

Pakistan Trip Report

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A photo report is available at http://peace.fresno.edu/Pakistan_Gallery

Traveling to Pakistan from Fresno takes longer than one might expect. A full forty-eight hours to get to Islamabad via San Francisco, London, Dubai and Karachi, followed by a two hour drive to Peshawar. Coming back the connections were worse and it required seventy-two hours of travel to return to Fresno. While getting settled on the plane leaving Dubai, a man carrying a falcon on his arm walked by. It turns out there were fifteen falcons and handlers on the plane, accompanying some members of the Saudi royal family. I met John Braithwaite of Australian National University in Karachi and we traveled together from there.

During the trip to Pakistan, Saddam Hussein was captured in Iraq and there was an assassination attempt against the president of Pakistan. One wondered how these events would affect our reception. Opting for a dramatic entry, I missed the last step deplaning in Islamabad and fell flat, computer case and suitcase flying. One knee bore the brunt of the fall and was impressively bloody through my torn pants. The computer, it turns out, was fine. I may need to send Lands' End a note about the effectiveness of their computer case.

We were met in Islamabad by our host [Malik Naveed Khan](#), Director of the Federal Investigation Agency of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. After some first aid we drove to his home in Peshawar where we were introduced to a group of people waiting to welcome us. We had a good discussion of restorative justice. The drive was a reminder of my time in Indonesia. Peshawar is at about the same latitude as Fresno and the weather was remarkably similar. They have the Hindu Kush and we have the Sierra Nevada influencing our weather. Peshawar is also just about halfway around the world, being 13 time zones east of Fresno.

John and I were housed at the Pearl Continental Hotel in Peshawar where the seminar was to be held. We were given internet connection dial-in cards which worked well, and I was able to keep up with email and Web work. Having left the day after classes ended there was a lot of unfinished business. We had FIA Inspector [Qazi Abdul Hameed Khan](#) as our guide and facilitator throughout our time in Pakistan. He was very helpful and saw to it that everything ran smoothly.

The seminar began with a plenary session including many guests, around 150 people in all. The opening address was given by Chief Guest Lt.Gen. (R) [Syed Iftikhar Hussain Shah](#), Governor of the North West Frontier Province. He said that the current justice system is giving neither justice nor peace, and that restorative justice might be a way to fix it. Pakistan has always had a rehabilitative concept of imprisonment, but it isn't working well.

The subject of using restorative justice principles for societal reconciliation was raised by my paper "Restorative Justice for nation building: reconciliation of people groups."

There was good discussion around this topic, which is important in a society divided along tribal and religious lines.

The jirga was discussed early and often as a traditional Pakistani dispute resolution method that looks very much like restorative justice. While it bears similarities, there are also important differences. It will be necessary to do training for jirga members to see the difference. Women and minority groups report that they do not receive fair treatment in the traditional jirga. It was a tribal jirga that recently ordered the gang rape of a girl whose brother had raped another girl.

Women were noticeable in their absence. A separate section was available at the opening plenary for women, and several attended. The seminar proper had 48 [official participants](#), but only one of those who regularly attended was a woman, and only [one woman presented](#). This was quite a change for me, coming from a university where 2/3 of the student body is female.

Besides participating in the seminar John and I were taken to visit a madrassa, an Islamic school for boys and girls, and also through the Khyber Pass to Afghanistan.

The madrassa was very interesting, particularly since such schools are much in the western news as places where terrorists are created. There was no sign of anti-western or other extremist sentiment at this school except for a sticker on one student locker saying “Jihad is holy war against America,” but that was the only such thing we saw in Pakistan. We were very cordially received. The girls’ classrooms at this school, in a separate building, have a [cubicle for the male teacher](#) to sit in so that the girls won’t be in his presence. His whiteboard slides in and out of the cubicle, and there is a drawer to be used for handing in assignments. These students take the same subjects and tests as public school students.

The Khyber Pass trip turned out to be more of an adventure than a sightseeing trip in California would be. We got into the car usually used to transport us, and then had a [truckload of police](#) lead the way while a chase car including an official photographer followed. When we transitioned out of Peshawar into the tribal area the police left us and were replaced by [a truck of Khyber Rifles soldiers](#), including a gunner with a belt-fed machine gun. We also had an additional chase car with [tribal militia](#).

This was all somewhat disconcerting for a pacifist, particularly when a request for a photo stop meant four vehicles turning off the road, and soldiers spreading out around us with the attendant traffic disruption. I had occasion to ask the commander of these soldiers why the big deal about our visit. He said that it was unlikely anything bad would happen, but that if anything did it would be extremely embarrassing, and it was better to take the precautions. My 1998 Pakistan guidebook says one is required to hire a gunman to escort you through the pass, so it isn’t out of the ordinary in these parts. Our guards were in good spirits and [enjoyed posing for photographs](#). The pass is 23 km long and full of history as the major invasion route between east and west. Alexander the Great’s army passed through here.

We had a good briefing on the pass and its history by [Major Sohail Azfar](#) at the [Michni Post](#) overlooking the Afghan border. He then accompanied us to the [border](#) where we crossed over briefly. Our hosts were anxious for us to see the free flow of people and trade goods over the border, and it didn't look like there was much in the way of [customs or immigration inspection](#). People were flowing freely both ways, and even [trucks](#) didn't get much attention.

After the visit to Afghanistan we repaired to the Khyber Rifles [officers' mess](#) for food and entertainment by dance groups doing traditional tribal dances with [shooting](#) and [swords](#). It was a very good trip with lots to learn.

One evening John and I visited the National Accountability Board, the anti-corruption police. This organization is charged with recovering money stolen through graft, and they have broad powers to arrest and seize assets. John and I spoke to them about the use of restorative justice principles in their work.

One surprise at the seminar was the unveiling of Howard Zehr's *Little Book of Restorative Justice* republished in Pakistan with additional material from a Pakistani perspective by Ali Gohar, who just graduated from the Eastern Mennonite University Conflict Transformation Program. They hope to put it out in local languages as well.

On the last day of the seminar John and I wore our shalwar kameez, the long shirt and floppy pants which are the traditional Pakistani dress. The clothes were custom tailored for us. Pants held up by elastic and having no pockets take some getting used to.

After the seminar was over we took a two-day trip to Islamabad by way of the mountains to the north of Peshawar, traveling through snow and looking into [Kashmir](#), the contested area between India and Pakistan. In Islamabad we visited the [King Faisal Mosque](#), a huge and impressive structure which can accommodate 100,000 worshippers.

The trip ended by my getting moved to business class for the flight from London to San Francisco. That was really nice. It was an honor to be able to work with people in Pakistan, and a unique experience in many ways.