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Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)**Crime Governance in Punjab: The Role of Crime Control Department****Ameer Hamza**

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Kms.sial786@gmail.com**Abstract**

In February 2025, the Government of Punjab established the Crime Control Department (CCD), a provincial police agency, to investigate rising organized crime and to succeed the tainted Organized Crime Unit (OCU). The CCD was positioned as an integrated and well-resourced response to serious crime by the provincial government, which gave the department independent powers of registration of First Information Reports, arrests, investigations, and prosecutions in respect of seventeen categories of offenses. This article analyzes the emergence and development of the CCD through an examination of government notices, statements by government officials, and news reports. In addition, it evaluates the CCD's performance in relation to a significant and growing body of evidence from HRCP of the use of staged encounters and extrajudicial killings as a method of operations by the CCD, resulting in over 1,000 killings of suspects in about a year. The article also considers the controversy surrounding the creation of the CCD and the response of Imran Khan, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader, to the killings and the proposed Punjab Control of Habitual Offenders and Anti-Social Behaviour Bill, 2026.

Keywords: Punjab Police, Crime Control Department, Police reform, Extrajudicial killings, Crime governance.

Introduction

Punjab, Pakistan's largest province, was plagued by rampant organized and violent crime, including armed robberies, dacoities, kidnaps for ransom, narcotics trafficking, and, more recently, land grabbing by criminal networks, also dubbed the "land mafia." At the same time, public trust in police, especially in special crime-economic wings, was at a historical low due to numerous scandals and proven cases of corruption. Thus, the government of the province announced the creation of the Crime Control Department (CCD) in Punjab in February 2025. It was formed as a unified crime-control agency that combines investigative, arresting, and prosecutorial powers and is patterned after the successful Counter Terrorism Department (CTD). This article will examine the CCD's origins, legal framework, personnel, and organization. Furthermore, it will also discuss the crime control department's rollout in Punjab, the organization's statements regarding its own efficacy, and most importantly, evaluate the evidence and arguments by human rights watchdogs, primarily the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), which have accused the CCD of staging encounters and committing extra-judicial killings. Additionally, this article will rely on information from police, including the CCD, official Pakistani media, independent domestic and international press, *Stratheaia*, and HRCP.

This article was written in mid-2026, so the information included is up to that point.

Research Questions

This article is organized around main research questions:

1. What are the organizational origins, statutory basis, mission, and structure of the Crime Control Department?
2. What are the claimed accomplishments of the Crime Control Department, and how do these allegations compare to other accounts of the department's practices?
3. How have political elements, opposition lawmakers, and human rights organizations reacted to the creation of the CCD, and what does their reaction say about the larger power struggle between centralized, performance-driven crime control and rule of law in modern Punjab?

Theoretical Framework

These two cases are analyzed through the prism of two theories that have been developed in the field of policing studies. The first theory is Packer's (1964) classification of the Crime Control and Due Process Models of Criminal Justice. According to this theory, Crime Control Model prioritizes the swift and final processing of suspected offenders with the aim of reducing crime by making police productive and effective. Due Process Model, in turn, emphasizes the goals of criminal law that are the protection of the innocent and the prevention of miscarriages of justice by ensuring that everyone is treated as innocent until proven guilty. It can be argued that the structure of the CCD and its focus on the need to ensure "efficient and timely results" demonstrate that this agency adheres to the Crime Control Model. This adherence is also manifested by the fact that it has the authority to make arrests and prosecute offenders. In contrast, the HRCP accusations are framed in the jurisdiction of Due Process philosophy because they appeal to the Constitution and the Code of Criminal Procedure, as well as international norms regarding the use of force.

The second body of theory related to police legitimacy and accountability. Research on police legitimacy, pioneered by Tyler (2004), and related notions of principal-agent accountability, suggest that the effectiveness of enforcement practices is less important in engendering public cooperation than the

perception of procedural fairness and accountability. The principal-agent literature also demonstrates that specialized units given extensive autonomy require a higher degree of external oversight, since the control mechanisms for such units must necessarily come from elsewhere due to their limited internal accountability. The two theoretical constructs discussed above are used, in turn, as interpretive frameworks for discussing the main topic of this article. Specifically, the structure and stated areas of focus of the CCD will be discussed in terms of the Crime Control Model, while its controversial human rights record will be evaluated through the prisms of Due Process and police accountability. The discussion will conclude by positing whether the division's Vigilance and Internal Accountability mechanism is able to balance crime control and due process concerns.

Methodology

This article uses a qualitative, document-based research design that is suitable for recently created and therefore still emerging institutions, whose case records do not yet appear in public domains. The study relies on three categories of sources. First, the official documents, including notifications, bulletins, and public statements was issued by Punjab Police and the CCD. Second, the reports in quality newspapers, including Dawn, The Express Tribune, Geo News, Pakistan Today, and Arab News, which pursue journalistic missions of news gathering and dissemination. Third, the fact-finding reports by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, an independent watchdog organization. The outlets covering similar issues in India were deliberately excluded to avoid conflation of data between the Pakistani and Indian provinces of Punjab that have little institutional common ground. Ascertaining the accuracy of information in such a young field was particularly challenging, and therefore, wherever possible, facts were triangulated between different sources; figures not triangulated explicitly are identified as such. The article prioritizes using secondary sources, which presents a limitation to the study, discussed further below.

Institutional Origins and Legal Basis

From the CIA and OCU to the CCD

The CCD was not emerged in isolation; rather, it was preceded by the Anti-Organized Crime Unit, popularly known as the CIA. This agency was reorganized into the Organized Crime Unit (OCU) almost two years before the inception of the CCD (The Express Tribune, 2025a). The OCU operated at the level of the district and city and was supposed to provide a collective response to organized crime, which is more effective than ordinary district police. However, the agency was accused of committing various crimes, including drug trafficking through drones in Lahore's border districts. Consequently, it was disbanded and replaced by the CCD (The Express Tribune, 2025).

The creation of the CCD was announced officially on 26 February 2025 and formally notified through a provincial government's instruction on 4 April 2025 (Stratheia, 2025; The Express Tribune, 2025a). In contrast to the OCU's chain of command, which was district-based, the CCD was formed to provide direct supervision by senior provincial police officials (The Express Tribune, 2025). Its functioning began in May 2025, but according to one human rights organization, it was documented in Pakistan in April 2025 (HUM News, 2026).

The Police (Amendment) Ordinance 2025

The legal basis for establishing the CCD was provided by the Police (Amendment) Ordinance 2025, which amended the Police Order 2002 to give the department legal autonomy (Stratheia, 2025). In essence,

the ordinance empowered the CCD to register First Information Reports for any offenses listed in the Fourth Schedule, create its own police stations free from the jurisdiction of the district police, and investigate a set of specific severe crimes (Legal Point, 2025). The initiative was launched by the Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, while the Inspector General of Police Dr. Usman Anwar supervised the creation of the new department and the Additional Inspector General Sohail Zafar Chattha was appointed to lead the newly established agency (Punjab Police, 2025a).

Mandate, Powers, and Core Functions

The CCD deals with the investigation and prosecution of the seventeen types of serious crime as stated (The Express Tribune, 2025). The police administration headed by Punjab Police chief stated that the department sets priorities in the apprehension and prosecution of major narcotic-trafficking lords and other dangerous criminals, eradicating no-go zones under the control of criminals, providing security to high-profile functions, and targeting kidnapping for ransom, extortion, robbery, robbery-cum-murder, and robbery-cum-rape cases (Punjab Police, 2025a; Dawn, 2025b). Other areas targeted by the police include reducing vehicle thefts, targeting land-grabbing mafias, provincial criminal activities, and promoting inter-district coordination to fight particular crimes (Dawn, 2025).

Critically, the CCD possesses independent legal authority to register First Information Reports, conduct arrests, investigate cases, and pursue prosecutions, placing the department on institutional footing comparable to the CTD (Stratheia, 2025). Punjab Police leadership has explicitly cited the CTD as the organizational template for the CCD's design, training regime, and compensation structure, stating that CCD personnel would receive salaries and allowances equivalent to those of CTD officers and undergo CTD-style specialized training (Punjab Police, 2025b).

Organizational Architecture

Command Structure

The Civilian Complaints Directorate's management structure consists of an Additional Inspector General of Police at the helm, with three Deputy Inspector Generals, ten Senior Superintendents of Police, thirteen Superintendents of Police, and forty-seven Deputy Superintendents of Police (The Express Tribune, 2025a). At the regional level, the number of Senior Superintendents of Police is led by an SSP as the Regional Officer, with Superintendents of Police managing the affairs of the capital city, city districts administered by Superintendents of Police, and districts controlled by Deputy Superintendents of Police who have at their disposal Assistant Sub-Inspectors, head constables, and constables (Stratheia, 2025; The Express Tribune, 2025a).

Personnel and Recruitment

The department was initially staffed with approximately 4250-4258 authorized personnel, with slight variations in numbers reported by different outlets (The Express Tribune, 2025a; Dawn, 2025a). About 2258 personnel came on board as restructured Punjab Police personnel, with recruitment drives concluding in April and May 2025 to fill all vacant slots in the 38 CCD stations dotted across the province (Legal Point, 2025). The Punjab government also announced plans to recruit about 4000 additional personnel (Dawn, 2025b).

Budget and Resource Allocation

The Punjab government allocated an annual budget of approximately Rs 5.56 billion for the CCD in 2025 (Stratheia, 2025). Personnel deployment figures indicate 900 officers in Lahore, 1,000 across Rawalpindi,

Faisalabad, Multan, and Gujranwala, 1,500 assigned to Category A districts, and 850 to Category B districts (The Express Tribune, 2025a).

Technology and Infrastructure

The CCD has been equipped with a centralized criminal database intended to track offenders across the province, surveillance and monitoring systems, and modern IT infrastructure (Dawn, 2025b; Stratheia, 2025). Reported measures include drone surveillance intended to reach a crime scene within roughly five minutes of a report, WhatsApp-based reporting channels and public helplines, GPS-based monitoring, and rudimentary AI-assisted detection tools (Legal Point, 2025).

Operational Rollout and Timeline

Following its April 2025 notification, the CCD progressively established thirty-eight district-level police stations across Punjab, modeled on the CTD's station structure, with recruitment and equipment procurement continuing through mid-2025 (Legal Point, 2025). The department began sustained operations in May 2025 and, within its first year, expanded its use of surveillance and reporting technologies while continuing to draw personnel and logistical support from district police units (Legal Point, 2025; HUM News, 2026).

Relationship with Existing Police Structures

The CCD functions as one of thirteen specialized wings within Punjab Police, alongside units such as the Counter Terrorism Department, Investigation Branch, Special Branch, and Punjab Highway Patrol (The Express Tribune, 2025b). District police officers had retained their jurisdiction over major cases while providing logistical support to the CCD, and district units had continued to provide technical support to the CCD (The Express Tribune, 2025a). In Lahore, the agency's CIA (counter-intelligence and anti-espionage) wing remained operational alongside the CCD, rather than being disbanded (The Express Tribune, 2025a). The post of Deputy Inspector General of Police for Vigilance and Internal Accountability was created within the CCD's administrative command to serve as a safeguard against future government surveillance and intelligence operations (The Express Tribune, 2025a).

Claimed Operational Performance

After nearly a year of operations, the new police force in Punjab called the Crime Control Department (CCD) reported a significant decrease of many serious crimes, based on the comparison of relevant data from May 2024 to the same period in 2025 (HUM News, 2026). According to the report, the murder incidents dropped by nearly 39% in Lahore, from 361 to 220 cases. Also, the number of attempted killings reduced by about 38%, from 812 to 504 cases (HUM News, 2026). In addition, according to the HRCP, the CCD's court documents show that crimes related to property decreased by over 60% during seven months compared to the same period in 2024. Dacoity-related murders also dropped by an estimated 60%.

At the same time, the Punjab Police registered 89,372 proclaimed criminals, 36,000 court-absconders, and 18,492 habitual offenders in 2025 ("Associated Press of Pakistan," 2025). Even though these statistics were not reported by the CCD, the police force had a major impact on the arrests' surge throughout the province. The CCD spokesperson confirmed that all activities take place within the Constitution, Police Order 2002, and relevant criminal procedure laws, emphasizing that the arrests are the force's primary mission, not killings (HUM News, 2026).

Human Rights Concerns and the HRCP Report

Documented Encounter Statistics

Since mid-2025, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has been releasing successive reports highlighting a disturbing upsurge in police "encounters", mainly attributable to the CCD. An early survey by the HRCP revealed that Punjab had recorded over 500 alleged encounters since January 2025, resulting in over 670 fatalities, a figure deemed the highest amongst all provinces (Dawn, 2025c). A more comprehensive fact finding report by the HRCP, published on 17 February 2026, revealed that there were at least 670 CCD encounters in the first eight months of 2025, inflicting 924 casualties in comparison to just two police personnel killed in similar circumstances (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2026; The Express Tribune, 2026a; Geo News, 2026). The HRCP concluded that such a disproportionately high number (over two encounters per day) together with the fact that similar allegations were reported from all districts evidenced a systematic pattern of killings by the CCD (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2026).

In April 2026, the Human Rights Claims Preservation (HRCP) officials reported that more than one thousand suspects have died in encounters related to the CCD since the department's establishment in April 2025 ("Daily Pioneer," 2026). As of the following year, the number of people killed during encounters reached approximately one thousand, one hundred as the total number of such meetings passed 808 ("India News Stream," 2026). This figure was reported in the context of one human rights organization's criticism of a bill proposed by the Punjab government.

Legal and Constitutional Issues

The HRCP February 2026 report raised issues related to CCD's alleged violations of the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials mandating use of deadly force only when absolutely unavoidable and proportionate and calling for accountability in cases of violation (The Express Tribune, 2026a). The report noted that following the Code of Criminal Procedure, magisterial inquiries (inquests) appear to be routinely bypassed in the cases under review by the commission (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2026). According to the report, families of the deceased are reportedly being harassed to conduct the funeral services at an early date and deter from taking legal action, which HRCP considered as obstruction of justice (The Express Tribune, 2026a). Consequently, the HRCP recommended a province-wide halt to encounter operations while the situation is reviewed. In addition, a judicial commission should be formed to investigate the killings and recommend appropriate action while FIA (Federal Investigation Agency) could be directed by the National Commission for Human Rights to open criminal investigations. Moreover, there is a need for an independent civilian police oversight agency and provision of compensation to the families of those killed in encounters (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2026; Geo News, 2026).

The CCD's Response

The CCD responded to the HRCP by denying the allegations made against them in the report. They claimed that they operated within the confines of the constitution and the law by only using force when faced with an armed conflict or when they were in imminent danger (HUM News, 2026). The CCD admitted that personal misconduct was not tolerable and that individuals found wanting would be prosecuted to the full extent of the law both administratively and criminally (HUM News, 2026).

Political and Legislative Reactions

Opposition in the Punjab Assembly

CCD creation gave rise to political controversy from the beginning. Malik Ahmad Khan Bhachar, the Leader of the Opposition in the Punjab Assembly, argued that there was no need for a brand-new department when existing instruments could serve the purpose, suggesting that it was made to impose on opposition lawmakers (The Express Tribune, 2025b). In addition, several critics pointed out that many of the promoted officials had previously occupied posts responsible for conducting politically sensitive investigations, raising questions about the neutrality of the new department (The Express Tribune, 2025b).

PTI and Imran Khan's Intervention

As the HRCP documentation of the encounters deaths progressed in 2025 and beyond, the issue took on a distinctly political hue. In April 2026 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder and former prime minister Imran Khan, alongside the HRCP, called upon the government to open an immediate judicial probe into the murders of over a thousand individuals who had been on the assumed staged encounters carried out by the CCD (Daily Pioneer, 2026). PTI labeled the department as having absolute impunity for its actions in the province as “law of the jungle” (Daily Pioneer, 2026). Thus, the controversy around the CCD encounters increasingly became inextricably linked to PTI’s charges of transgressions and personal attacks towards the latter’s supporters a further manifestation of the province’s deep-seated political struggle.

The Habitual Offenders Bill Controversy

In mid-2026, Pakistan was engulfed in renewed controversy over the proposed Punjab Control of Habitual Offenders and Anti-Social Behaviour Bill, 2026, which sought to repeal the century-old Restriction of Habitual Offenders (Punjab) Act, 1918 and the Punjab Control of Goondas Ordinance, 1959 (Arab News, 2026). The new law would have allowed the government to freeze bank accounts, attach property, cancel social media profiles, confiscate phones, and electronically monitor individuals under the supervision of an executive-authorized committee, without requiring a court conviction (Pakistan Today, 2026; Arab News, 2026). HRCP argued that the proposed law sought to grant far too much power to the government without due process and cautioned that surveillance, movement restrictions, and property seizures should be authorized only if they were found to be lawful, necessary, and proportionate (Dawn, 2026). PTI lawmakers accused the government of seeking to enact “a repressive colonial relic” (The Express Tribune, 2026b), whereas the opposition in the Punjab Assembly accused the government of wanting to use it to cow the people into line and compared it to the accountability laws that targeted political opponents (Dawn, 2026). Following a stormy session in which the speaker admitted that he had been unaware that the bill had been brought before the Assembly, and after objections from the opposition members, civil society groups, and lawyers, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif ordered the bill to be sent back to the Law Department and the cabinet for revision and re-submission to the Assembly (The Nation, 2026; The Express Tribune, 2026b). Although the habitual offenders bill is separate from the CCD, the controversy around it is part of the larger context of the debate over the expansion of state and police powers in Punjab, which has also been met with sustained objections from human rights groups and the opposition parties.

Comparative Analysis: The CCD and the CTD Model

The CCD's designers have explicitly compared the unit to the Counter Terrorism Department, which the police in Punjab also believe has played a crucial role in countering terrorism in the province in the last decade (Dawn, 2025b; Punjab Police, 2025b). However, such a comparison appears only partially relevant at best. While the CTD deals with a far narrower category of crimes, there is a broad consensus on the definition of terrorism, as well as international agreements on counter-terrorism measures. Organized crime takes a far wider area, which also overlaps with regular non-economic police work, where erroneous actions lead to abuses of power. The number of civilian casualties HRCP reported for the CCD in its first year strongly suggests that attempting to apply similar methods to all types of organized crime would cause significantly worse human rights violations than those committed by the CTD.

Discussion: Balancing Public Safety, Accountability, and the Rule of Law

The situation with the center can be used as an example of how the desire of the provinces to quickly show results in the fight against organized crime has collided with the principles of the law that should protect the province from the state's excessive use of capital punishment. Thus, the Stratheia (2025) report shows that already before the creation of the Center for Combating Crime (CCD), police officers reported a significant increase in encounters with potential suspects. In particular, there were 401 such cases in 2022, 842 in 2023, and 1,008 in 2024. Adding to that, already in 2024, 502 suspects died as a result of lethal force. However, according to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP, 2026), the number of cases in the first eight months of 2025 was almost twice as large (924). So, one can see that the tendency for police officers to solve problems with criminals by using deadly force exploded after the establishment of the CCD and has grown significantly against the backdrop of nationwide protests.

This raises a basic governance issue concerning the credibility of the decreases in reported incidents of crimes such as Lahore's murders and attempted murders announced by the CCD (HUM News, 2026). To what extent has the CCD leveraged its capacity to investigate and prosecute crimes within the framework of the law to deter perpetrators, and to what extent have its operations resulted in extrajudicial killings characteristic of the practices advanced by the HRCP? Interpreted within the context of Packer's (1964) model, the CCD appears to operationalize the Crime Control model by emphasizing the need for expeditious and conclusive investigations, as demonstrated by its own rhetoric on the subject, while the documentation by the HRCP reflects a Due Process orientation by focusing on the formal aspects of investigations that have been denied by the CCD itself through reports of no magisterial inquiries. Consequently, by failing to provide the type of independent audits of policing operations that would alleviate police legitimacy concerns of the community, as advocated by Tyler (2004), and effectively address the principal-agent governance problem, the CCD appears to have exacerbated it, as evidenced by the controversy over the Habitual Offenders Bill, which once again raises concerns by the opposition and the judiciary over the politicization of the Punjab police.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The analysis was based mainly on secondary sources, as the author did not have direct access to the case files of the CCD or HRCP. Therefore, it may be challenging to verify some of the figures related to the CCD death toll. Indeed, even the number of fatalities is subject to change as the CCD is an evolving entity:

the number of recorded deaths increased from 670 in late 2025 to over 1,000 in April 2026 and reached about 1,100 by mid-2026. Subsequent studies should attempt to investigate a significant number of encounters with the CCD to confirm the findings and ensure that they are not predetermined by the initial set of cases reviewed. Furthermore, it would be helpful to compare the dynamics across different provinces to assess whether the trends identified are consistent across various jurisdictions. It would also be interesting to see whether the described patterns hold when the jurisdiction of the CCD is expanded, as the claims of reduced crime rates might only be evident before the release of information obtained by independent investigations.

Conclusion

The Crime Control Department is a significant experiment in provincial crime control, combining together specialized personnel, extended legal powers, and enhanced surveillance abilities under one governmental umbrella, similarly to how the Counter Terrorism Department was created several years earlier. According to its own reports, the very creation of the CCD has already improved the province's crime reduction performance by hundreds of thousands of rupees within the first year of its existence. Meanwhile, the very same department is accused by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan of committing staged encounters and extrajudicial killings of over a thousand suspects already within a year after its opening. In reality, these two statistics are not necessarily at odds, which is why the public needs an independent investigation not of the Counter Terrorism Department, as HRCP, PTI, and others have already demanded, but rather of the CCD itself, which should be undertaken in order to establish whether there is any connection between the two. As the department continues its independent development, and as the debate over the government's expanding power base, fueled by the Habitual Offenders Bill, is set to continue, the Crime Control Department and the controversy around it will serve as a useful lesson in crime prevention for years to come.

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