



Benazir Bhutto biography

SYNOPSIS

Benazir Bhutto was born on June 21, 1953, in Karachi, SE Pakistan, the child of former premier [Zulfikar Ali Bhutto](#). She inherited leadership of the PPP after a military coup overthrew her father's government and won election in 1988, becoming the first female prime minister of a Muslim nation. In 2007 she returned to Pakistan after an extended exile, but was killed in a suicide attack.

EARLY LIFE

Public figure. Benazir Bhutto was born June 21, 1953, in Karachi, SE Pakistan, the eldest child of former premier [Zulfikar Ali Bhutto](#). He founded the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and was prime minister from 1971 to 1977. After completing her early education in Pakistan, she pursued her higher education in the United States. From 1969 to 1973, she attended Radcliffe College, and then Harvard University, where she graduated with a B.A. degree in comparative government. It was then onto the United Kingdom to study at Oxford from 1973 to 1977. There, she completed a course in International Law and Diplomacy.

Bhutto returned to Pakistan in 1977, and was placed under house arrest after the military coup led by General Mohammad Zia ul-Haq overthrew her father's government. One year after Zia ul-Haq became president in 1978, the elder Bhutto was hanged after his conviction on charges of authorizing the murder of an opponent. She inherited her father's leadership of the PPP.

There was more family tragedy in 1980 when Bhutto's brother Shahnawaz was killed in his apartment on the Riviera in 1980. The family insisted he was poisoned, but no charges were brought. Another brother, Murtaza, died in 1996 (while his sister was in power) in a gun battle with police in Karachi.

She moved to England in 1984, becoming the joint leader in exile of the PPP, then returned to Pakistan on April 10, 1986, to launch a nationwide campaign for 'open elections.

She married a wealthy landowner, Asif Ali Zardari, in Karachi on December 18, 1987. The couple had three children: son Bilawal and two daughters, Bakhtawar and Aseefa.

QUICK FACTS

NAME: Benazir Bhutto
OCCUPATION: [Prime Minister](#)
BIRTH DATE: [June 21, 1953](#)
DEATH DATE: [December 27, 2007](#)
EDUCATION: [Radcliffe College](#), [Harvard University](#), [Oxford](#)
PLACE OF BIRTH: Karachi, Pakistan
PLACE OF DEATH: Rawalpindi, Pakistan

BEST KNOWN FOR

Benazir Bhutto was the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the first female prime minister of a Muslim nation. She was killed by a suicide bomber in 2007.

PAKISTAN PRESIDENT

Zia ul-Haq's dictatorship ended when he was killed in a plane crash in 1988. And Bhutto was elected prime minister barely three months after giving birth to her first child. She became the first ever female prime minister of a Muslim nation on December 1, 1988. Bhutto was defeated in the 1990 election, and found herself in court defending herself against several charges of misconduct while in office. Bhutto continued to be a prominent focus of opposition discontent, and won a further election in 1993, but was replaced in 1996.

While in self-imposed exile in Britain and Dubai, she was convicted in 1999 of corruption and sentenced to three years in prison. She continued to direct her party from abroad, being re-affirmed as PPP leader in 2002.

Bhutto returned to Pakistan on October 18, 2007, after President Musharraf granted her amnesty on all corruption charges, opening the way for her return and a possible power-sharing agreement.

Bhutto's homecoming rally after eight years in exile was hit by a suicide attack, killing 136 people. She only survived after ducking down at the moment of impact behind her armored vehicle. Bhutto said it was Pakistan's "blackest day" when Musharraf imposed a state of emergency Nov. 3 and threatened to bring her supporters on to the streets in mass demonstrations. She was placed under house arrest Nov. 9. Bhutto called for his resignation four days later. Emergency rule was lifted Dec.

ASSASSINATION

Bhutto was killed when an assassin fired shots and then blew himself up after an election campaign rally in Rawalpindi on December 27, 2007. The attack also killed 28 others and wounded at least another 100. The attacker struck just minutes after Bhutto addressed a rally of thousands of supporters in the garrison city of Rawalpindi, 8 miles south of Islamabad. She died after hitting her head on part of her vehicle's sunroof -- not as a result of bullets or shrapnel, a spokesman for Pakistan's Interior Ministry said. President Musharraf said he had asked a team of investigators from Britain's Scotland Yard to assist in the investigation into Bhutto's killing. Hundreds of thousands of mourners paid last respects to former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on December 28, 2007 as she was buried at her family's mausoleum in Garhi Khuda Bakhsh, the southern province of Sindh. Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf announced three days of mourning. Bhutto's husband, Asif Ali Zardari, her three children and her sister Sanam attended the burial. Bhutto was buried alongside her father [Zulfikar Ali Bhutto](#), Pakistan's first popularly elected prime minister who was later on executed by hanging.

The shooting and bombing attack on the charismatic former prime minister plunged Pakistan into turmoil. Pakistan is armed with nuclear weapons and is a key U.S. ally in the war

on terrorism. Furious supporters rampaged through several cities, torching cars, trains and stores in violence that left at least 23 dead.

Pakistan's election commission announced January 2, 2008 that parliamentary elections would be postponed until February 18, a delay of six weeks. Bhutto reportedly had been planning to give two visiting American lawmakers a 160-page report accusing the Musharraf government of taking steps to rig the Jan. 8 vote.

WHO'S TO BLAME?

"The United States strongly condemns this cowardly act by murderous extremists who are trying to undermine Pakistan's democracy," President Bush said from his ranch near Crawford, "Those who committed this crime must be brought to justice."

Pakistan's Interior Ministry also revealed that it had "irrefutable evidence" showing that al Qaeda was behind Bhutto's assassination. Brigadier Javed Iqbal Cheema said the government had recorded an "intelligence intercept" in which "al Qaeda leader" Baitullah Mehsud "congratulated his people for carrying out this cowardly act." Mehsud is regarded as the commander of pro-Taliban forces in the lawless Pakistani tribal region South Waziristan, where al-Qaida fighters are also active. Mehsud has denied involvement.

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