



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 4

**Human rights situations that require the Council's attention**

### **Written statement\* submitted by Union of Northwest Human Rights Organisation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[11 August 2024]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



## **Systematic Appropriation of Land Belonging to Sindhi People by the Pakistan Army**

We request your urgent attention to the multifaceted and multipronged vast scale land grabbing by Pakistan army belonging to indigenous Sindhi people. The army because of its dominant status and power carry out these misappropriations with impunity and disregard to the rights and wellbeing of the people impacted by these actions and designs. Although, the process started from the inception of Pakistan, but in recent years it has gained an unprecedented pace. This is severely impacting the rights of millions of Sindhi people to life, food, economic wellbeing and social development. Although, the land of Sindhi people is occupied in numerous ways, but we highlight the systematic three-pronged attack where the army is the obvious and direct beneficiary of the land grab.

### **Residential Lands**

In 2024, the army has got allotted 6,000 acres (>24 km<sup>2</sup>) of land in the Hawkes Bay area of Karachi for the extension of Defence Housing Authority (DHA). The DHA is a housing authority established for the welfare of officers of the armed forces of Pakistan. It is important to note that in Karachi, army already holds more than 20,000 acres (> 80 km<sup>2</sup>) under DHA and DHA city. Pakistan army owns more than half of the lands of Karachi under its DHA and other housing schemes and cantonment and naval bases and facilities. The newly acquired 6,000 acres is one of the costliest lands in the country worth around 10,000 billion rupees. As has happened in the past the poor residents of these villages will be displaced with ruthless force and their houses and villages bulldozed to pave the way for the development. As a result of this additional acquisition for DHA, more than 45 villages, many centuries old, will get vacated, thousands of the residents will be displaced and will lose their lands, houses and livelihood and communities will be destroyed. Rather spending resources for the uplift of these poor and marginalised people and communities, these will be used for the development of one of the costliest houses of the country enormously benefitting the army.

### **The Agricultural Lands**

Historically, the coercion and exodus of Sindhi Hindus at the inception of Pakistan marked the beginning of the massive land appropriation in Sindh. More than 700,000 acres of lands of Sindhi Hindus were handed over to people from outside Sindh denying these lands to poor peasants and small farmers who have worked on these lands for generations. The situation intensified in 50s, when further millions of acres of the most valuable and fertile agricultural lands of Sindh were allotted to military and their affiliates in the command areas of Guddu, Sukkur and Kotri barrages. Further tens of thousands of acres of forest land of Sindhi people have been allotted to the army. This process of acquisition has remained devoid of transparency and legal propriety.

The hunger of Pakistan army for land grab appears to be insatiable. In 2024, the interim government, which did not have legal mandate to make decisions on such critical matters, allotted 52,700 acres of land in Sindh to the army for corporate farming. The army has identified and seeking to occupy a further massive 2 million acres of land in the Nara area of Sindh for corporate farming. This is happening in the face of millions of Sindhi peasants living in miserable conditions trapped in multidimensional and absolute poverty.

### **Lands for Military Cantonments**

Pakistan army has acquired hundreds of thousands of acres of land for the current 13 cantonments in Sindh, many in the middle of on most valuable lands of the cities of Sindh. Not content with this, the army has started to construct one more cantonment in Sindh in Sakrand tahseel. On September 28 2023, village Marhi Jalbani village, in Sakrand tahseel, was surrounded by the rangers and police and villagers were fired upon directly and indiscriminately resulting in the death of four and injuring scores.

Now the lands vacated in the area are being used for building of the Sakrand cantonment. Now it has become clear that the brutal attack on Marhi village residents was to create an atmosphere of fear to get the lands vacated for the construction of the cantonment.

We would like to bring to your kind notice that all these acts of occupation of lands of Sindhi people by Pakistan army have invariably resulted in misery, suffering, displacement, poverty, destruction of communities for millions of Sindhis and constitute to grave violation of all the human rights including right to life, food, economic and social wellbeing. Please also note that the military which is predominantly from Punjab does not represent the local Indigenous Sindhi people.

In this desperate situation we request the UN Human rights Council to:

1. Urge the Pakistani government to halt the ongoing land grabs in Sindh.
2. Ensure the return of seized lands to their rightful Sindhi owners.
3. Promote the allocation of lands intended for corporate farming to land-less peasants to alleviate poverty and malnutrition in Sindh.
4. Demand transparency, legal compliance, and accountability in all regional land transfers, especially those involving commercial and military entities.

These actions are imperative to address the severe human rights violations and to uphold the dignity and rights of the Indigenous Sindhi people.

We thank the Council for its consideration and look forward to your support in rectifying these grave injustices to millions of Sindhi people.

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