

Minerals and Misery: The Human Cost of Pakistan's Resource Politics in Balochistan



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1. Abstract

An alarming escalation in enforced disappearances has been documented in Balochistan during the first half of 2025. A total of 824 individuals were subjected to enforced disappearance between January and June 2025, surpassing the number of cases reported throughout 2024. Of these, 530 remained missing as of June, while 294 were later released, categorising them as victims of short-term or long-term enforced disappearance. Kech district was the most severely affected, with 194 cases, followed by Awaran and Gwadar reporting 90 and 87 cases respectively. Students emerged as the most targeted group, accounting for 217 cases, followed by laborers (143) and drivers (47).

Extrajudicial killings also showed a significant rise, with 113 cases recorded in the same six-month period, exceeding the annual total for 2024. The highest number of victims were from Kech (34), while other affected districts included Awaran (21), Quetta (8), Khuzdar (8), Harnai (6), Gwadar (6), and Panjgur (6).

These statistics underscore a deteriorating human rights situation in Balochistan, marked by intensifying state violence and persistent impunity.

2. Introduction

Balochistan witnessed a significant escalation in enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings during the first half of 2025. Human rights organisations monitoring the region documented a marked increase in both short-term and long-term disappearances, alongside a continued pattern of unlawful killings throughout the six-month reporting period. These abuses occurred within the broader context of Pakistan's concerted politico-economic exploitation of Balochistan and the Baloch people's ongoing struggle against state repression and for the right to self-determination.

A key development during this period was Pakistan's aggressive effort to leverage Balochistan's resources amid the growing global competition for rare-earth elements (REEs) between the United States and China. This economic agenda coincided with intensified attempts to silence the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC), one of the most prominent organisations within Balochistan's human rights movement. The Provincial Assembly of Balochistan functioned as a key institutional mechanism in advancing both objectives.

On 12 March 2025, the Provincial Assembly of Balochistan passed the Mines and Minerals Act, 2025, granting the federal government enhanced control over provincial mineral resources [1]. Later that month, a widespread crackdown was launched against the BYC leadership under the Maintenance of Public Order Ordinance (3MPO) and anti-terrorism charges. Several BYC leaders were detained and verified reports indicated reprisals against their family members. Independent observers and legal experts characterised these detentions as politically motivated and as acts of collective punishment, raising serious concerns about due process violations and the absence of transparent legal proceedings. Soon after, the Pakistan Minerals Investment Forum was held in Islamabad to attract international investors for mineral exploration [2].

Historically, Pakistan has refused to recognise the legitimacy of Baloch national and political aspirations [3], instead framing the movement as a foreign-sponsored conspiracy. To suppress this struggle, state authorities have relied on coercive measures, including enforced

disappearances and extrajudicial killings, which have become central tools of governance and security management in Balochistan.

This escalation intensified amid heightened regional tensions between Pakistan and India. Following the Pahalgam terrorist attack on Indian nationals on 22 April 2025, Indian authorities adopted a robust stance toward Pakistan, citing its provision of safe haven to UN-designated terrorist groups implicated in cross-border violence, and launched retaliatory strikes targeting Islamist militant bases inside Pakistan [4]. Within this context, Pakistani authorities further exploited the situation in Balochistan, framing Baloch dissent and human rights activism as elements of an external conspiracy. Subsequently, the Anti-Terrorism (Balochistan Amendment) Bill, 2025, was tabled and passed by the provincial assembly, expanding the scope of anti-terror laws [5]. Around the same time, the federal government issued an official directive declaring that all active voices advocating for human rights and self-determination in Balochistan would henceforth be referred to as “Fitna al-Hindustan” [6]. This narrative reinforced an expanded military and intelligence campaign in the province, where criticism of state abuses and advocacy for human rights were increasingly treated as threats to national security.

Another deeply disturbing trend has been the enforced disappearance of teenagers, many of them high school students. Numerous children were abducted during this period; some were later found murdered in extrajudicial killings, while many others remain missing without trace or accountability. Notably, this period witnessed more cases of teenage disappearances than any previous year, marking a devastating escalation in the targeting of young people.

Overall, the findings presented in this report reveal a continuing contraction of civic and political space in Balochistan. Enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and the systematic misuse of security legislation have been employed to suppress dissent, restrict civic engagement, and silence human rights defenders. The situation is likely to deteriorate further in the absence of meaningful international intervention and accountability mechanisms.

3. Methodology and statistical analysis

Data collection was performed by obtaining data from different primary and secondary sources. The collected data was thoroughly compared with data compiled by Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC), Voice for Baloch Missing Persons (VBMP), Paank, and Human Rights Council of Balochistan (HRCB). All statistical analyses were performed using Prism version 8.0.1 (GraphPad Software, Inc., San Diego, CA, USA).

4. Results

4.1 Monthly enforced disappearance cases

A total of 824 cases of enforced disappearances were recorded between January and June 2025. March was recorded as the deadliest month in this period with 184 individuals becoming victims of enforced disappearances. This figure (184) accounts for 22.3% of the total 824 cases. April recorded the second highest number, with 156 cases, followed by February (140), May (132), and January and June (106 each) (Figure 1a). Among these 824

individuals, only 294 (35.7%) were released after being subjected to short-term and long-term disappearances, while 530 (64.3%) are still missing (Figures 1b, c, and d).

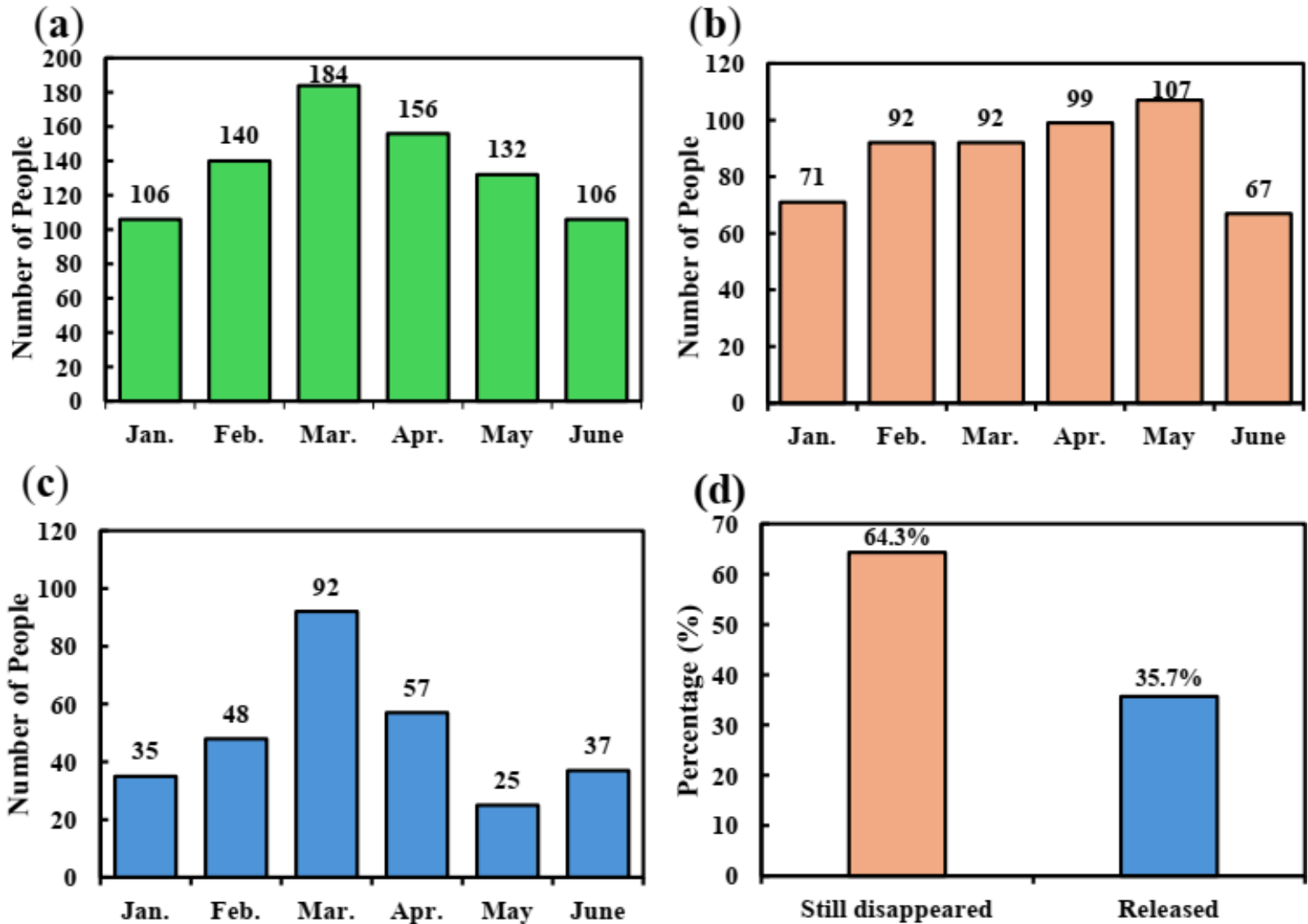


Figure 1. The total number of individuals subjected to enforced disappearance from January 2025 to June 2025 (a), those who continue to remain missing (b), those who were later released after abduction (c) and the proportion of disappearances and subsequent releases recorded between this time (d).

4.2 Geographic distribution of enforced disappearance cases

The highest number of enforced disappearances was recorded in Kech district, surpassing all other districts in Balochistan, including Karachi and Dera Ghazi Khan (Figure 2). A total of 194 individuals were forcibly disappeared by various Pakistani security forces in Kech, accounting for 23.5% of all cases. Notably, the highest number of enforced disappearance cases in 2024 was also recorded in Kech [7].

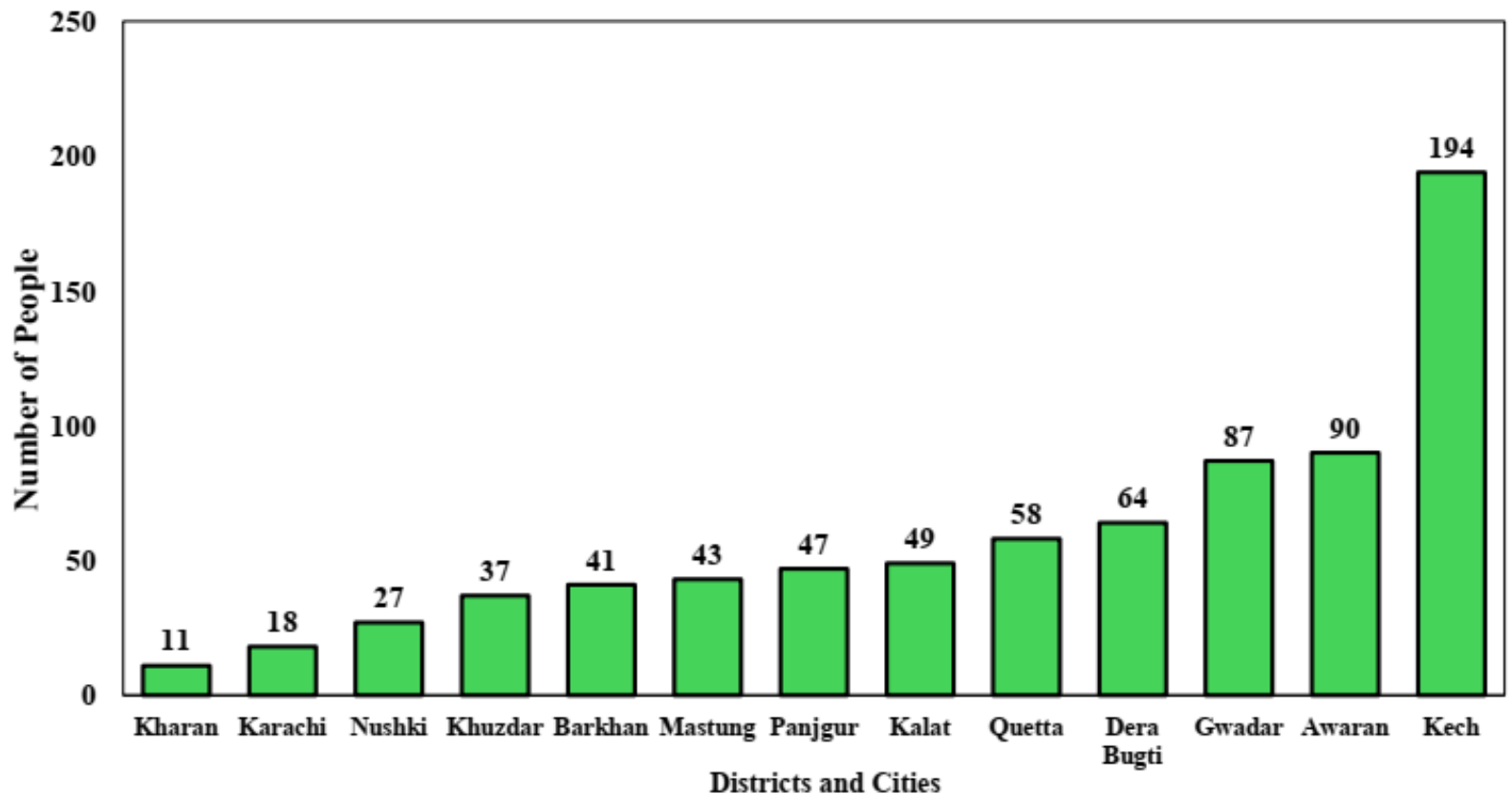


Figure 2. The number of individuals subjected to enforced disappearances between January and June 2025 across various districts of Balochistan. High number of cases were reported in Kech, Awaran, Gwadar and Dera Bugti.

Awaran recorded the second-highest number of cases, with 90 individuals becoming victims of enforced disappearances, accounting for 10.9% of the total cases. The situation in Gwadar was nearly similar, with 87 individuals (10.5% of the total) forcibly disappeared. This

was followed by Dera Bugti (64 cases, 7.8%), Quetta (58 cases, 7%), Kalat (49 cases, 5.9%), Panjgur (47 cases, 5.7%), Mastung (43 cases, 5.2%), and Khuzdar (37 cases, 4%) (Figure 2).

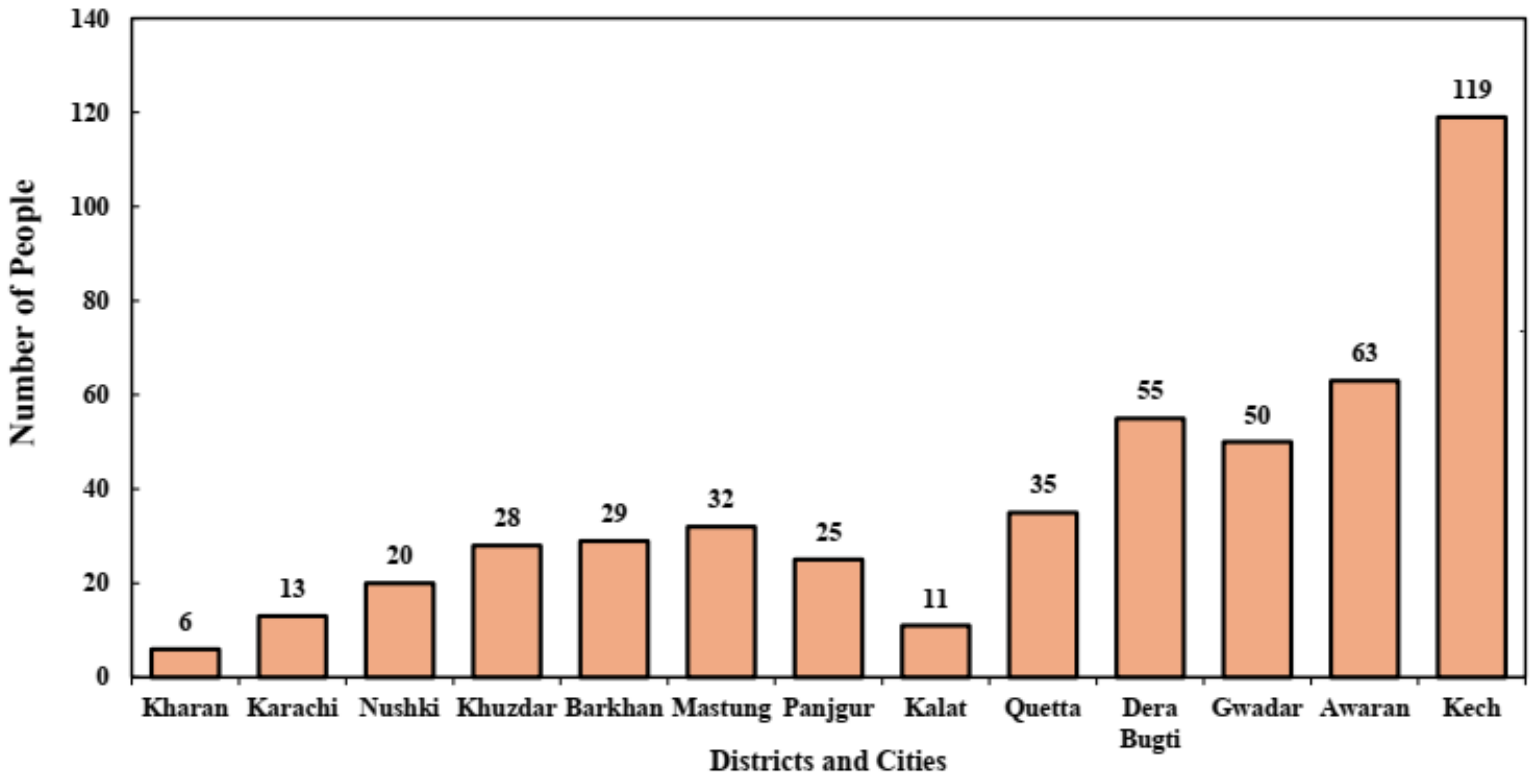


Figure 3. The number of individuals that remained missing between January and June 2025 across various districts of Balochistan. Kech recorded the highest number of unresolved cases, followed by Awaran, Dera Bugti, and Gwadar.

A high proportion of the victims are still missing, out of 194 cases in Kech, 119 (61.3%) individuals remain missing, while 75 (38.7%) individuals were released (Figure 3). Similarly, in Awaran, 70% of individuals are still missing, whereas 30% of 90 individuals were released between January and June 2025 (Figures 4 and 5).

Among all districts and cities, the proportion was particularly alarming in Dera Bugti, where 85.9% of enforced disappeared individuals remained missing, while only 14.1% were released (Figure 5). The proportion of released versus still missing individuals was 75.7% and 24.3% in Khuzdar, 74.4% and 25.6% in Mastung, 74% and 26% in Nushki, 72.2% and 27.8% in Karachi, 70.7% and 29.3% in Barkhan, and 60.3% and 39.7% in Quetta (Figure 5).

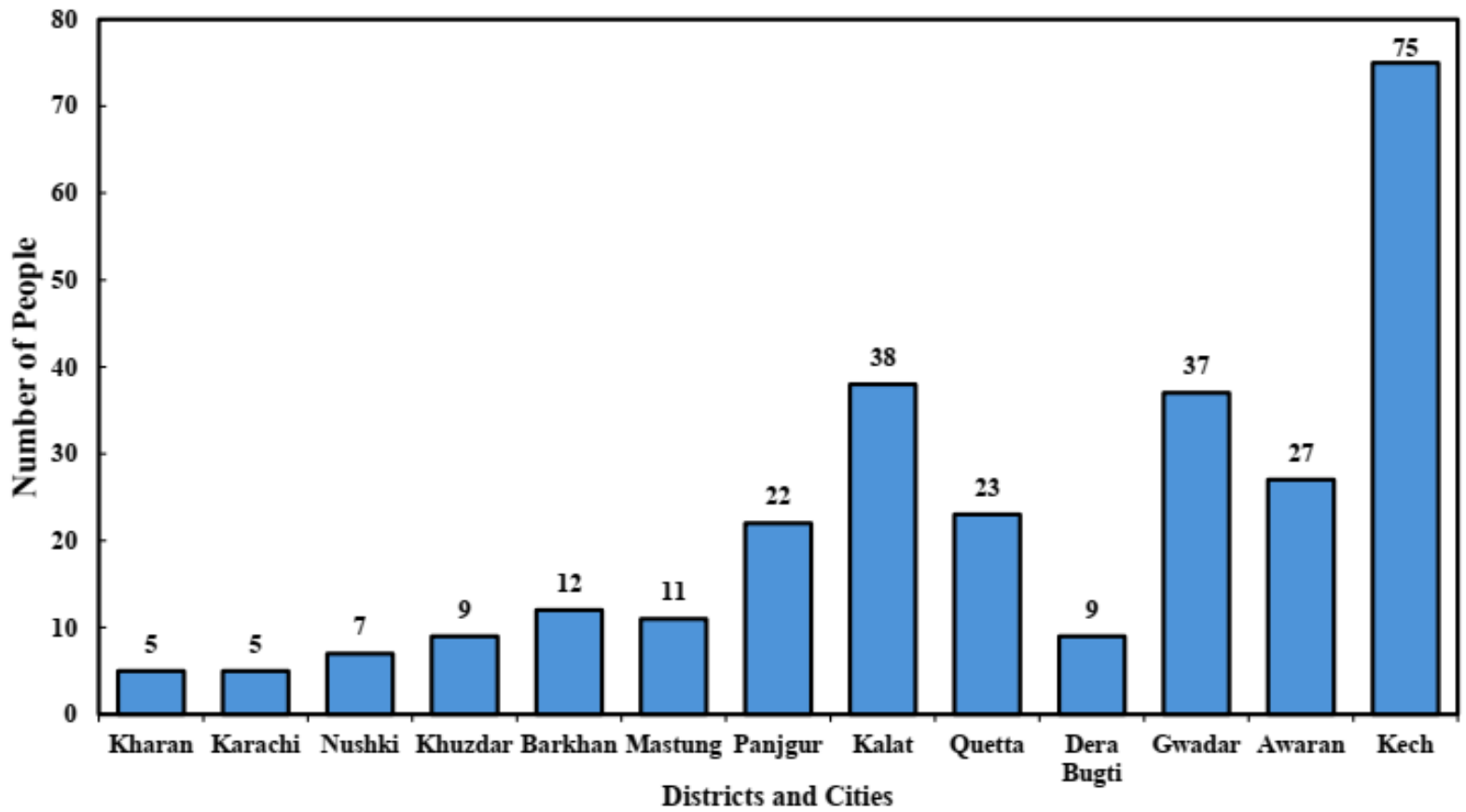


Figure 4. The number of individuals released between January and June 2025 after being subjected to enforced disappearance across various districts of Balochistan including Karachi.

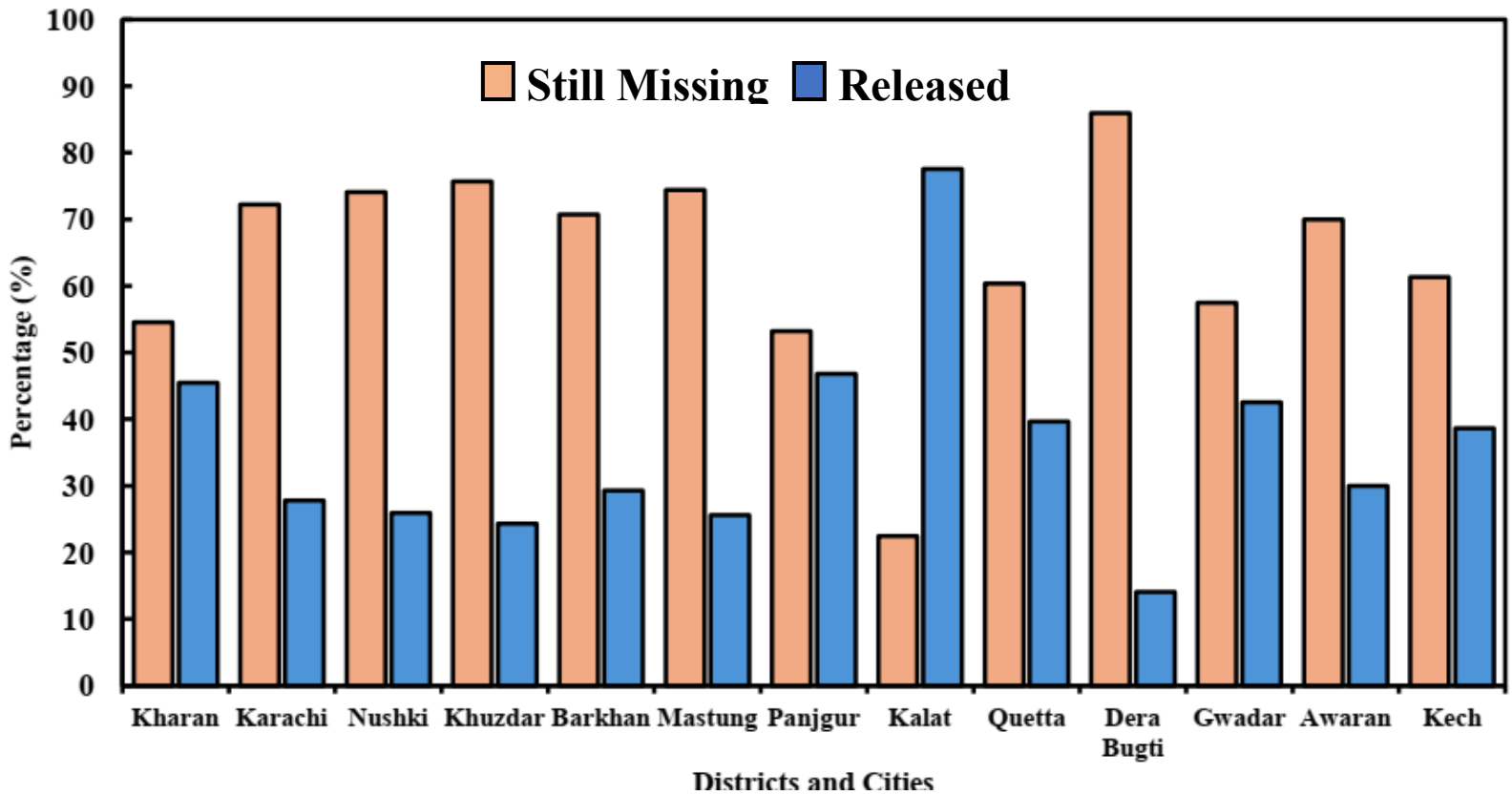


Figure 5. The proportion of enforced disappearances and subsequent releases recorded between January and June 2025 across various cities and districts with significant Baloch populations in Pakistan.

4.3 A Socio-Occupational distribution of enforced disappearance cases

Among all those studied, students were the most severely affected in terms of enforced disappearances, with 217 students, representing 42.5% of cases with known occupations. However, the occupations of 313 individuals were unknown in this report. Among these 217 students, 83 (38.2%) were released, while 134 (61.8%) remained missing. Labourers were the second most affected occupational group, with 143 individuals becoming victims of enforced disappearances; 48 (33.6%) were released during the first six months of 2025, whereas 95 (66.4%) remained missing (Figures 6 and 7).

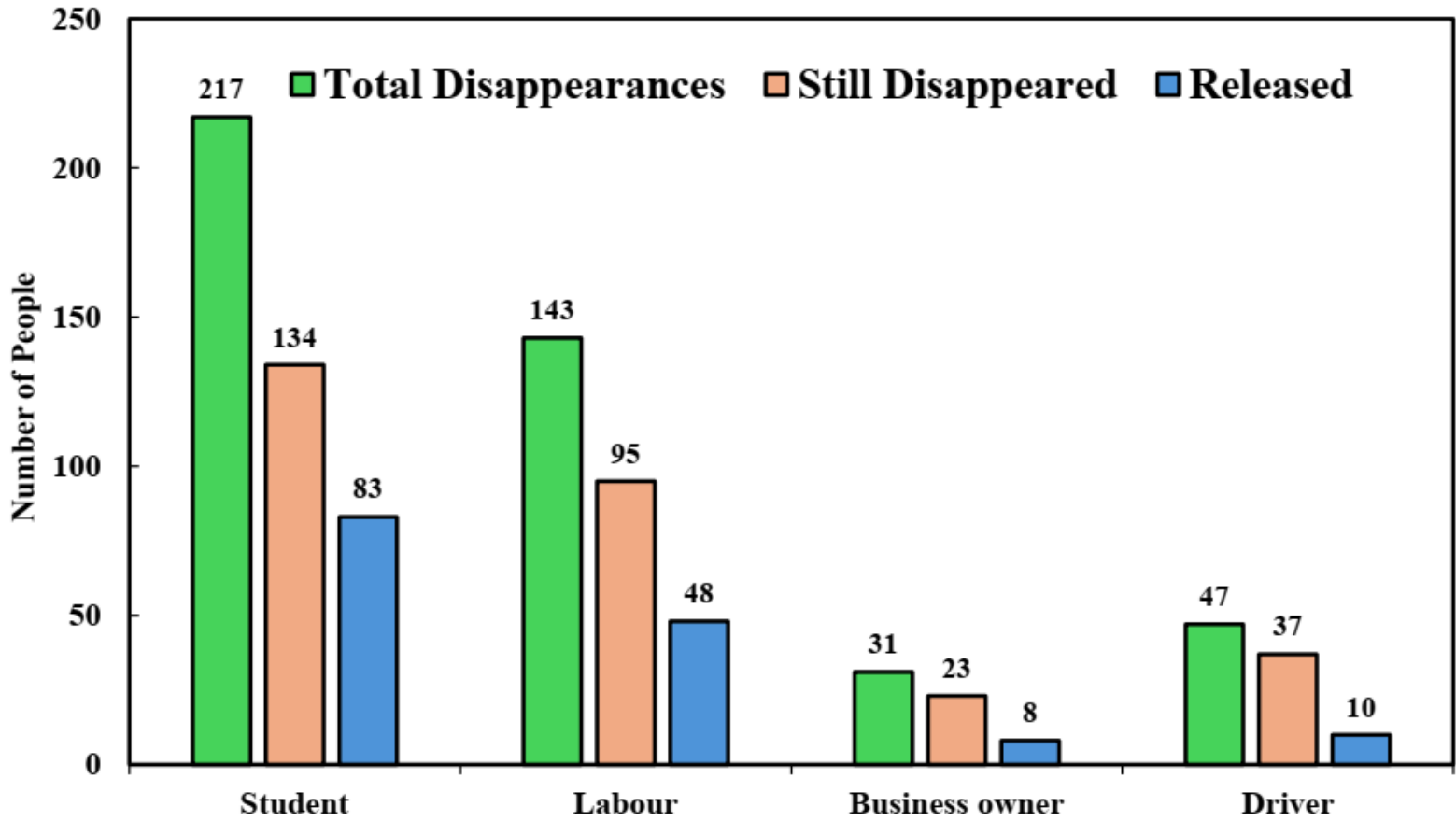


Figure 6. The number of individuals subjected to enforced disappearance between January and June 2025 across various fields and professions. Students accounted for the highest number of cases, followed by labourers and drivers.

Drivers and business owners were the third and fourth most affected occupational groups, respectively (Figures 6 and 7). A total of 47 drivers forcibly disappeared between January and June 2025, of whom 10 (21.3%) were released during the same period, while 37 (78.7%) remained missing. During the same timeframe, 31 business owners became victims of enforced disappearances, with 8 (25.8%) released and 23 (74.2%) still missing (Figures 6 and 7).

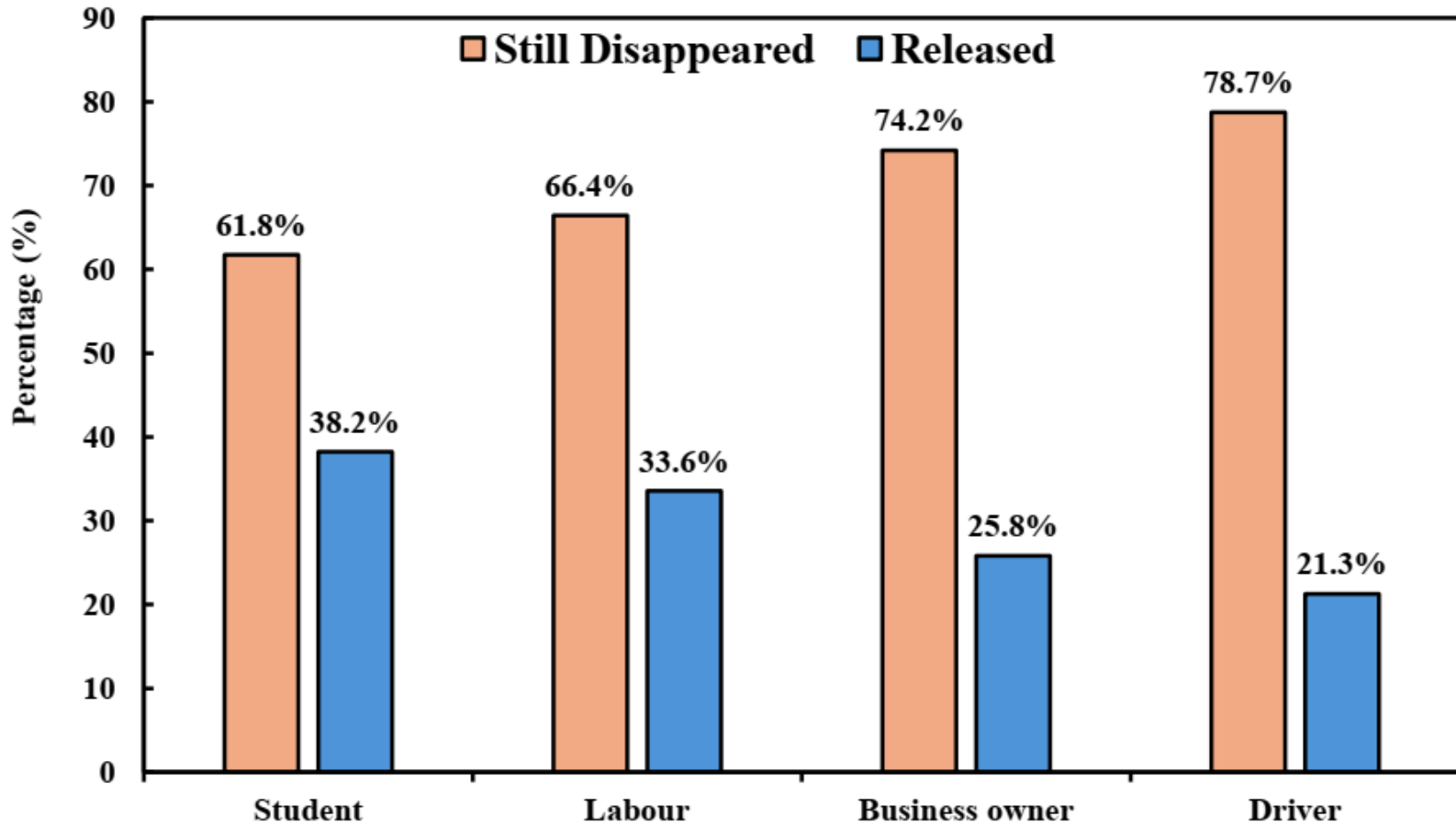


Figure 7. The proportion of enforced disappearances and subsequent releases between January and June 2025 across various fields and professions in Balochistan.

4.4 Extrajudicial killings in the first half of 2025

A rapid increase in extrajudicial killings was observed in the first half of 2025, with 113 individuals extrajudicially killed during this period, which is significantly higher compared to 12 individuals killed in 2024 [7]. This 9.4-fold increase highlights the intensity of atrocities

perpetrated by Pakistan in Balochistan. The highest number of killings occurred in April (35 individuals), followed by June (32), May (11), March (9), and February (8) (Figure 8).

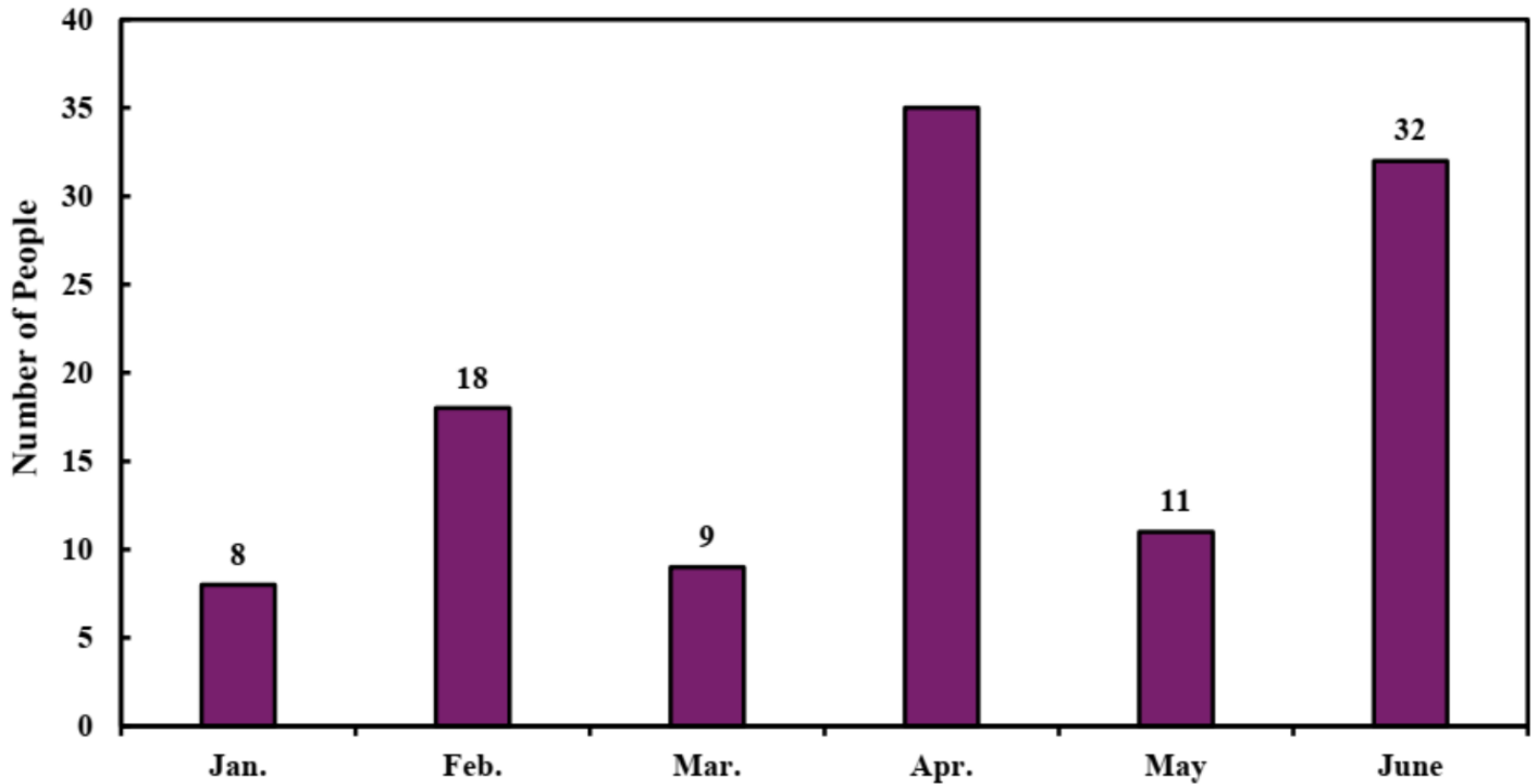


Figure 8. The total number of individuals subjected to extrajudicial killings between January and June 2025.

Kech recorded the highest number of extrajudicial killings, with 34 individuals, accounting for 30% of the total 113 victims. In Awaran, 21 individuals (18.6%) were extrajudicially killed (Figures 8 and 9). Eight individuals were killed in each of Khuzdar and Quetta. Panjgur, Gwadar, and Harnai each recorded six victims, while four people from Kalat and Barkhan respectively were killed. In Musakhel, Dera Bugti, and Kohlu, three individuals were extrajudicially killed in each district. Additionally, one victim was reported in Nushki and another, from Kharan (Figures 8 and 9).

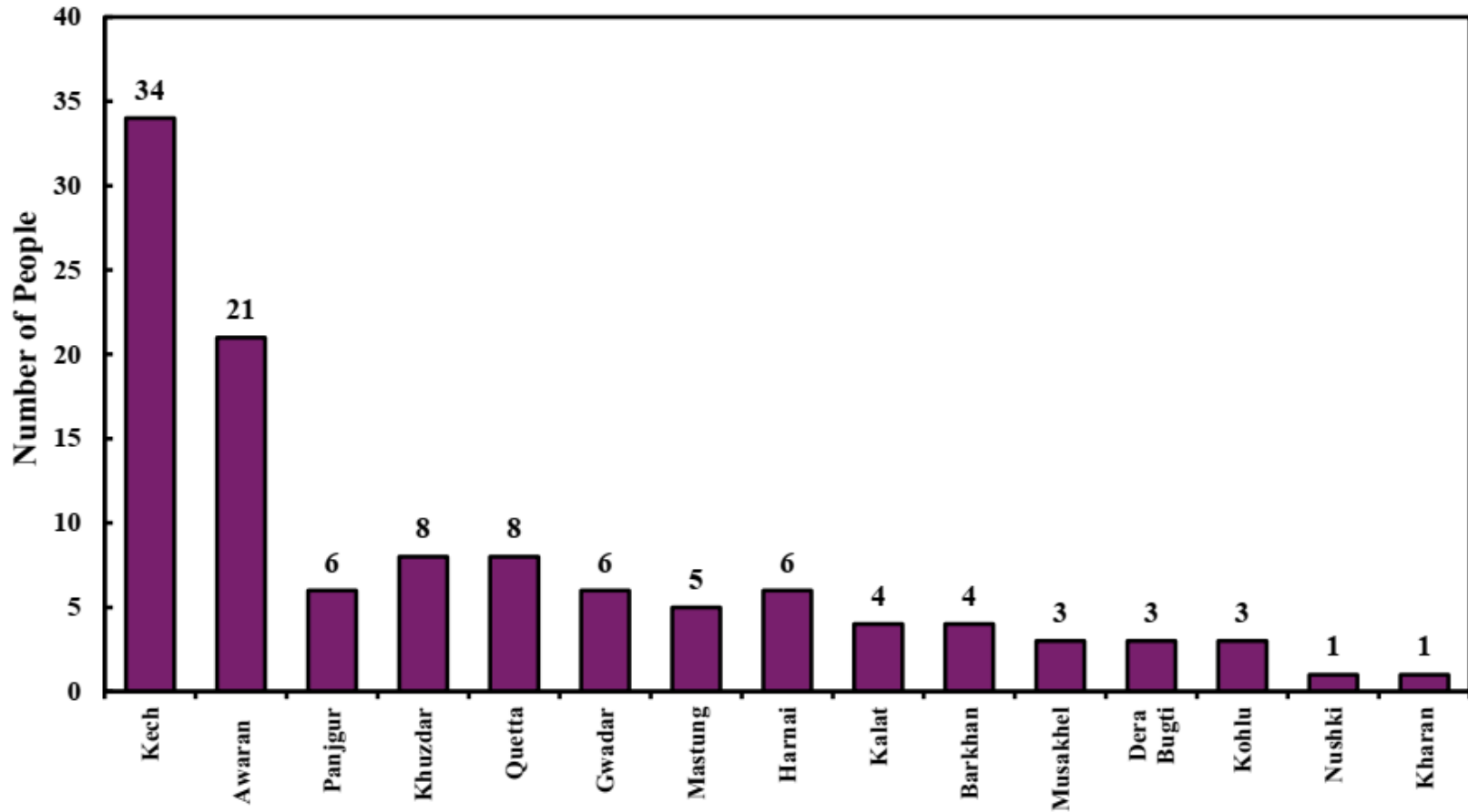


Figure 9. The number of individuals subjected to extrajudicial killings between January and June 2025 across various districts of Balochistan is shown. A high number of cases were recorded in Kech and Awaran.

Among all occupations, labourers experienced the highest number of extrajudicial killings, with 41 individuals, accounting for 36.3% of the total. Additionally, 19 students, 12 drivers, and 4 business owners were extrajudicially killed between January and June 2025 (Figure 10).

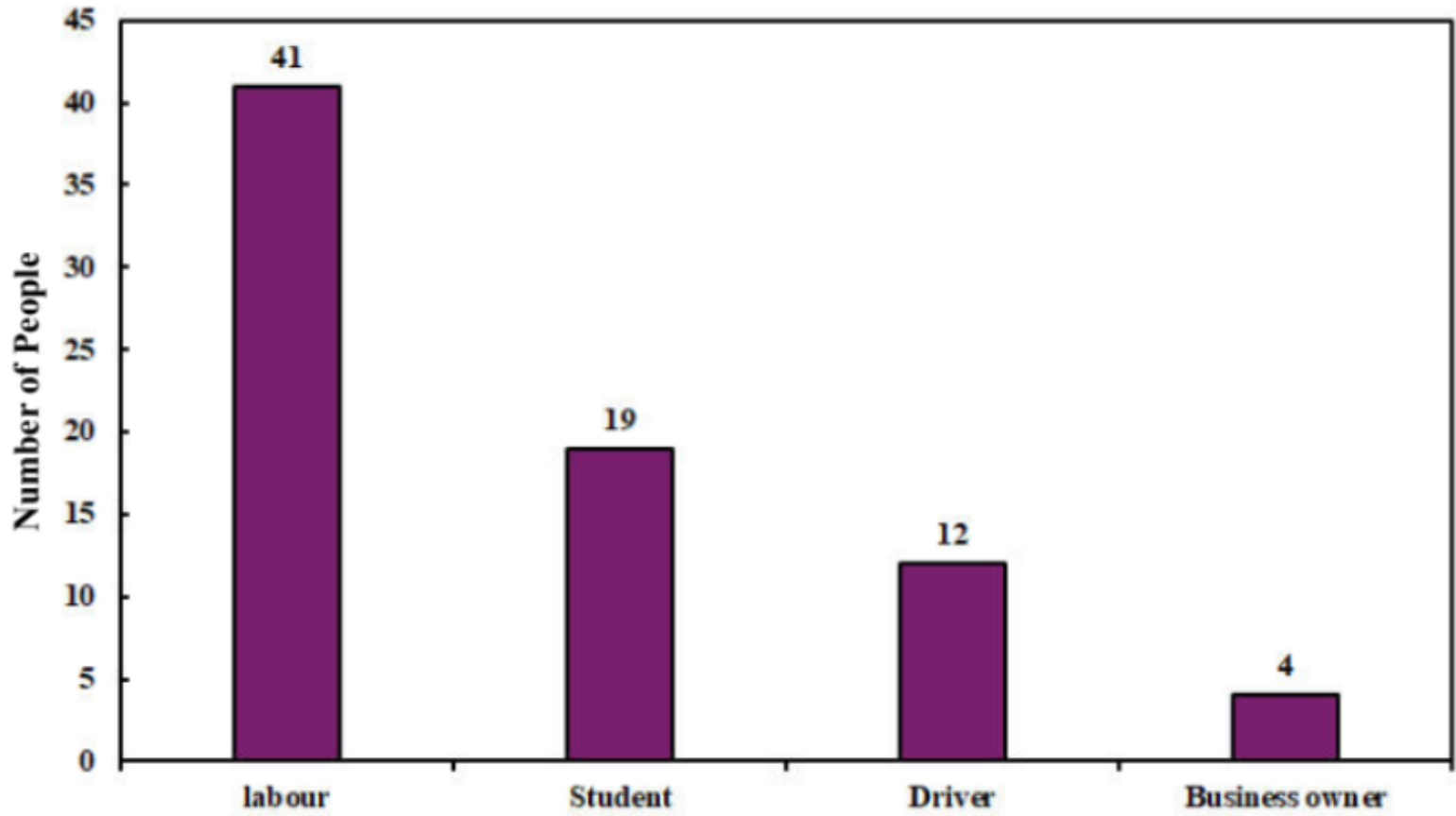


Figure 10. Number of individuals subjected to extrajudicial killings between January and June 2025 across various professions in Balochistan.

5. Conclusion

These findings indicate a sharp deterioration in the human rights situation in Balochistan, reflected in the unprecedented rise in enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings within the first six months of 2025. This escalation followed a series of unlawful legislative and political measures introduced during the same period, notably the Anti-Terrorism (Balochistan Amendment) Act 2025 and the official stigmatisation of dissenting Baloch voices as “Fitna al-Hindustan.” During this time, leaders and members of the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC), as well as their families, emerged among the primary targets of state repression. The disproportionate

victimisation of civilians and activists underscores the growing vulnerability of peoples subjected to Pakistan's coercive governance structures in Balochistan.

Although this report covers the first half of 2025, subsequent developments have further reinforced these findings. In September 2025, the Pakistani government signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Frontier Works Organization (FWO) and U.S.-based firms for large-scale mineral extraction and processing in Balochistan. This agreement exemplifies the continuation of the state's politico economic strategy, while excluding and repressing the local population.

Urgent international attention and the establishment of credible accountability mechanisms are essential to address this rapidly intensifying crisis, safeguard fundamental human rights, and prevent further exploitation of Balochistan's people and resources.

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7. About Baloch Advocacy and Studies Center (BASC)

The Baloch Advocacy and Studies Center (BASC) is a United Kingdom–based research and advocacy organisation dedicated to advancing the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Baloch people in Iran and Pakistan.

Through rigorous, evidence-based research, BASC documents and analyses patterns of human rights violations, political repression, and socio-economic exploitation affecting the Baloch people. The Center translates its findings into strategic advocacy initiatives designed to promote accountability and raise international awareness of the situation in Balochistan.

BASC's mission is to mobilise global support for the protection and promotion of Baloch human rights. Through its publications and advocacy efforts, the organisation works to ensure that human rights abuses against the Baloch are recognised, addressed, and prevented in accordance with international human rights standards.