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Pakistan: Shi'a killings failure of government protection

The killing of at least 25 people during religious processions yesterday highlights the continued failure of Pakistani authorities to protect the Shi'a community, Amnesty International said.

The Pakistan Taliban (Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan) has claimed responsibility for yesterday's bombings in the cities of Rawalpindi and Karachi, which came as the Shi'a community marked the holy month of Muharram.

"These attacks demonstrate the Taliban's utter disregard for human rights and basic principles of humanity," said Polly Truscott, Amnesty International's Deputy Asia-Pacific Director.

"Unfortunately the Taliban are just one of the groups implicated in attacks on Shi'a Muslims resulting in hundreds killed or injured in Pakistan this year."

Amnesty International has recorded at least 39 attacks on Shi'a Muslims since the start of 2012.

But despite the frequency of such violence, the Pakistani government has a poor track record of bringing the perpetrators - and those who incite them - to justice.

"From ethnic Hazaras in Quetta and communities in the Tribal Areas, to men and women in Gilgit all the way down to Karachi, people of all walks of life live in constant fear of deadly violence," Truscott added.

"The Taliban and others must cease all such attacks and the authorities must bring the perpetrators to justice through prompt investigation and fair trials."

Direct incitement by religious groups to their followers to carry out such violence must be stopped.

"In no way can such attacks be excused as an attempt to protect the religious sentiments of other faiths," said Truscott.

"Failure to act sends a dangerous message that the authorities are unwilling or incapable of protecting their citizens adding to an already toxic climate of vilification on the basis of religion that has fuelled so much violence in Pakistan this year."