosecutor General of Punjab's visit to Portugal. With the support of the EU, the Portuguese Embassy, UN OHCHR, and Harm Reduction International, the visit provides first-hand insights into Portugal's public health-centered drug policy. This engagement has been pivotal, positioning the Prosecutor General as a leading advocate of drug policy reform.



2025 - DRUG POLICY CONSULTATION

JPP convenes high-level consultations where Barrister Aqeel Malik, Government Spokesperson on Legal Affairs, affirms Pakistan's commitment to aligning its drug policy with human rights principles, signaling a shift toward rehabilitation-focused legislation, proportionate sentencing, and harm reduction strategies.

2025 - JUDGES' TRAINING

JPP launches an inaugural training for judges at the Federal Judicial Academy on the CNSA and the International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy, featuring international experts from the UN OHCHR and the International Centre on Human Rights & Drug Policy at Essex University.

