



WORLD ANTI EXTREMISM  
**NETWORK**  
BUILDING A FREE WORLD

# UNCENSORED WATCH

*Defending Freedom, Challenging Extremism and Authoritarianism*

Issue 8 | April and May 2025



# UNCENSORED WATCH

Issue 8|April-May 2025

*Defending Freedom, Challenging Extremism and Authoritarianism*



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## **SECTION - 1:**

WELCOME TO UNCENSORED WATCH- A PROJECT OF WORLD  
ANTI-EXTREMISM NETWORK

## Dear Readers

Welcome to another edition of Uncensored Watch! We're here with our strong commitment to keep you informed about the latest happenings and ensure no story goes unnoticed. In this issue, you'll find fresh insights into ongoing global events, updates from the ground, and more. So, settle in and enjoy the read. We hope it sparks your interest and keeps you in touch.

Enjoy Reading!

The Uncensored Watch Team



## SECTION - 2:

Global Crisis in Focus



## Burkina Faso: Detained Journalists Forced into Military Role Amid Crackdown on Press

On April 2, 2025, a troubling [video](#) surfaced on social media, showing three well-known Burkinabè journalists, Guezouma Sanogo, Boukari Ouoba, and Luc Pagbelguem, dressed in military uniforms. These men, who had [disappeared](#) for 10 days after their arrest on March 24, were outspoken voices for press freedom, with Sanogo and Ouoba leading [Burkina Faso's Journalists Association](#) and Pagbelguem reporting for BF1 television. Their sudden reappearance, filmed near what looked like a military base, sent shockwaves through their colleagues and loved ones. In the footage, Pagbelguem praises a military operation, but the forced nature of their situation is hard to ignore. Human Rights Watch couldn't verify the video, but those who knew the journalists recognized them instantly, raising fears that Burkina Faso's military junta had coerced them into service to silence their criticism of the regime's crackdown on free speech.

The story of these journalists is a heartbreaking violation of their basic human rights. They were arrested for speaking out against the junta's restrictions on the media, restrictions that have already driven dozens of journalists into exile. Their 10-day disappearance, with no word to their families or lawyers, left their loved ones in anguish, fearing the worst. The thought that they might have been tortured or forced into dangerous military operations is a heavy burden for their community. Forcing someone into military service as punishment for their words is not just wrong, it's a betrayal of the principles of freedom and dignity. International laws, like those in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, protect the right to speak freely and to be safe from arbitrary detention. Yet, the

junta's actions show a blatant disregard for these protections, using an emergency law meant to fight insurgents as a tool to crush dissent. It's a tactic that's been used before. Last year, an opposition politician and a human rights activist were paraded in similar videos, rifles in hand, before they were finally released.

This isn't just about three journalists; it's about a broader assault on the truth. By targeting voices like Sanogo, Ouoba, and Pagbelguem, the junta is trying to scare others into silence. When journalists are forced to wear uniforms and recite praise for the military, it's not just their freedom that's stolen, it's the public's right to know what's happening in their country. The junta's actions are tearing apart the fabric of trust and openness that a society needs to thrive, leaving fear and self-censorship in their wake.

The ripple effects go beyond Burkina Faso. The country is part of the Alliance of Sahel States, alongside Mali and Niger, where similar authoritarian tactics are taking hold. As these junta lean on foreign support, like Russian mercenaries, and abandon democratic principles, the region becomes a breeding ground for instability and extremism. The story of these journalists is a human tragedy, but it's also a warning. When a government chooses to silence its critics instead of listening to them, it doesn't just betray its people, it fuels the very chaos it claims to fight. The junta must release Sanogo, Ouoba, and Pagbelguem and stop using conscription as a weapon against the truth. Their freedom, and the freedom of Burkina Faso's people, depends on it.



Photo by Randy Fath on Unsplash

## Civilians Around Sudan's El Fasher Face New Attacks

In Sudan's North Darfur, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have [intensified attacks](#) on civilians in El Fasher and the Zamzam displacement camp, home to over half a million displaced people. Since May 2024, the RSF has besieged El Fasher, cutting off supplies and shelling populated areas, with recent attacks in February 2025 destroying civilian infrastructure in Zamzam. The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) have failed to adequately protect civilians. [Famine](#) has been confirmed in Zamzam, and aid organizations like Médecins Sans Frontières and the World Food Programme have suspended operations due to the violence. Recent RSF attacks killed dozens, including aid workers and children, exacerbating Sudan's displacement crisis, the largest globally. Despite UN Security Council resolutions condemning the violence, the RSF continues to ignore calls for civilian protection and safe aid access. The UK is hosting an international conference to address the crisis, urging global action to prevent further atrocities.

They are shattering lives with killings, [gang rapes](#), sexual slavery, and ethnic cleansing targeting non-Arab communities, stripping people of their basic rights to life and dignity under international law like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Geneva Conventions. Their destruction of homes and blocking of food and medicine deepens starvation, leaving families desperate and potentially amounting to war crimes. The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) aren't shielding civilians either, with reports of detainee executions adding to the horror. [Aid groups](#) have stopped work because of the violence, abandoning hungry and sick people to fend for themselves. The RSF's brutal attacks on women and children and their defiance of UN calls for peace show a ruthless drive for power, sowing fear and division with extremist tactics. Both the RSF's siege and the SAF's inaction reflect a cold, authoritarian grip that crushes freedom and hope, ignoring global pleas and dodging accountability, especially as new weapons keep flowing in. This crisis in El Fasher and Zamzam is a heartbreaking mix of human rights abuses, extremist cruelty, and authoritarian control, and the world must act urgently, as urged at the UK conference, to stop the atrocities and get help to those who need it most.





Photo by Unseen Histories on Unsplash

## Zimbabwe's New NGO Law Threatens Freedom and Silences Voices

In a troubling move for [Zimbabwe's](#) people, President Emmerson nangagwa signed a new [law](#) on April 11, 2025, that clamps down on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), making it [harder](#) for groups to stand up for free speech and human rights. The Private Voluntary Organisations Amendment Act allows the government shut down NGOs it accuses of being too political, seize their assets, and even jail their workers. This law gives officials sweeping powers to snoop into NGOs' funding and operations, leaving groups that fight for democracy and justice in constant fear of being silenced. Despite warnings from local and [global human rights](#) advocates, including UN experts, Mnangagwa claimed the law protects Zimbabwe from foreign threats, but critics say it's a tool to crush dissent. The government has already deregistered nearly [300 NGOs](#) in 2023, and this new law tightens the grip, pushing Zimbabwe further from its promises of freedom under international agreements. The European Union has responded by halting funding for Zimbabwe's governance programs, citing broken commitments to open civic space, as the country grapples with a massive \$21 billion debt. This law leaves Zimbabweans with fewer voices to defend their rights, deepening the struggle for a freer, fairer society.

This law undermines democracy by stifling freedoms essential to an open society, directly violating the rights to freedom of association and expression, cornerstones of democratic governance enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. This erodes civic space, weakens checks on government power, and discourages dissent, all of which are vital for democratic accountability.

The state's intent appears to be consolidating authoritarian control under the guise of protecting sovereignty. Mnangagwa's rhetoric about defending against foreign interests and "mercenaries" suggests a pretext to target NGOs that expose government abuses or promote democratic values. By framing NGOs as threats, the government seeks to justify its crackdown while deflecting from Zimbabwe's economic woes and its failure to meet international governance standards, as evidenced by the EU's funding suspension. This law is a calculated move to entrench power, prioritizing regime stability over the democratic aspirations of Zimbabweans.





Photo by Mael BALLAND on Unsplash

## A Path to Justice for Venezuelan Deportees

In a distressing situation, over 200 Venezuelan migrants have been caught in a nightmarish ordeal after being deported from the United States to El Salvador. The [U.S. authorities](#) sent 238 Venezuelans to El Salvador, where they were immediately locked up in a notorious [maximum-security prison](#) called the Center for Confinement of Terrorism (CECOT), known for its harsh conditions. Since then, these individuals have vanished from contact, with no word on their whereabouts or well-being—a situation Human Rights Watch calls enforced disappearances, a serious violation of international human rights law.

Families are heartbroken and desperate, left in the dark by both U.S. and Salvadoran officials. Relatives told Human Rights Watch that U.S. immigration authorities initially said their loved ones would be sent back to Venezuela, not El Salvador, and now both governments are refusing to share any clear information. A leaked [list of names published by CBS News](#) is the only clue some families have, but neither country has officially confirmed who was sent or why they're being held. The Salvadoran government hasn't even explained if there's any legal reason

for keeping these people locked up, and they've been cut off from lawyers, families, or the outside world.

The U.S. claims some of these deportations fall under an old law, the Alien Enemies Act, targeting members of a [Venezuelan](#) gang called Tren de Aragua. But there's no evidence linking these detainees to the gang, and many have no criminal records at all, according to documents shared with Human Rights Watch. To make matters worse, the U.S. seems to have scrubbed these individuals' names from its detainee tracking system earlier than usual, leaving families with nowhere to turn for answers.

Imagine the pain of not knowing where your loved one is, piecing together scraps like a video from Salvadoran authorities or a leaked list just to guess if they're alive. Human Rights Watch is demanding that the U.S. publicly identify who was sent to El Salvador and that Salvadoran officials reveal where these people are, why they're being held, and let them contact their families. This isn't just about policy, it's about real people, stuck in a terrifying limbo, and families aching for answers.



*Photo by Diana Khwaelid on Unsplash*

## **Haiti: Escalating Violence Puts Population at Grave Risk**

[Haiti](#) is spiraling into chaos as powerful criminal gangs tighten their grip on the capital, Port-au-Prince, controlling 90% of the city and spreading violence to other regions. Clashes with so-called “self-defense” groups, often tied to police, are making things worse, leaving Haitians trapped in a nightmare of killings, kidnappings, sexual violence, and child recruitment. Since early [2025](#), hundreds have been killed, 262 in southern Port-au-Prince alone, and over 90,000 people have fled their homes. The transitional government, weakened by corruption, is struggling to respond, using drone strikes with little accountability while facing protests calling for its removal.

The UN-backed Multinational Security Support Mission (MSS), meant to help the Haitian police, is underfunded and understaffed, with only a fraction of the needed 2,500 personnel deployed. The way forward requires immediate international action rooted in human rights protection. The UN must transform the current mission into a full-fledged peacekeeping force with a strong mandate to protect civilians and restore security. A surge in humanitarian aid is urgently needed, with particular focus on food, shelter, and protection for women and children. International support must also prioritize Haitian-led governance reforms, targeting corruption and rebuilding institutions. Alongside this, independent investigations should begin into all parties involved in abuses, ensuring future accountability. Regional cooperation, especially through CARICOM and U.S. involvement in curbing arms and gang networks, is essential. Time is running out, and without a coordinated rights-based response, Haiti risks a complete collapse.



Photo by Fajar Grinanda on Unsplash



## Indonesia: Attacks on Journalists Threaten Press Freedom

In recent months, [journalists](#) in Indonesia have faced serious threats and violence for simply doing their jobs. From being [beaten during protests](#) to receiving horrifying threats like animal carcasses at their offices, the media is under pressure, especially those critical of the government. Human Rights Watch has raised concern, urging the government to take immediate action to protect press freedom.

Most of the attacks seem to be linked to criticism of new military laws that expand the army's power. Journalists from the well-known [outlet Tempo](#) have been especially targeted. One of their podcast hosts, Francisca Christy Rosana, received a pig's head in the mail, a deeply offensive and threatening gesture in a Muslim-majority country. Her personal information was leaked, her family was harassed, and later, six beheaded rats were left at *Tempo's* office, possibly aimed at the six podcast hosts.

During protests against the new military law, journalists trying to report were forced to delete their [footage by police](#) and were even physically attacked. In

Surabaya and other cities, at least 14 journalists were hurt or stopped from covering events.

In some cases, journalists were attacked in their homes or offices. In one shocking case, a journalist named [Rico Pasaribu](#) and his family were killed after he reported on illegal online gambling. The man who confessed to the crime said he was ordered to do it by a military officer, but that officer has not been investigated.

Even digital attacks are rising. *Tempo's* website was hit with over a billion cyberattacks in April, bringing it down for hours. Other media outlets have faced similar online harassment, forcing journalists to become more cautious in their reporting.

Foreign journalists are also being restricted. A new police rule says they need permits to report in "certain locations," but the rule doesn't say where these are. West Papua, a region often excluded from journalist access, remains tightly controlled.



Human Rights Watch is calling on President Prabowo's government to stop the threats, investigate the attacks, and remove unfair restrictions on both local and foreign journalists. If not, the space for free speech and democracy in Indonesia will only shrink further.

The ongoing attacks on journalists in Indonesia reflect a serious erosion of freedom of expression, a fundamental human right protected under international law and enshrined in democratic principles. When journalists are beaten, harassed, doxed, or even killed for reporting on issues of public concern, particularly government policies and military power, their ability to serve the public is severely compromised.

The Indonesian government's failure to investigate these incidents and its use of vague laws and police regulations to restrict media coverage signal a growing intolerance for dissent. This undermines not only press freedom but also the broader right to information for all Indonesians. Free and independent media act as a watchdog on power, and their repression is often a red flag for authoritarian tendencies. The state's silence or complicity in such abuses violates the spirit of human rights and weakens democratic accountability.

In this context, protecting journalists is not just about protecting individuals—it's about defending the public's right to know and safeguarding the health of Indonesian democracy.



*Photo by Sazzad bin Jofar on Unsplash*

## **Maldives Government Accused of Undermining Judicial Independence**

Human Rights Watch has raised serious concerns over the [Maldives](#) government's decision to suspend three Supreme Court justices, Dr. Azmiralda Zahir, Mahaz Ali Zahir, and Husnu Al Suood, accusing it of trying to control the country's top court.

The suspensions were made just as the Supreme Court was about to decide on an important case about lawmakers losing their seats if they left the political party they were elected. The Maldives Judicial Service Commission, which includes the attorney general, took disciplinary action against the justices, but reports suggest this was done to pressure them into dropping the case. The justices [were not allowed](#) a proper defense, and one even resigned in protest, saying they were threatened by government officials.

Under the Maldives' own constitution and international standards, judges should only be removed for serious

wrongdoing or incompetence, and they must be given a fair hearing. But in this case, according to Human Rights Watch, it looks like political interference.

The Maldives has faced similar issues in [the past](#), with previous governments using the judiciary for political gain. Rights groups are now urging President Mohamed Muizzu to stop interfering in the courts and to protect judicial independence. They are also calling on international donors and allies to push the Maldives to respect the rule of law and democratic principles

The suspension of three top judges in the Maldives shows how the government is trying to control the courts for its own political gain. Instead of letting the judges do their job fairly, the government pressured them to back off from a sensitive case. This goes against the idea of judicial independence, which is crucial for justice to work properly.

In any real democracy, courts must be free from political pressure. When judges are punished or threatened for making tough decisions, it means the system is no longer fair or balanced. If leaders can influence the courts, they can bend the law to stay in power, and that's dangerous for everyone.

This isn't the first time this has happened in the Maldives. Different governments have used the courts to silence opposition before. Unless serious reforms are made to protect judges and make the system independent, democracy in the Maldives will continue to weaken.



*Photo by Mahmut Yildiz on Unsplash*

## **Türkiye to Put Hundreds of Students and Journalists on Trial for Peaceful Protests**

In a sweeping crackdown on dissent, [Türkiye](#) is preparing to put hundreds of students, journalists, and peaceful protesters on trial starting April 18, in response to demonstrations against the arrest of Istanbul's mayor, Ekrem İmamoğlu. Human Rights Watch has criticized the mass trials as rushed, lacking credible evidence, and designed to intimidate people from exercising their rights to free speech and peaceful assembly.

The first set of hearings will include 189 individuals, mostly students along with some journalists and photographers. The charges they face include participating

in unauthorized protests, not complying with police orders, covering their faces, and encouraging criminal activity, many of these based on social media posts. Punishments could range from six months to five years in prison.

According to Human Rights Watch, the accusations lack concrete, individualized evidence. In many cases, the so-called “weapons” cited include only rocks or protest gear, and face coverings were often used to protect against police-deployed pepper spray, not to hide identities. The protests in question were overwhelmingly peaceful and took place even after a temporary ban on public gatherings had expired.

Out of the 650 people charged in related cases, 107 face charges merely for participating in peaceful protests. In a troubling move, seven journalists who were reporting on the events are also being prosecuted as if they were participants, with the prosecution dismissing their press credentials simply because police did not “verify” their journalistic purpose. There are also serious concerns about police violence and abuse during the arrests. Dozens of detainees have reported beatings, verbal abuse, and even sexual harassment by police. Although some of the detained students have been released, especially after public outcry and concerns about their upcoming university exams, the broader legal crackdown continues. Over the years, the European Court of Human Rights has consistently ruled against Türkiye’s excessive use of force and legal penalties against peaceful

protestors, urging reforms to its protest laws.

The mass prosecution of students and journalists in Türkiye for protesting the arrest of [Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu](#) highlights a deepening erosion of fundamental human rights, particularly the freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, and press. Charging individuals without specific evidence and criminalizing peaceful protest reflect an increasingly authoritarian use of legal tools to suppress dissent. The [blanket protest bans](#), police brutality, and targeting of journalists are all clear violations of Türkiye’s obligations under international human rights law, including the European Convention on Human Rights. This case not only reveals systemic flaws in Türkiye’s justice system but also underscores the urgent need for legal reform and stronger protections for civil liberties.





*Photo by Kwaku Panti Osei on Unsplash*

## **Al-Shabab Attacks Key Somali Town, Challenges Security**

In central Somalia, the armed group [al-Shabab](#) launched a bold attack on the strategically important town of Adan Yabaal, about [130 miles](#) north of Mogadishu. They claim to have taken control of this key logistical hub for government forces after intense fighting that started before dawn on Wednesday. A local security officer reported that the Somali army was forced to retreat. However, the army disputes this, with officers like [Captain Hussein Olow](#) and [Captain Mohamed Ali](#) insisting that government troops repelled the attack, though clashes were still ongoing in parts of the town. No casualty reports have surfaced yet.

Residents, like Fatuma Nur, a mother of four, described hearing a massive explosion followed by gunfire as al-Shabab struck from multiple directions. Adan Yabaal is a vital link between Hirshabelle and Galmudug states and was reclaimed from al-Shabab in 2022. The group has been waging a brutal insurgency against the Somali government for over 16 years, often targeting officials and military personnel. Adding to the complexity, a new African Union peacekeeping mission in the region is grappling with uncertain funding, as the U.S. opposes a proposed shift to UN financing.

The al-Shabab attack on Adan Yabaal, a key town in central Somalia, poses significant threats to human rights, security, and democratic progress. From a human rights

perspective, the assault, marked by explosions and gunfire as reported by residents like Fatuma Nur, endangers civilian lives, violating their right to safety. Al-Shabab's history of targeting civilians and officials exacerbates fear, displacement, and restricted access to essentials like food and healthcare, particularly for vulnerable groups. Although no casualties were reported, the psychological impact and disruption of daily life deepen Somalia's human rights challenges.

On security, the attack exposes the Somali army's struggle to secure recaptured territories like Adan Yabaal, a logistical hub linking Hirshabelle and Galmudug states. Conflicting claims, al-Shabab asserting control and the army insisting it repelled the assault, highlight ongoing instability. The recent shift to a smaller African Union peacekeeping mission, compounded by funding uncertainties due to U.S. opposition to UN financing, limits Somalia's ability to counter al-Shabab's tactics, threatening regional stability and government control.

Democratically, al-Shabab's insurgency undermines Somalia's fragile governance. By targeting strategic areas and aiming to overthrow the government, the group erodes public trust in state institutions. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's efforts to assert authority are challenged by such attacks, which disrupt civic participation and weaken democratic processes. Al-Shabab's temporary control over areas creates oppressive governance systems, suppressing freedoms and stalling Somalia's path to stable, accountable democracy.



Photo by Thomas Ashlock on Unsplash

## The Human Rights Crisis Behind the Killing of Pakistani Workers in Iran

In a tragic incident over the weekend, eight Pakistani migrant workers from Punjab were brutally killed in Iran's Sistan-Baluchestan province, near the border with Pakistan's Balochistan. The attack happened in Mehrestan county, about 230km from the border, where gunmen stormed a workshop, tied up the mechanics, and shot them dead. The Baloch Nationalist Army (BNA), a lesser-known group fighting for Baloch independence from Pakistan, claimed responsibility.

This attack highlights the volatile security situation along the Pakistan-



Iran border, which has been tense since last year when the two nations exchanged missile strikes, each accusing the other of sheltering armed groups. The region, especially Balochistan, has seen a spike in violence, with groups like the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) carrying out bold attacks, including a recent [train hijacking](#). The BNA, though smaller and less equipped than the BLA, might be trying to make a name for itself with this attack.

The border area is a hotspot for unrest, with Baloch separatists alleging [exploitation and neglect](#) by both Pakistan and Iran. While Iran has been more focused on tackling groups like Jaish al-Adl, which pose a direct threat to its security, this incident could push Tehran and Islamabad to work together more closely to tackle the growing menace of armed groups in the region.

The killing of eight Pakistani migrant workers in Iran's Sistan-Baluchestan province underscores a dire intersection of human rights and security challenges along the Pakistan-Iran border. From a human rights perspective, the targeting of vulnerable migrant workers highlights the precarious conditions faced by laborers in volatile regions, where they lack protection and are exposed to violence from armed groups like the Baloch Nationalist Army (BNA). This incident also reflects broader grievances fueling Baloch separatism, including allegations of state neglect and resource exploitation, which perpetuate cycles of unrest and human rights abuses. On the security front,

the attack exposes the complexities of cross-border militancy, with groups like the BNA exploiting porous borders to strike, while Iran and Pakistan struggle to align their threat perceptions and coordinate responses. The lack of effective joint security measures risks further escalation, endangering civilian lives and undermining regional stability.

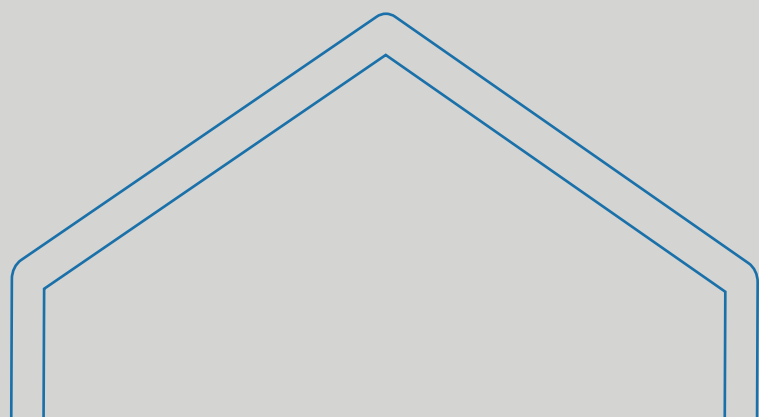




Photo by Muhammad Abdul Majid on Unsplash

## Pahalgam Attack Rekindled India-Pakistan Tensions and Threatens Regional Stability

On April 22, a deadly attack in Pahalgam, a popular tourist town in Indian-administered Kashmir, left [26 people dead](#), most of whom were Hindu tourists. Militants, allegedly linked to Pakistan-based groups, ambushed the tourists in a meadow, and the Indian government quickly blamed Pakistan for the incident. This attack, the deadliest in Kashmir in over two decades, occurred during the peak tourist season, raising concerns about security and stability in the region.



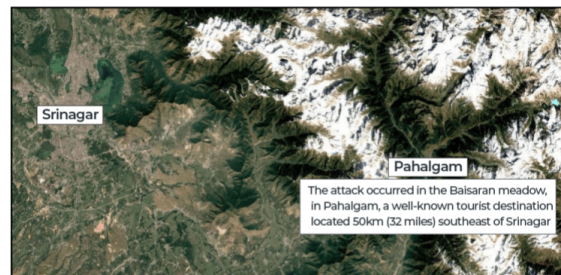
Photo by Amol Singh on Unsplash

In response, India took several drastic measures: it suspended the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), closed its border with Pakistan, expelled Pakistani officials, and revoked Pakistani visas. Pakistan [denied involvement](#) in the attack and retaliated by closing its airspace to India, halting trade, and warning India not to interfere with the Indus River's water supply. Both countries, already tense from previous conflicts, have seen their relations deteriorate sharply. There are fears that this could escalate into a military conflict, especially given that both nations are nuclear-armed.

### KASHMIR

#### Gunmen kill at least 26 in Kashmir

Armed men opened fire on a group of tourists in Indian-administered Kashmir, killing at least 26 people, according to Indian police, in one of the deadliest attacks there in recent times.



Indian police officers stand guard at a checkpoint following an attack near Pahalgam in south Kashmir's Anantnag district, on April 22, 2025 [Springer/Reuters]

Source: Al Jazeera, Google Earth, © OpenStreetMap contributors | April 23, 2025 @AJ/Labs | ALJAZEERA

The suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) by India marks a significant and concerning development in the region's geopolitics. The IWT, which has been in place since 1960, is one of the few

agreements between India and Pakistan that has remained largely intact despite their long-standing political and military tensions. [India's decision](#) to suspend it is a major shift, signaling a possible move to use water resources as a geopolitical tool to pressure Pakistan.



*Photo by Raimond Clavins on Unsplash*

The consequences of this move are severe, especially for Pakistan, which relies heavily on the Indus River for its water supply, crucial for agriculture and the economy. For Pakistan, this is not just a diplomatic dispute; it's a matter of survival, affecting food security for millions of people. The threat of disrupting water supplies is a powerful and dangerous political maneuver, but it also carries significant risks, including potential long-term destabilization of the region.

Legally, India's suspension of the treaty is controversial. The IWT does not have provisions for unilateral withdrawal, and international water law generally protects the rights of downstream countries like Pakistan. This raises questions about the legality of India's actions and the broader implications for international treaties.

On a humanitarian level, any interruption in the water supply could have devastating effects on Pakistan's agricultural sector, which employs a large portion of its population. This escalation not only affects the countries involved but also places a heavy burden on civilians, who are often caught in the crossfire of political and military struggles.

Strategically, India's move could be seen as a way to exert pressure on Pakistan, either to stop supporting Kashmiri militants or to renegotiate the treaty under more favorable conditions for India. This sends a strong message about India's growing use of its water resources as a form of leverage in an already volatile region.

The overall implications are significant: the situation has pushed India and Pakistan to a dangerous point, and while both sides deny responsibility for the attacks, their actions have made the conflict even more complicated. The risk of military confrontation is high, and international intervention may be necessary to prevent a full-blown crisis.



*Photo by Kunal Saha on Unsplash*





## Suicide Bombing in Somalia's Mogadishu: A Stark Violation of Human Rights

At least 13 people were killed in a suicide bombing on May 18, 2025, at a military recruitment center in Mogadishu, Somalia. The attacker struck a crowd of young men who were lined up outside the Damanyo military base to enlist in the army. Eyewitnesses described a powerful explosion followed by chaos and panic, with bodies scattered and smoke filling the area.

While no group has claimed responsibility, the attack bears the hallmarks of the armed group al-Shabab, which has a long history of targeting Somali security forces and government officials. Medical sources confirmed that 30 people were wounded in the blast, six of whom died on arrival at the hospital.

The explosion comes just a day after the assassination of Colonel Abdirahmaan Hujaale in the Hiiran region, adding to concerns about al-Shabab's continued infiltration into the country's security apparatus. This bombing also draws parallels to a 2023 suicide attack at a nearby base that killed 25 soldiers. The government has sealed off the area as investigations continue.

The suicide bombing at Mogadishu's Damanyo military base is a grave violation of human rights, particularly the right to life and security. Targeting young recruits, many of them teenagers, underscores the vulnerability of youth in conflict zones and raises concerns under international laws protecting children from violence. The attack not only caused death and injury but also instilled fear among civilians, disrupting daily life and undermining basic freedoms. It reflects the government's limited ability to protect its citizens, a failure of its human rights obligations. With al-Shabab likely behind the attack, it highlights the group's ongoing role in destabilizing the region and committing widespread human rights abuses.





Photo by Tahamie Farooqi on Unsplash

## Fragile Peace: India-Pakistan Strikes and the Price of Escalation

On May 7, 2025, India launched [Operation Sindoor](#), a series of missile strikes across Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Kashmir, claiming to target terrorist camps in retaliation for the [April 22 Pahalgam attack](#) that killed 26 tourists. India blamed the [Resistance Front \(TRF\)](#), allegedly linked to [Lashkar-e-Taiba \(LeT\)](#), while Pakistan denied any involvement and called for an international investigation. The operation marked one of India's most expansive military actions in recent history, with both sides presenting sharply different accounts of the damage and targets.

India stated it hit nine locations, including camps tied to groups like LeT, [Jaish-e-Muhammad \(JeM\)](#), and [Hizbul Mujahideen \(HuM\)](#). Pakistani officials, however, reported 24 strikes across six cities, claiming that India targeted

civilian infrastructure such as mosques, hospitals, and residential buildings. At least 31 people, including women and children, were reportedly killed in these strikes.

### INDIA-PAKISTAN India strikes Pakistan

The Pakistani military says Indian missile attacks hit six cities in Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Kashmir early on May 7. India said it struck nine sites. The attacks killed at least eight people and wounded more than 35, according to Pakistan.



Among the [key areas](#) hit were Muridke and Bahawalpur in Punjab, where India said it destroyed LeT and JeM facilities. Pakistan claimed civilian casualties and damage to religious sites in these areas. In Pakistan-administered Kashmir, strikes in Muzaffarabad, Kotli, and Bhimber targeted alleged terrorist camps, but local officials said mosques were destroyed and minors were among the casualties. Additional strikes were reported in Sialkot and Shakar Garh, where Pakistan confirmed minor damage, while India insisted it hit active training centers.

The escalation is significant not just for its geographic reach, with strikes even near major population centers in Punjab, but also for its political implications. Both countries have since downgraded diplomatic ties and threatened to withdraw from critical bilateral agreements such as the Indus Waters Treaty and the Simla Agreement. With two nuclear-armed neighbors now locked in heightened tension, the risk of further conflict has grown more serious than it has been in years.

Both India and Pakistan, as immediate neighbors and nuclear-armed states, share not only borders but also immense potential for trade and regional cooperation. According to the World Bank, bilateral trade could exceed \$37 billion annually if political relations normalize. However, recurring military escalations like Operation Sindoor derail this potential and pose serious risks to regional peace and global security.

Moreover, claims of targeting civilian infrastructure, including mosques, hospitals, and residential areas, represent a grave violation of international humanitarian law. Deliberate or reckless harm to non-combatants breaches the Geneva Conventions and undermines basic human rights. Such actions, regardless of the justification, cannot be accepted and must be independently investigated to uphold accountability and protect civilian lives in conflict zones. Avoiding war is not just a strategic imperative; it is a moral one.



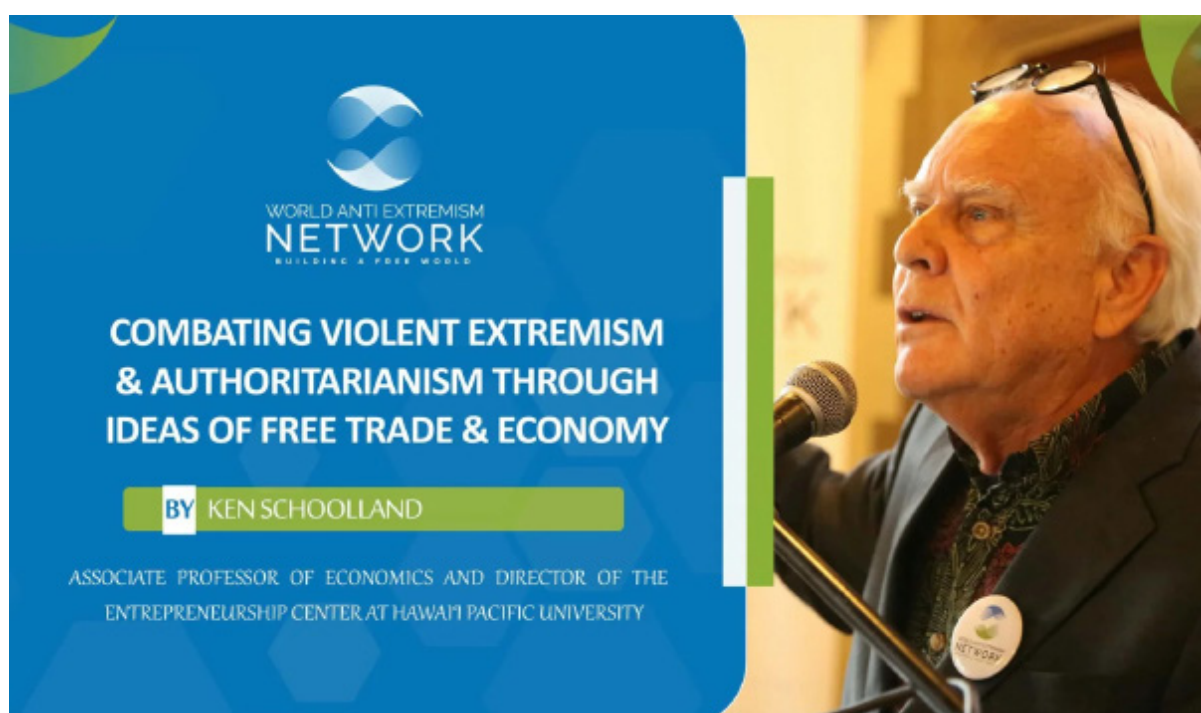
## **SECTION - 3:**

Multimedia Update: Voices Against Authoritarianism



Economic freedom isn't just a tool for prosperity; it's a weapon against authoritarian regimes. In his compelling presentation at the Toronto Dialogue Forum (TDF) 2024, Professor Ken Schoolland, Associate Professor of Economics and Director of the Entrepreneurship Center at Hawaii Pacific University, discussed how free markets and open trade can weaken dictatorial regimes and also shared insights about economic policies which empower individuals and enable escape from tyranny.

These ideas and findings are now available in a write-up by Professor Ken for anyone interested in these transformative economic dynamics. Visit our [website](#) and discover how free trade challenges authoritarianism at its core.



Along with Professor Ken's write-up up we have also published a few other write-ups to keep the discussion from TDF 2024 alive. Visit our website to read in [detail](#).

## Write-ups by International Human Rights Certificate Program Participants

We are also pleased to announce the publication of write-ups by the International Human Rights Certificate program graduates, highlighting their perspectives on various human rights violations and authoritarianism in their regions.

### The United States of America: The Effects of the Current Administration's Global Priorities by Maja A. Jovanovic



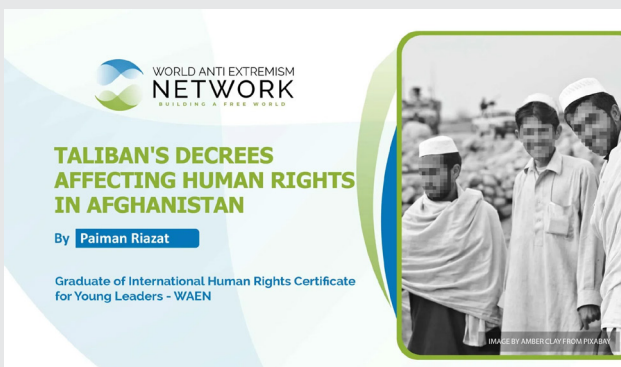
Mohammad, an Afghan human rights worker, fled to Pakistan after the fall of Kabul, hoping for safety in the U.S. After years of navigating the refugee process, his future was suddenly put on hold by the new executive order freezing all refugee

and asylum admissions. Now, with Pakistan ordering Afghan refugees to leave by March 31, 2025, he faces an uncertain future.

Mohammad's story is not unique. Thousands who were set to rebuild their lives in the U.S. are now left in limbo. As policies shift, the question remains: What happens to those caught in between?

[Read](#) more about the impacts of these executive orders and the real human and economic consequences in an article by Maja A. Jovanovic, one of the graduates of the International Human Rights Certificate Program, [published on our website](#).

### Taliban's Decrees Affecting Human Rights in Afghanistan by Paiman Riazat



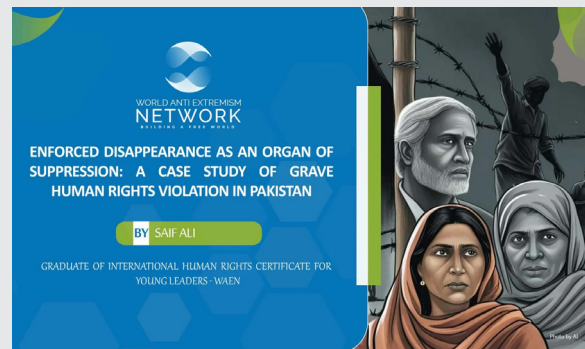
The Taliban's policies have forced Afghan women out of schools and jobs, with devastating consequences. According to UNICEF, Afghanistan's GDP could shrink by

2.5% annually due to the exclusion of women from economic participation. Beyond financial losses, the erasure of women from public life has created a chilling effect, where freedoms of expression and association are brutally suppressed.

Discover more about the economic and social impact of these restrictions by [reading an in-depth analysis by Paiman Riazat](#), Global Ambassador with WAEN and a graduate of the International Human Rights Certificate Program.

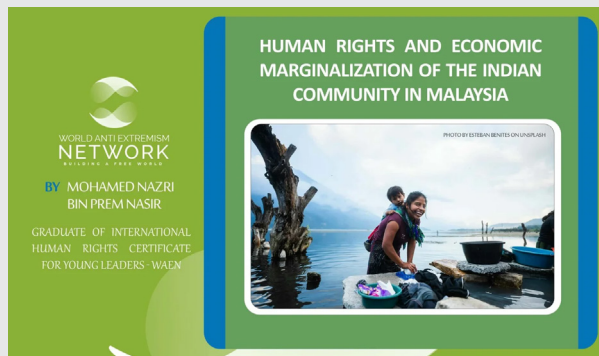
Ethnic minorities, especially Baloch, Pashtuns, and Shia communities, are disproportionately affected by enforced disappearances in Pakistan. Protests like the Baloch Families' March are met with repression instead of justice. Could enforced disappearances and suppression of dissent lead to the country's failure and long-term instability?

[Read Saif Ali Khan's article](#), the International Human Rights Certificate Program participant, on our website to explore the consequences.



## Disappearance as an Organ of Suppression: A Case Study of Grave Human Rights Enforced Violation in Pakistan by Saif Ali

## Human Rights and Economic Marginalization of the Indian Community in Malaysia By Mohamed Nazri Bin Prem Nasir



their significant contributions to Malaysia's growth, the Indian community continues to face deep-rooted economic challenges, especially in areas like education, employment, housing, and political participation. This issue has been thoughtfully explored by Mohamed Nazri Bin Prem Nasir in his recent article, now published on our website. If this topic interests you and you'd like to understand the realities and solutions in more depth, we invite you to [visit our website](#) and read the full article.

## The Human Rights Struggle of Afghan Refugee Women in Pakistan by Nasrullah Nasih



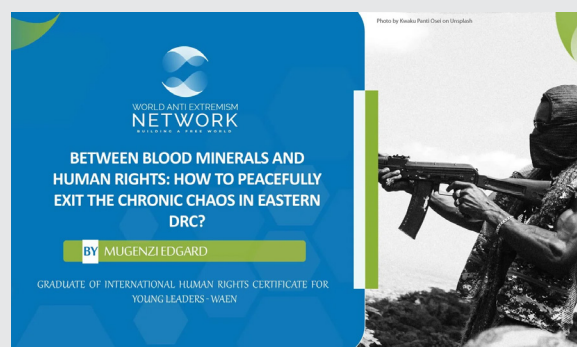
Afghan refugee women in Pakistan continue to endure exploitation, abuse,

and neglect, despite promises of protection under international law. In his article, Nasrullah Nasih, who is a graduate of the International Human Rights Certificate for Young Leaders, critically analyzes how politicized aid, restrictive government policies, and community-level discrimination have created an environment of fear and deprivation for Afghan women refugees. [Read the full article](#) now and learn more about the challenges they face and why their voices must be heard.



## Between Blood Minerals and Human Rights: How to Peacefully Exit the Chronic Chaos in Eastern DRC? by MUGENZI Edgard

We're excited to share an insightful article by Mugenzi Edgard, one of the graduates of our *International Human Rights Certificate Program*.

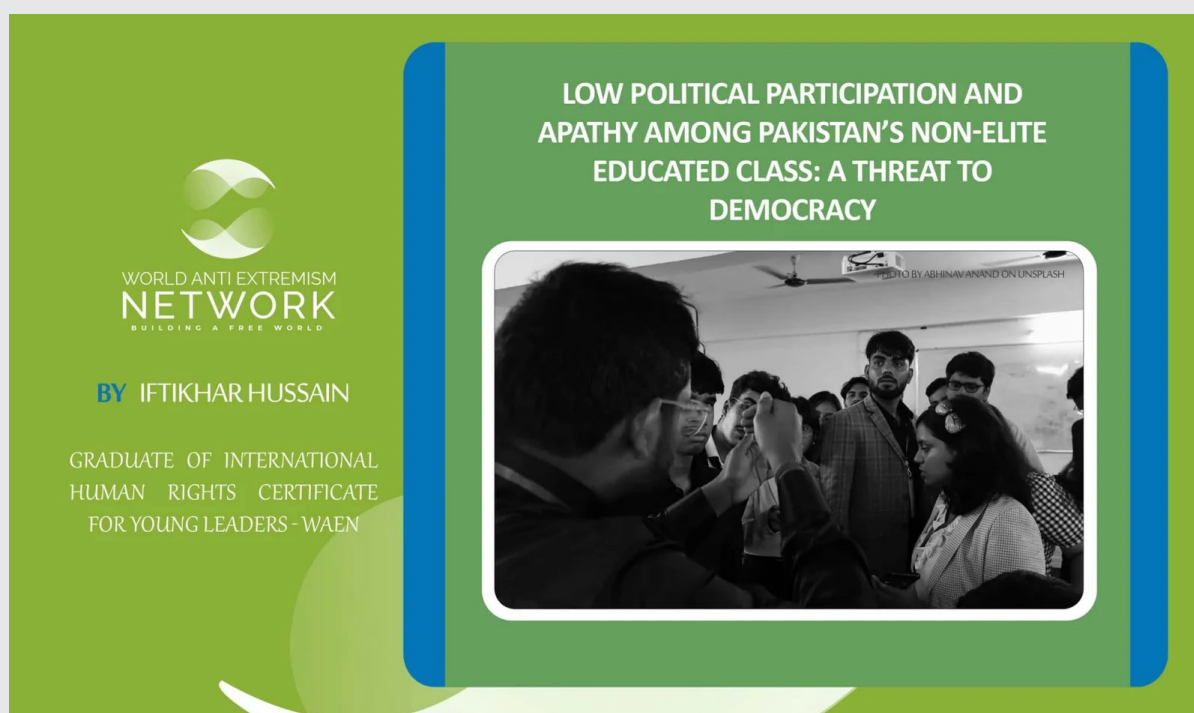


### He poses an important question:

*Are the armed groups in Eastern Congo truly fighting to protect endangered minorities, or are they driven by the economic interests tied to the region's mineral wealth?* This article takes a deep dive into the ongoing conflict in Eastern DRC, shedding light on the complex roles of local and foreign militias and their devastating impact on human rights and democracy. Check out the [full article](#) on our website and discover the intricate dynamics that continue to shape this conflict.

## Low Political Participation and Apathy Among Pakistan's Non-Elite Educated Class: A Threat to Democracy by Iftikhar Hussain

Iftikhar Hussain, a graduate of the International Human Rights Certificate Program, sheds light on the issue of political apathy in Pakistan. He explores how factors like disillusionment with the political system, economic hardships, and a weak education system are causing a lack of political engagement, especially among the educated non-elite class. If you want to learn more about this important topic, [read Iftikhar's](#) article on our website!



## WAEN Chairperson's Visit to Syria: Advancing Liberty, Democracy, and Economic Freedom

Our Chairperson, Ms. Li Schoolland, who is deeply committed to promoting the ideas of liberty, free market economics, and democracy, visited newly liberated regions of Syria. She observed firsthand the determination of Syrians who are striving to bring peace, prosperity, and dignity back to their ancient and resilient land. In her discussions, she highlighted how principles like free markets and economic freedom can help Syria move toward a brighter future. Her visit to Syria reflects WAEN's broader mission of supporting communities in promoting their basic rights, dignity, democratic values, and free market ideas.



## Scholarly Podcast: New Episode is Live



### Madrasas, Extremism, and Islam:

Just released! In April, we released a new episode of Scholarly Podcast with Dr. Hassan Abbas. He unpacks why madrassas outnumber schools in Taliban Afghanistan, the effects of rote learning, and the roots of oppressive views on women. It is a must-listen for anyone curious about education and extremism's impact on society.

[Listen now](#) and be part of the conversation!



### Insights on Afghan [Regional] Extremist Groups:

Extremist and radical groups continue to pose a serious threat to stability in Afghanistan and the surrounding areas. Recently, we had a podcast discussion with Imtiaz Ahmad Baloch, a militancy researcher and reporter at the Khorasan Diary, who shared valuable insights into the dynamics of these groups and highlighted the close connections between the Afghan Taliban and other extremist organizations such as Al-Qaeda, Central Asian Islamic groups, and the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), revealing how collaboration among these factions' fuels ongoing regional instability.

Anyone interested in understanding these issues in depth can listen to the full podcast, now available on our [website](#).



## **Defending Democracies and Countering Illiberalism | An International Campaign**

In an era marked by rising authoritarianism and growing threats to democratic values, the World Anti-Extremism Network (WAEN) has launched “Defending Democracies and Countering Illiberalism”, an international campaign to strengthen the global dialogue and collective action. This series features 10 powerful video contributions from our Global Ambassadors and graduates of the International Human Rights Certificate Program, leading voices from various countries and from across continents who share insights, experiences, and strategies for safeguarding democratic principles and countering the spread of illiberal ideologies. These videos provide meaningful insights into the challenges being faced by democracies today and highlight how civil society, academic voices, and young people can respond with strength, clarity, and purpose. Each video serves as a call to action, reminding us of the importance of protecting freedom, inclusion, and human rights.

Watch the videos and also become part of the global conversation on democracy by sharing your video messages.



## SECTION - 4:

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**Sources**

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