



Kashmir and Balochistan: Will Pakistan own up to rights abuses?

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In this episode of *UpFront*, we challenge Pakistan's Human Rights Minister Shireen Mazari on the country's support for groups that have carried out attacks in Indian-administered Kashmir; enforced disappearances in Balochistan and treatment of religious minorities.

And in our *Arena*, author Grace Blakeley and financial policy analyst Diego Zuluaga debate the state of capitalism in the world today.

Pakistan defends its rights record in Kashmir and Balochistan

The Pakistani government's support for internationally designated terrorist groups came under scrutiny earlier this year when the Pakistan-based group Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) claimed responsibility for a suicide attack that killed 40 Indian soldiers in Pulwama in Indian-administered Kashmir in February.

Pakistan has long been accused of supporting violent groups like JeM, but the country's Human Rights Minister Shireen Mazari says that was in the past.

"Yes, in the past, we have backed some freedom fighters, and we had bad groups supporting those freedom fighters, that was a long time ago," she said.

The Paris-based watchdog, the Financial Action Taskforce (FATF), said Pakistan is still helping to fund groups like JeM, and that it is not doing enough to curb terrorism. Though the watchdog says Pakistan has only addressed five of its recommended 27 "action items", Mazari says Pakistan is complying with FATF demands.

"Our government is not only compliant, we are supporting, we are trying to improve our sort of structures ... we are cooperating with them."

Mazari also defended Pakistan's record in Balochistan. The government is accused of abducting and killing tens of thousands of people there throughout a decades-long rebellion. She conceded there were cases of enforced disappearances, but said the government was dealing with the issue.

"We have now prepared a bill against enforced disappearances. We have a commission which is focusing on checking out enforced disappearances ... anybody can complain, and if there is a problem, it will be dealt with, within the law of the land," Mazari said.

Mazari also defended Pakistan's treatment of religious minorities. Critics say Pakistan's blasphemy laws, which carry the death sentence for anyone who insults Islam, have been used to persecute members of minority faiths.

"Coming now to the non-Muslims citizens, yes, there have been problems. But now the Supreme Court has set a very good precedent that false accusations on blasphemy charges will be punishable and those who do it will be punished," Mazari said.

This week's Headliner, Pakistani Minister for Human Rights Shireen Mazari.

Are we in the death throes of capitalism?

From Lebanon to Chile, from Iraq to Ecuador, there has been a wave of protests across the world this year; a groundswell of anger, and all of it directed at the ruling class.

Each protest movement is unique: some are demanding more democracy and greater political freedoms, while others are fuelled by anger over corruption. Amongst all these grievances, however, there appears to be a common underlying theme: frustration over the economy and rising inequality.

Grace Blakely, author of the book, *Stolen, How to Save the World from Financialisation*, believes that many of the protests, particularly in Latin America, are driven by economic discontent.

Blakeley argues that we are seeing cracks in the capitalist system. The problem, she says, is that corporations have become "financialised"; they are so focused on profits for shareholders that working people are losing out.

"They (corporations) will do anything to boost their short-term share price, even at the expense of long-term investment and paying their workers," she says.

Diego Zuluaga, a financial policy analyst at the Cato Institute, doesn't believe we are seeing a breakdown in the capitalist system and contends that people are generally better off economically.

"I think we haven't had a period in the history of the world like the last 30 years in which the vast majority of the global population, even in the most deprived places, have suddenly and finally gained access to the most basic essentials and necessities. And that has been driven universally by liberalisation," Zuluaga says.