

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5271

To impose sanctions relating to undermining democracy in Pakistan.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 10, 2025

Mr. HUIZENGA (for himself, Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE, Mr. MOOLENAAR, Ms. JOHNSON of Texas, and Mr. SHREVE) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To impose sanctions relating to undermining democracy in
Pakistan.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Pakistan Freedom and
5 Accountability Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) Pakistan is an important and valued part-
9 ner of the United States.

1 (2) On December 10, 1948, Pakistan became
2 one of the original signatories to, and supported the
3 creation of, the Universal Declaration of Human
4 Rights (UDHR).

5 (3) On June 23, 2010, Pakistan ratified the
6 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
7 (ICCPR).

8 (4) Following the end of the most recent period
9 of military rule in 2008, Pakistan completed its first
10 peaceful transition of power between civilian govern-
11 ments led by different political parties in 2013, but
12 the military continues to exert undue influence on
13 the politics of the country.

14 (5) During previous elections, such as the ones
15 held in 2018, election monitors expressed concern
16 about constraints on the freedom of expression and
17 freedom of association and noted allegations of influ-
18 ence by the military-led establishment on the elec-
19 toral process.

20 (6) The Department of State's Country Report
21 on Human Rights Practices has often highlighted
22 significant human rights issues in Pakistan across
23 multiple years, including unlawful, arbitrary, and
24 extrajudicial killings, forced disappearance and arbi-
25 trary detention by the state or its agents, the taking

1 of political prisoners, serious restrictions on free ex-
2 pression and media, and substantial interference
3 with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom
4 of association.

5 (7) On February 8, 2024, millions of Pakistanis
6 participated in Pakistan’s most recent general elec-
7 tion, with record numbers of women, youth, and
8 members of religious and ethnic minority groups
9 registered to vote Pakistan’s civil society—including
10 women’s networks and youth groups—have contin-
11 ued to be resilient in their efforts to constructively
12 engage political leaders and government institutions
13 in more democratic, accountable, and responsive gov-
14 ernance.

15 (8) Pakistan’s 2024 general election was
16 marked by allegations by credible international and
17 local observers of interference in the electoral proc-
18 ess, including electoral violence, intimidation, arrest
19 of political actors, restrictions to freedom of assem-
20 bly, restrictions on freedom of expression, and re-
21 strictions on access to the internet and telecommuni-
22 cations.

23 (9) On February 9, 2024, the Department of
24 State noted that it shared the assessment of observ-
25 ers that the election included “undue restrictions on

1 freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful as-
2 sembly”, condemned “electoral violence” as well as
3 “restrictions on the exercise of human rights and
4 fundamental freedoms”, and called for the full inves-
5 tigation of fraud or interference in Pakistan’s gen-
6 eral elections.

7 (10) In October 2024, the Government of Paki-
8 stan ratified the 26th Amendment to the Pakistani
9 constitution, which increased political influence on
10 the Judicial Commission of Pakistan and over the
11 process to appoint the Chief Justice of Pakistan.

12 (11) In November 2024, Pakistan adopted leg-
13 islation extending the terms of military service chiefs
14 for two years.

15 (12) On December 23, 2024, the Department of
16 State criticized the use of military courts against
17 Pakistani civilians, noting that they lack “judicial
18 independence, transparency, and due process guar-
19 antees”.

20 (13) In August 2025, Pakistan enacted legisla-
21 tion to expand the powers of security and military
22 forces to carry out “preventive” detentions that con-
23 travene international human rights and due process
24 standards, including under the ICCPR.

1 (14) An essential safeguard of democracy is ci-
2 vilian command and control of apolitical military and
3 security forces, and the Constitution of Pakistan
4 states that “the Federal Government shall have con-
5 trol and command of the Armed Forces”, and the
6 oath taken by members of the Armed Forces swears
7 they will “uphold the Constitution” and “not engage
8 in any political activities”.

9 (15) Democracy, development, rule of law, and
10 respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms
11 are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

12 **SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

13 Congress—

14 (1) affirms its strong support for democracy in
15 Pakistan, including free and fair elections reflecting
16 the will of the people of Pakistan;

17 (2) calls on the President and the Secretary of
18 State to strengthen engagement with the Govern-
19 ment of Pakistan to ensure democracy, human
20 rights, and the rule of law are upheld;

21 (3) urges the Government of Pakistan to up-
22 hold democratic and electoral institutions, human
23 rights, and the rule of law, and respect the funda-
24 mental guarantees of due process, freedom of press,

1 freedom of assembly, and freedom of speech of the
2 people of Pakistan; and

3 (4) condemns attempts to suppress the people
4 of Pakistan's participation in their democracy, in-
5 cluding through harassment, intimidation, violence,
6 arbitrary detention, restrictions on access to the
7 internet and telecommunications, or any violation of
8 their human, civil, or political rights.

9 **SEC. 4. SANCTIONS RELATING TO UNDERMINING DEMOC-**
10 **RACY IN PAKISTAN.**

11 (a) DESIGNATION OF PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR
12 UNDERMINING DEMOCRACY IN PAKISTAN.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days
14 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the
15 President shall transmit to the appropriate congres-
16 sional committees a report identifying—

17 (A) any senior official or former senior of-
18 ficial of the government, military, or security
19 forces of Pakistan who the President deter-
20 mines, based on credible evidence, is responsible
21 for gross violations of human rights;

22 (B) any senior official or former senior of-
23 ficial of the government, military, or security
24 forces of Pakistan who the President deter-
25 mines has committed or directed gross viola-

1 tions of human rights associated with under-
2 mining democracy in Pakistan; and

3 (C) any entities owned or controlled by
4 senior officials or former senior officials of the
5 government, military, or security forces of Paki-
6 stan identified pursuant to subparagraphs (A)
7 and (B).

8 (2) FORM OF REPORT.—The report required
9 under this subsection may be transmitted in classi-
10 fied form.

11 (b) IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS.—The President may
12 impose any or all of the sanctions described in the Global
13 Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (22 U.S.C.
14 2656 note) against any or all of the foreign persons identi-
15 fied in the report required by subsection (a).

16 (1) EXCEPTION TO COMPLY WITH INTER-
17 NATIONAL OBLIGATIONS.—Sanctions under para-
18 graph (2) shall not apply with respect to the admis-
19 sion of an alien if admitting or paroling the alien
20 into the United States is necessary to permit the
21 United States to comply with the Agreement regard-
22 ing the Headquarters of the United Nations, signed
23 at Lake Success June 26, 1947, and entered into
24 force November 21, 1947, between the United Na-

tions and the United States, or other applicable international obligations.

(2) EXCEPTION RELATING TO THE PROVISION OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE.—Sanctions under this section may not be imposed with respect to transactions or the facilitation of transactions for—

(A) the sale of agricultural commodities, food, medicine, or medical devices;

(B) the provision of humanitarian assistance;

(C) financial transactions relating to humanitarian assistance; or

(D) transporting goods or services that are necessary to carry out operations relating to humanitarian assistance.

(3) EXCEPTION FOR INTELLIGENCE, LAW ENFORCEMENT, AND NATIONAL SECURITY ACTIVITIES.—Sanctions under this section shall not apply to any authorized intelligence, law enforcement, or national security activities of the United States.

SEC. 5. APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES DEFINED.

In this Act, the term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

1 (1) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the
2 House of Representatives; and

3 (2) the Committee on Foreign Relations of the
4 Senate.

5 **SEC. 6. SUNSET.**

6 This Act shall terminate on September 30, 2030.

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