



Truth Matters, We Verify

INCIDENT REPORT 2024

**Fake News during and after
the PTI Protest Nov 24 - 2024**



Fake News Watchdog

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About Us

Fake News Watchdog (FNW) is a dedicated non-profit organization committed to countering the spread of disinformation and misinformation in the digital age. As an advocate for truth and transparency, we empower individuals, institutions, and communities with the tools and knowledge to navigate the complexities of the modern media landscape.

Our Mission

Our mission is to expose falsehoods, analyze misinformation trends, and promote media literacy to create a more informed and discerning society. By combining cutting-edge technology, artificial intelligence, and in-depth research, we aim to tackle the challenges of fake news head-on, fostering trust and accountability in information sharing.

Our Belief

We believe that a well-informed society is the foundation of a thriving democracy. Through fact-checking services, research and educational initiatives, and collaboration with global stakeholders, we are building a world where truth prevails over deception.

Join Hands With Us

Join us in this crucial endeavor to combat fake news and safeguard the integrity of information for the betterment of humanity.



A Message from Our Team

At Fake News Watchdog, our mission is rooted in the belief that truth is not just a principle but a cornerstone of a thriving society. In an age where disinformation spreads faster than ever, the responsibility to uphold integrity in information is one we share collectively.

This report serves as both a reflection of the challenges we face and a call to action. It dives deep into the anatomy of disinformation, examining its sources, impact, and the societal vulnerabilities it exploits. By bringing these incidents to light, we aim to empower individuals, institutions, and policymakers with the insights necessary to recognize, combat, and prevent the spread of falsehoods.

Our work is not possible without the contributions of vigilant fact-checkers, dedicated researchers, and the trust of those who believe in a better-informed world. Together, we can build an ecosystem where truth has the power to outpace lies, fostering trust and accountability in every corner of society.

We hope this report inspires meaningful dialogue and decisive action. Thank you for standing with us in this crucial fight against misinformation.

– The Fake News Watchdog Team



Founding Members

Dr. Asad Ali Shah (Co-Founder)

Dr. Asad Ali Shah is a professor, researcher, and entrepreneur. He has earned his Ph.D. in media and sociology from the University of Saskatchewan, Canada. He has been teaching at different universities in Pakistan and Canada. He has also been conducting professional training workshops and seminars at national and international forums. He is the author of a number of publications, including a book, journal articles, and reports. After completing his doctoral degree in Canada, Dr. Shah returned to Pakistan in 2018 to serve his country.

Muhammad Nasir Butt (Co-Founder)

Muhammad Nasir Butt is a seasoned journalist and academic, currently serving as a Senior Correspondent for Public TV and Deputy Editor at Global Diplomacy Lens. With extensive experience in media, he has previously worked with Capital TV and GNN, earning a reputation for insightful reporting and analysis.

In addition to his journalistic endeavors, Nasir is an educator, teaching media and communication courses at prestigious institutions in Islamabad, including IIU and Rawalpindi Women University. He holds an MPhil in Media and Communication and is presently pursuing a PhD in Media, further cementing his expertise in the field.

Team Members

Prof. Rehan Hasan (Head of Trainings)

Rehan Hasan is an accomplished Director with extensive experience in the broadcast media industry, showcasing a proven track record of excellence. Renowned for his expertise in Immersive Reality, Journalism, Media Relations, Radio, and Film Production, he brings a dynamic and innovative approach to every project. With a strong professional background and a passion for storytelling, Rehan continues to make significant contributions to the ever-evolving media landscape.

Rubab Jaffery (EU and UK)

Rubab Jaffery holds a Master's degree in Media and Communication from the UK and brings a wealth of experience in journalism, having worked with several prominent media organizations, including Daily Jang.

Muhammad Faraz (North America)

Muhammad Faraz holds a Master's degree in Media and Communication and has demonstrated a strong commitment to the field of journalism and research. He brings valuable expertise to media analysis, reporting, and communication studies.



A Message from the President PFUJ

It is with great respect and admiration that I extend my wholehearted support to the team at Fake News Watchdog for their groundbreaking efforts in investigating and exposing the surge of fake news during and after the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) protests from November 24 to 27, 2024.

The dissemination of fake news, as this report highlights, poses a grave threat to the integrity of journalism and the well-being of our society. The incidents documented here not only reflect the challenges faced by media practitioners but also underscore the immense responsibility of ensuring credible reporting during politically charged times.

By meticulously analyzing and debunking fabricated narratives, doctored images, and unverified claims, the Fake News Watchdog has set an exemplary standard for fact-checking and media accountability. Their work not only contributes to safeguarding public trust in journalism but also acts as a deterrent against the exploitation of media platforms for misinformation.

The PFUJ firmly believes in upholding press freedom while emphasizing the critical need for ethical journalism. We recognize that initiatives like this are vital for fostering a culture of transparency, accountability, and informed public discourse.

I really appreciate Fake News Watchdog for their invaluable contribution. We stand united in our commitment to combat misinformation and ensure that journalism continues to serve as a pillar of democracy and truth.

Sincerely,

Afzal Butt

President, Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ)



A Message from the President NPC

It is my honor to commend the exceptional efforts of Fake News Watchdog in investigating and documenting the surge of fake news during the PTI protests from November 24 to 27, 2024. This report provides a comprehensive and critical analysis of how misinformation influenced public perception and exacerbated political tensions during a pivotal period in Pakistan's history.

The National Press Club (NPC) recognizes the immense challenges posed by misinformation, especially during times of national unrest. By systematically identifying and debunking fabricated narratives, this report not only informs the public but also upholds the principles of truth and accountability in journalism. The findings presented here are a crucial contribution to the fight against fake news and serve as a call to action for all media professionals to prioritize accuracy and integrity.

I applaud Fake News Watchdog for their dedication to this cause and for setting a benchmark for investigative reporting in Pakistan. Their work strengthens the media's role as a reliable source of information and a defender of public interest.

Sincerely,

Azhar Jatoi

President, National Press Club (NPC)



A Message from the Chairperson WJC

On behalf of the Women Journalist Caucus (WJC), I extend my sincere appreciation to Fake News Watchdog for their meticulous work in investigating and exposing the role of fake news during the PTI protests from November 24 to 27, 2024. This report is a vital resource, shedding light on how misinformation distorted narratives, fueled public unrest, and complicated political discourse during this critical period.

Misinformation poses a grave challenge to journalistic integrity and public trust. This report, through its detailed analysis and factual rigor, underscores the importance of countering such threats with a commitment to accuracy and accountability. By providing actionable insights into the origins and impact of fake news, Fake News Watchdog has delivered a service that benefits not only the media but also the broader public.

The Women Journalist Caucus is proud to support initiatives like this that align with the principles of ethical journalism. Your work inspires us all to remain steadfast in promoting transparency, truth, and responsibility in reporting.

Sincerely,

Nayyar Ali

Chairperson, Women Journalist Caucus
Secretary General National Press Club



A Message from the President ICRA

It is with deep appreciation that I acknowledge the diligent and impactful work of Fake News Watchdog in compiling and publishing this critical report on the proliferation of fake news during and after the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) protests from November 24 to 27, 2024.

In an era where misinformation spreads rapidly and compromises societal stability, the role of fact-checking and investigative journalism becomes paramount. The thorough research and detailed analysis presented in this report provide invaluable insights into the challenges posed by false narratives, especially during times of heightened political activity. By tracing the origins and impacts of misinformation, Fake News Watchdog has done an extraordinary service to both the media and the public.

The Islamabad Crime Reporters Association (ICRA) is keenly aware of the detrimental effects misinformation has on public safety, law enforcement efforts, and trust in institutions. This report not only sheds light on these concerns but also serves as a blueprint for responsible journalism and effective countermeasures against fake news.

We commend the Fake News Watchdog team for their unwavering commitment to truth and their dedication to strengthening the integrity of information in Pakistan. Their efforts are a call to action for all stakeholders—journalists, policymakers, and citizens alike—to remain vigilant and proactive in addressing the pervasive threat of misinformation.

With utmost respect,

Qamar ul Munawar

President, Islamabad Crime Reporters Association (ICRA)



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Introduction

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) protests from 24–27 November 2024 represent a pivotal chapter in Pakistan’s political history, marked not only by the intensity of public demonstrations but also by the significant role of information warfare in shaping the narrative. At the heart of the protests was the demand for the release of PTI's founding leader, Imran Khan, whose imprisonment had galvanized supporters and heightened political tensions nationwide. However, as the protests unfolded, the dissemination of fake news and misinformation across multiple platforms—print media, social media, and television—emerged as a critical factor in influencing public perception and escalating the crisis.

This report delves into the complex interplay between political unrest and the spread of misinformation, offering an in-depth analysis of how fake news impacted the events surrounding the protests. By examining fabricated statements, doctored visuals, and unverified claims that gained widespread traction, the study highlights the vulnerability of modern information systems during politically sensitive periods. The misinformation not only shaped public behavior but also complicated the response of government institutions, security agencies, and political stakeholders, amplifying tensions in an already polarized society.

Data for this analysis were meticulously collected from three primary sources: mainstream media coverage, tweets and posts from official and unofficial accounts of key stakeholders, and televised news reporting during and after the protests. The study employed robust content analysis and comparative verification techniques to identify patterns of misinformation and evaluate their impact on public sentiment, media integrity, and institutional trust.

The findings of this report underscore the critical need to address the challenges posed by fake news, particularly in the context of political upheaval. By tracing the origins, dissemination, and consequences of misinformation during these protests, this study not only documents a significant episode in Pakistan's contemporary history but also provides actionable insights into mitigating the spread of fake news in the future. Through a detailed examination of the intersection of media, politics, and public perception, the report contributes to a deeper understanding of the far-reaching effects of misinformation in times of crisis.

Methodology

Methods of Data Collection

Data were collected from three primary sources, print media, social media, and television to ensure a comprehensive analysis:

- **Print Media:** News published in national and international newspapers were reviewed to identify key narratives and coverage of the protests.
-
- **Social Media:** Tweets from the official accounts of stakeholders, including Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), government representatives, and media outlets, were analyzed. Viral social media content, hashtags, and user-generated posts were also collected to trace the spread of mis/disinformation.
-
- **Television News Coverage:** Broadcasts from leading news channels were monitored to assess the narratives presented by mainstream media, including any discrepancies or biases in reporting.

Methods of Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the following methods: The analysis involved categorizing all collected materials into themes such as misinformation, biased reporting, and public perception through a systematic coding framework that identified recurring patterns and instances of fake news. Questionable content, including viral images and videos, was cross-verified with reliable sources such as key stakeholders, independent fact-checking platforms and archival databases to assess its authenticity. Additionally, the broader political and social context was analyzed to understand the impact of misinformation on stakeholder behavior, public sentiment, and government responses during the protests.

This multi-source and multi-method approach ensures the reliability and validity of findings, providing a nuanced understanding of how fake news shaped the PTI protests and its repercussions on society and governance.

Fake News During and Post-PTI Protests

The period surrounding the PTI protests in late November 2024 witnessed a surge in the spread of fabricated and misleading information through various channels. False narratives propagated on social media, mainstream news outlets, and unofficial platforms played a pivotal role in shaping the unfolding events and their aftermath. This section delves into the mechanisms of fake news dissemination, analyzing its patterns, sources, and broader consequences. By systematically examining the content and verifying its authenticity, the analysis aims to provide insights into how misinformation contributed to the amplification of tensions and influenced stakeholder actions during this politically charged episode.

Fake News Data

Fake News



Reality

A doctored image falsely attributed to Michael Kugelman, a prominent South Asian analyst, suggested his involvement in commenting on the PTI protests. Kugelman clarified that he never tweeted the statement in question, labeling the image as a complete fabrication. This incident underscores the misuse of credible figures to lend authenticity to false narratives.

<https://x.com/FakeNWatchdog/status/1860392096357843113>

Fake News



Reality

A false statement attributed to Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, allegedly targeting the Kashmiri people, was widely circulated. The Ministry of Interior dismissed the claim as baseless, asserting that it was an intentional effort to create division and foster hostility between the Kashmiri community and the state of Pakistan.

<https://x.com/FakeNWatchdog/status/1860941904302547275>

Fake News

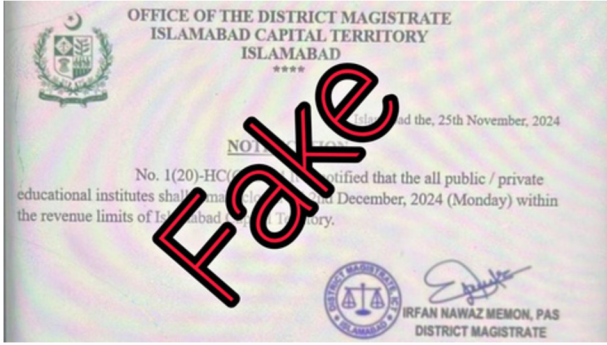


Reality

This is not Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, rather he is actually Dr. Zahoor Swati from Mansehra. This confusion spread rapidly on social media, illustrating the risks of misinformation stemming from visual similarities and a lack of verification.

https://x.com/ahmad_bobak/status/1860919046394552477

Fake News



Reality

Rumors regarding the closure of educational institutions in Islamabad until December 2, 2024, were debunked by the district administration. Fake notifications circulated on social media had created widespread panic among parents and students, necessitating official clarification.

<https://x.com/FakeNWatchdog/status/1861074258635751821>

Fake News



Reality

According to Spokesperson PTI MNA Shaikh Waqas Akram, "our media channels were happily sharing news about a video message recording, but surprisingly, there was no recording or video message at all."

<https://x.com/FakeNWatchdog/status/1861159356903129126>

Fake News



Reality

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has strongly denied this news report, terming it as fake news. They claim that Ali Amin Gandapur is present among the party workers and resisting shelling.

<https://x.com/FakeNWatchdog/status/1861478568796266868>

Fake News

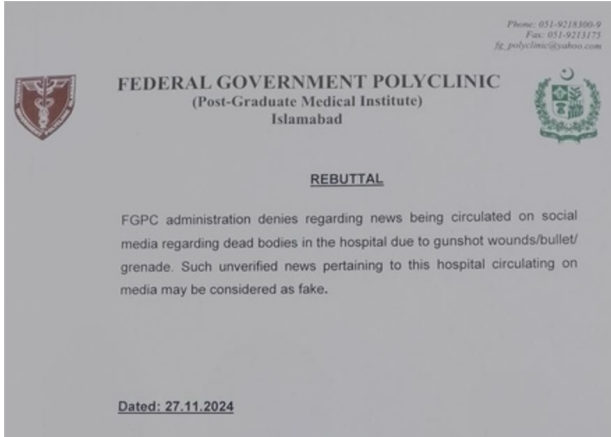


Reality

Reports from ARY, Dunya News, and other channels regarding the arrest of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and former First Lady Bushra Bibi have been denied by security sources. Security sources later clarified that the individuals had escaped the scene.

<https://x.com/FakeNWatchdog/status/1861491746368299226>

Fake News



Reality

Poly Clinic Hospital has issued a clarifying statement debunking reports of injuries and fatalities. The statement said, "Administration denies the social media reports of bodies being brought to the hospital due to gunshots and grenade injuries."

<https://x.com/FakeNWatchdog/status/1861678999371686171>

Fake News



Reality

Such headlines are printed because many media outlets in Pak have close ties with political parties, governments, or are owned by business ticons who can't compromise their relations with the government, which is ultimately leading to biased reporting.

<https://x.com/FakeNWatchdog/status/1861813668066820135>

Fake News



Agha Sheikh Sarwar @Agha_... · 2h
راولپنڈی میں گولی لگنے سے زخمی ہونے والی 55 سالہ خاتون، جو پمز اسپتال میں زیر علاج تھیں، انتقال کر گئی ہیں۔
پاکستان تحریک انصاف کے شہداء کی تعداد 104 سے پڑھ کر 105 ہو چکی

233 7.2K 13.7K 140K

Reality

Clashes between PTI supporters and security forces in Islamabad have resulted in conflicting reports of fatalities. While PTI's different social media influencers are claiming hundreds of deaths, the government denies these allegations. According to sources at Islamabad's hospitals, the actual number of fatalities ranges from 6 to 8, with the deceased being treated at Polyclinic and PIMS hospitals.

<https://x.com/FakeNWatchdog/status/1861827701910229140>

Fake News

بے نظیر کی شہادت کے فوراً بعد جائے وقوعہ کو کیوں دھویا گیا اس سوال کی تلاش میں پیپلز پارٹی نے ن لیگ کے ساتھ مل کر D چوک کی جائے وقوعہ کو دھو دیا۔



Reality

YouTuber Imran Riaz shared an image claiming to show casualties from the PTI protests. However, the image was artificially created using AI, depicting a non-existent scene in ICT, including the road, adjacent buildings, and parked cars. Despite being fabricated the image has been shared thousands of times, with many believing it to be real.

<https://x.com/FakeNWatchdog/status/1862122877308252411>

Fake News



Reality

According to a news report by ARY, PTI founder Imran Khan has removed Barrister Gohar as party chairman and appointed former National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser as chairman and former Minister of State Ali Muhammad Khan as secretary-general. However, Asad Qaiser has strongly denied the news, stating that he has not been appointed as chairman.

<https://x.com/FakeNWatchdog/status/1862145858944356383>

Fake News



Reality

A fake Twitter account, @Salmankhanik, pretending to be Suleman Isa Khan, the son of former Prime Minister Imran Khan, has been interacting with PTI supporters. Shockingly, this fake account has garnered thousands of comments from users. In reality, Imran Khan's son's name is indeed Suleman Isa Khan, and he does not have any Twitter account.

<https://x.com/FakeNWatchdog/status/1862849621975793801>

Fake News



Reality

Reports circulating on social media attributed to Asad Qaiser, the former Speaker of the National Assembly and a member of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), claim that PTI will stage another sit-in at D-Chowk on December 7. However, PTI spokesperson Sheikh Waqas Akram has denied these reports, stating that no decision has been made regarding returning to D-Chowk or gathering on December 7.

<https://x.com/FakeNWatchdog/status/1862911897726493142>

Fake News



Reality

A video was shared on social media by PTI worker Falak Javed Khan, showing a mother crying at her son's grave, with the caption: "May God make the oppressors suffer the same pain." In response, a social media user, Sahara Anwar, allegedly a supporter of the Muslim League-N, labeled the woman as a "cruel woman" and shared a video from November 15, claiming that the original video was shared on the same day.

<https://x.com/FakeNWatchdog/status/1862916170417848796>

Fake News



Shahid Khan ✓
@SKhan_520

ٹی چوک سانحہ کے بعد پنجابی کمیونٹی نے آرمی اکیڈمیوں سے 600 نوجوانوں نے ریزائن کر دیا ہے جن کا ابھی فیوچر بننا تھا انہوں نے عمران خان کیلئے وہ بھی قربان کر دیا ہے
کاشف عباسی

Translate post

15:14 · 01 Dec 24 · 8,331 Views

Reality

Claims by a Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) social media activist @SKhan_520 Shahid Khan, that over 600 young individuals from Punjab, undergoing training at Pakistan Army academies, had resigned following the violent crackdown on PTI's protest at D-Chowk, have been debunked as completely fabricated and baseless by our team after verifying with the Pakistan Army.

<https://x.com/FakeNWatchdog/status/1863274957922312384>

Fake News

<p>Sanam Jamali @sana_j2 · 16h اسد فیصل اور محمود اچکزئی پر کرم میں حملہ۔ اسد فیصل اور محمود اچکزئی ایک ہی گاڑی میں کرم کے حالات پر کوہاٹ میں امن چرگے کیلئے جا رہے تھے اسد فیصل اور محمود اچکزئی کی گاڑی پر فائرنگ ہوئی دونوں محفوظ رہے۔</p> <p>21 46 260 2.8K</p>	<p>PTI SMT Imran Khan @NazimBapu74328 · 16h اسد فیصل اور محمود اچکزئی پر کرم میں حملہ۔ اسد فیصل اور محمود اچکزئی ایک ہی گاڑی میں کرم کے حالات پر کوہاٹ میں امن چرگے کیلئے جا رہے تھے ذرائع کے مطابق اسد فیصل اور محمود اچکزئی کی گاڑی پر فائرنگ ہوئی دونوں محفوظ رہے۔</p> <p>4 104</p>
<p>Obaid kayani @ObaidKaya... کے مطابق اسد فیصل اور محمود اچکزئی گیا ہے، ان کے موبائل بھی بند ہیں۔ اپنی حفظ و امان میں رکھے۔</p> <p>3 42 252 3.2K</p>	<p>Asad Qaiser @AsadQaiserP... بیڈیا پر اسد فیصل اور محمود خان اچکزئی پر کوہاٹ میں فائرنگ کی خبر فیک ہے۔ اس وقت اپنی رہائشگاہ میں موجود ہیں۔ میڈیا من گھڑت خبروں پر یقین نہ کیا جائے۔</p> <p>58 401 1.8K 18.2K</p>

Reality

Social media is abuzz with unverified reports of an alleged attack on the vehicle of former National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser and Mahmood Khan Achakzai, the head of the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, in Kohat. However, Asad Qaiser himself has denied these rumors through a tweet from his account, stating that he is safe and sound at his residence, and urging people not to believe in such fabricated news.

<https://x.com/FakeNWatchdog/status/1863562559363953082>

Fake News



Qasim Khan Suri @QasimKh... · 2d
 عمران خان جیل میں نہیں ہیں انہیں
 پچھلے 3 دنوں سے GHQ کے ایک انتہائی چھوٹے سے
 سیل میں بند کیا ہوا ہے جس کے ارد 150 سے 200
 تک فوجی پہرہ دے رہے ہیں سیل کے آگے دیوار بنائی ہے
 دن کو خان صاحب کے منہ پر کالا کپڑا ڈال دیتے ہیں
 رات کو کپڑا اتار دیتے ہیں بدترین ٹارچر کی زد میں
 ہیں۔ [Show more](#)

1.6K 12.5K 26.7K 679K



Qasim Khan Suri @QasimKh... · 2d
 5 سے 7 دن میں عمران خان کو نقصان (اللہ
 نہ کرے) پہنچانے کی سازش کر لی گئی ہے سارے ملک
 کو ایک ہی وقت میں سیل کرنے کی منصوبہ بندی ہے
 گزشتہ روز پولیس کے تمام بڑے افسران کے ساتھ
 اجلاس منعقد کیا گیا ہے اور کسی بڑے خطرناک پلان
 کی منصوبہ بندی ہے۔ زرائع

408 7.2K 13.5K 203K



Qasim Khan Suri @QasimKh... · 2d
 عمران خان کو کوئی ایسی چیز دی گئی ہے
 کہ جس سے ان کا ذہنی توازن خراب ہونے کا خطرہ ہے
 چھوٹے سے کمرے میں بند کر کے کسی زہریلی چیز کا
 سپرے کیا گیا ہے جس کی بو ان کے ذہن پر اثر کر رہی
 ہے عمران خان کی طبیعت خراب اور جان کو شدید
 خطرات لاحق ہیں۔ قریبی زرائع

1K 11.5K 22.2K 388K

Reality

Former Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Qasim Khan Suri claimed on Twitter that a conspiracy has been hatched to harm former Prime Minister Imran Khan within 5 to 7 days. Suri alleged that the entire country would be put under siege, and Imran Khan had been given something that would disrupt his balance. He also claimed that Imran Khan was locked in a small room and sprayed with poisonous substances. However, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government spokesperson Barrister Saif denied these claims, stating that rumors of Imran Khan being transferred from Adiala Jail are baseless. PTI spokesperson Waqas Akram also confirmed that Imran Khan's health is perfectly fine, and various reports about his health are unfounded.

These claims, including rumors about poisoning and inhumane treatment, were refuted by government and PTI spokespersons, who confirmed that Imran Khan was in good health.

<https://x.com/FakeNWatchdog/status/1863649255199576097>

Fake News

 **Farhan Khan** 🇺🇸 @FarhanKha... · 1d
 بریکنگ نیوز *بڑی خبر*
 اسلام آباد ہائیکورٹ نے انٹرنیشنل میڈیا BBC نیوز کو
 عمران خان سے ملنے کی اجازت دے دی
 #گولی_کیوں_چلائی

 **Shahid Khan** @SKhan_520 · 1d
 بڑی خبر
 اسلام آباد ہائیکورٹ نے انٹرنیشنل میڈیا BBC نیوز کو
 عمران خان سے ملنے کی اجازت دے دی

 **Ch. Shahzad Gill** @ShahzadG... · 1d
 خبر آرہی ہے کہ
 اسلام آباد ہائیکورٹ نے انٹرنیشنل میڈیا BBC نیوز کو
 عمران خان سے ملنے کی اجازت دے دی...

 **Hamid Mir fans** @Hamidmir01 · 1d
 اسلام آباد ہائیکورٹ نے انٹرنیشنل میڈیا BBC نیوز کو
 عمران خان سے ملنے کی اجازت دے دی

Reality

Rumors circulating on social media claim that the Islamabad High Court has allowed international media, specifically the BBC, to interview Imran Khan following a court order.

However, Fake News Watchdog's team verified with the Islamabad High Court, which revealed that no such permission was granted, nor did the BBC submit any request.

<https://x.com/FakeNWatchdog/status/1863843114630390193>

Fake News



Reality

A recent press conference held by DPO Dr. Ghayyas featured various images and videos of violent clashes during Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) protests.

However, one image shared during the conference had no connection to the ongoing protests. In fact, Punjab's Information Minister Azma Bokhari had shared the same image on October 4, 2024.

Senior journalist Tariq Mateen pointed out the fake image shown during the DPO's press conference, demanding action against the DPO for spreading fake news.

<https://x.com/FakeNWatchdog/status/1863852241683103919>

Fake News



Reality

Tahir Abbas, the [@PTIofficial](#) worker who fell from a container during a protest in Islamabad on November 26, has been spotted meeting with the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This encounter has put to rest rumors circulating on social media that Tahir Abbas had lost his life after falling from the container.

Abbas, a resident of Mandi Bahauddin in Punjab, was provided medical treatment and later shifted to the Chief Minister's House in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

It's worth noting that various fake news stories and rumors had been circulating on social media platforms and Pakistani media channels regarding the incident. However, the government and [@ICT_Police](#) had clarified that Abbas was not praying when he fell from the container, but rather making a TikTok video, and that he was alive and receiving medical treatment.

<https://x.com/FakeNWatchdog/status/1864403866122432560>

Findings and Analysis

The PTI protests in November 2024 witnessed an unprecedented surge of fake news, misinformation, and misleading narratives that influenced public perception, fueled tensions, and complicated the political situation in Pakistan. These incidents illustrate how both traditional and social media became tools for the dissemination of unverified or deliberately false information, exacerbating an already volatile environment. Below is a comprehensive summary of the key categories and specific instances of fake news during this period:

1. Fabricated Content Involving Public Figures

Several fake news stories targeted prominent personalities to lend credibility to false narratives. For instance, an image falsely attributed to South Asia analyst Michael Kugelman was widely circulated, despite his explicit denial of ever making the statement. Similarly, a fake Twitter account impersonating Imran Khan's son, Suleman Isa Khan, engaged with PTI supporters, gaining significant traction before being exposed. These fabrications reveal a systematic attempt to exploit the reputations of influential individuals to manipulate public sentiment.

2. Misrepresentation of Government Officials and Policies

Misinformation targeting government officials and their statements added to the chaos. A fabricated statement attributed to Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi suggested animosity toward the Kashmiri people, which the Ministry of Interior dismissed as a baseless attempt to incite divisions. Similarly, false claims about government policies, such as the closure of schools in Islamabad until December 2, 2024, created confusion and unnecessary panic.

3. Manipulated Visual Content

Visual misinformation played a central role in shaping public opinion. For example, a viral image claimed to show casualties from the protests but was later exposed as AI-generated. This incident highlights how technology can create convincing but entirely fake content. Additionally, an image presented during a press conference by DPO Dr. Ghayyas was revealed to be unrelated to the ongoing protests, raising questions about the authenticity of official narratives.



4. Fake News Targeting PTI Leaders

Multiple fake stories surrounded PTI leaders, such as reports of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur's arrest, which were later denied. Another claim that PTI founder Imran Khan had replaced Barrister Gohar with Asad Qaiser as the party chairman was also debunked. Such misinformation aimed to destabilize PTI's internal dynamics and undermine its credibility.

5. Exaggerated Protest Incidents and Fatalities

Misinformation about fatalities and injuries was widely spread to fuel emotions and intensify the conflict. Social media posts claimed bodies were arriving at hospitals due to gunshots and grenade injuries, which hospital administrations denied. Similarly, exaggerated numbers of deaths during clashes were circulated by PTI office holders and social media influencers, while official sources reported significantly lower figures. Such discrepancies sowed mistrust and escalated tensions.

6. Fabricated Stories of Military Involvement

False claims involving the military further complicated the situation. For instance, a PTI social media activist alleged that 600 young trainees at Pakistan Army academies had resigned in protest, which the Army categorically denied. These fabrications threatened to erode trust in national institutions and divert focus from the protests' actual issues.

7. Sensational Rumors About Imran Khan

Imran Khan, the focal point of the protests, was a major target of misinformation. Rumors of his poisoning and mistreatment in custody circulated widely, despite being refuted by PTI spokespersons and government officials. Other false reports included claims that the Islamabad High Court had permitted the BBC to interview Khan, which were proven unfounded. These narratives attempted to dramatize the situation, increasing public unrest.



8. Emotional Manipulation Through Social Media

Social media posts used emotional appeals to amplify public anger. For example, a video of a grieving mother at her son's grave was shared as evidence of oppression during the protests, even though the footage was taken prior to the events. Such content demonstrates how misinformation leverages human emotions to influence perceptions and mobilize action.

9. False Rumors of Future PTI Actions

Misinformation about PTI's future plans also circulated widely. Reports of a sit-in at D-Chowk on December 7 were refuted by PTI's spokesperson, highlighting how fake news is often used to create uncertainty and provoke reactions from political opponents.

10. Misinformation About Protest Participants

Individuals involved in the protests became targets of fake news as well. For example, Tahir Abbas, a PTI worker rumored to have died after falling from a container, was later confirmed to be alive and receiving medical treatment. This incident underscores the role of fake news in creating unnecessary alarm.

Conclusion

The events surrounding the PTI protests from 24–27 November 2024 underscored the profound impact of fake news on political, social, and institutional dynamics in Pakistan. Misinformation during this period did not merely serve as a byproduct of political unrest; it actively shaped the narrative, inflamed tensions, and influenced public actions. Fabricated content—whether through manipulated images, doctored videos, or false statements attributed to key figures—spread rapidly across social media and traditional news platforms, magnifying confusion and mistrust. This phenomenon revealed vulnerabilities in the country's information ecosystem, where unverified claims gained traction in the absence of effective countermeasures.

The role of social media was particularly significant, acting as both a tool for mobilization and a breeding ground for misinformation. The platform's speed and reach allowed false narratives to proliferate unchecked, with emotionally charged content exploiting public



sentiment. At the same time, lapses in journalistic standards by mainstream media contributed to the problem, as unverified reports from influential outlets further legitimized misleading information. The circulation of fake news was not limited to grassroots users or individual influencers but also involved established institutions, illustrating a systemic challenge in ensuring credible communication.

The consequences of this widespread misinformation were manifold. Public trust in media and government institutions eroded as conflicting narratives from different sources created an environment of uncertainty. Political polarization deepened, with both supporters and opponents of PTI becoming entrenched in echo chambers that reinforced their biases. On the ground, exaggerated claims of violence, arrests, and fatalities escalated tensions, potentially contributing to unnecessary confrontations between protesters and security forces. The misrepresentation of events also posed risks to the country's international reputation, as fabricated stories about leadership changes, military resignations, and human rights abuses garnered global attention.

Addressing the fake news crisis requires a multi-faceted approach. Firstly, media outlets and social media platforms must adopt robust fact-checking protocols and ensure the prompt identification and removal of fabricated content. Partnerships with independent fact-checking organizations can enhance credibility and counteract misinformation more effectively. Secondly, media literacy initiatives are essential to empower citizens to critically evaluate the information they consume. Educational campaigns targeting schools, universities, and online communities can play a vital role in fostering a more discerning audience.

Moreover, policymakers should consider developing comprehensive regulatory frameworks to address the challenges posed by fake news while safeguarding freedom of speech. These regulations should include mechanisms for accountability, penalties for deliberate dissemination of false information, and incentives for ethical reporting. Transparency from government institutions is also crucial, as timely and accurate communication can preempt the spread of misinformation and build public trust during crises.

The PTI protests serve as a case study in the profound consequences of fake news during politically sensitive periods. While the proliferation of misinformation highlighted systemic



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flaws in the country's information ecosystem, it also presented an opportunity to reflect and reform. By investing in media integrity, public education, and institutional transparency, Pakistan can build a more informed and resilient society capable of navigating future challenges with greater confidence and unity.

