

Pakistan court accuses security force over missing people

By AFP

11 July 12, 2012

QUETTA, Pakistan — Pakistan's top judge on Wednesday accused the paramilitary Frontier Corps of involvement in the disappearance of a third of all the missing persons in the country's restive southwest.

Pakistan's Supreme Court is investigating cases of missing people in southwestern Baluchistan province, where the military has been accused of rights violations in its bid to put down a separatist insurgency.

Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, sitting in the Baluchistan capital Quetta, ordered Frontier Corps (FC) officials to produce missing persons before the court.

"Enough evidences are available for involvement of the Frontier Corps in picking up of every third missing person" in Baluchistan, he said.

Chaudhry and two other judges also heard a case involving the alleged abduction of 30 people and killing of two tribesmen in the Totak Khuzdar district of Baluchistan in February last year.

The court ordered FC officials to produce people from the Totak incident which it had in custody.

Baluchistan, which borders Iran and Afghanistan, is rich in oil and gas, but remains one of the most deprived areas of Pakistan. Rights activists have accused the military of mass arrests and extra-judicial executions in its bid to put down a separatist insurgency.

UN human rights chief Navi Pillay last month voiced concern about "very grave" rights violations during Pakistani military operations.

Baluch rebels rose up in 2004, demanding political autonomy and a greater share of profits from the oil, gas and mineral resources in the region.

The province has also been a flashpoint for violence between Sunnis and Shiites, who account for around 20 percent of the population, that has left thousands of people dead since the late 1980s.

Last month the high court in the northwestern city of Peshawar ordered spy agencies, police and the provincial government to provide details on the status of 170 people.

In February, seven men allegedly held by intelligence services appeared before the Supreme Court, more than a year and a half after being allegedly arrested in connection with terror attacks.

It was an unprecedented development that challenged perceptions that Pakistan's feared Inter-Services Intelligence operated above the law.

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