



Synopsis: Gujjar and Orangi Nala Housing Survey

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Introduction:

On August 27 last year, Karachi saw record-breaking rainfall which led to unprecedented urban flooding and a near-collapse of its infrastructure. Among the communities most impacted were residents of settlements along Gujjar and Orangi Nullahs, many of whom saw their entire homes go underwater. Subsequently, the Supreme Court of Pakistan issued a [judgement](#) directing the Sindh Government and the NDMA to clean up Karachi's major stormwater drains. Then, in February 2020, the government of Sindh initiated a large-scale anti-encroachment operation along the Gujjar and Orangi Nullahs, in accordance with the Supreme Court order of August 2020. The anti-encroachment operation was based on a [Global Navigation Satellite System Survey](#) that identified structures required for demolition by flying a drone over areas impacted. Then, these structures were assigned unique ID numbers and percentages that delineated how much area was required for demolition. The ensuing anti-encroachment operation saw the large-scale displacement of residents and the demolition of thousands of homes across low-income housing settlements in Karachi.

The Karachi Bachao Tehreek undertook a research and data collection initiative to challenge the premise of the anti-encroachment operation and explore its consequences in material and social costs to the affectees. This was a collaborative effort between activists, trained researchers working on the issue, and residents of the communities who had in-depth knowledge of the areas affected.

A household survey consisting of 24 questions was put together collaboratively by our data team. The questions were aimed at assessing the economic and social risks that affectees would become vulnerable to as a result of the demolition drive. A mixed-methods approach was deployed where data was collected through household surveys, informal interviews and

digital media. Our findings from this activity revealed grave discrepancies between the [survey commissioned to NED University](#) by the Sindh Government as the basis for the anti-encroachment operation; statements by governing bodies executing the demolition campaign; and the actual situation on the ground.

Methodology:

Our methodological practice was constructed around the two overarching questions we sought to answer: (1) Was there substantive evidence to support the claims the Sindh Government had made to justify the demolitions and evictions they had engineered across the Gujjar and Orangi Nullahs? (2) What were the material and social costs borne by the affectees of these demolitions and evictions?

In order to answer these questions, we curated a team of researchers that consisted of professional researchers, social scientists, urban planners, and affectees. Over the span of three months, from June 2021 to August 2021, we collectively worked to gather a combination of qualitative, quantitative, and visual data to help answer the two primary questions we had started with. Our primary processes of data gathering can be broken down into three components:

- (1) a survey, comprising of qualitative and quantitative sections, that was distributed in the affected communities through snowball sampling techniques;
- (2) a series of informal interviews with the affectees who were part of organized frameworks for resistance within their communities;
- (3) a concentrated effort to gather visual data in order to document the processes and consequences of the demolition operation.

Our sites for data collection spanned multiple housing settlements along the Gujjar Nullah. The Mutasireen Committee set up camps in different areas across the Gujjar Nullah where people were encouraged to come. They were then briefed about the survey and taken through the form. Affectees who were not able to come to the camps were sent a link to a digitized version of the survey. A total of 350 households were surveyed along the Gujjar Nullah. The total number of housing settlements covered was 32.

As such, our findings reflect a wide variety of social research and data collection methodologies to build a holistic picture of the situation in the Gujjar Nullah, highlighting

major discrepancies with the extremely limited survey commissioned to NED University and its massive oversights.

Findings:

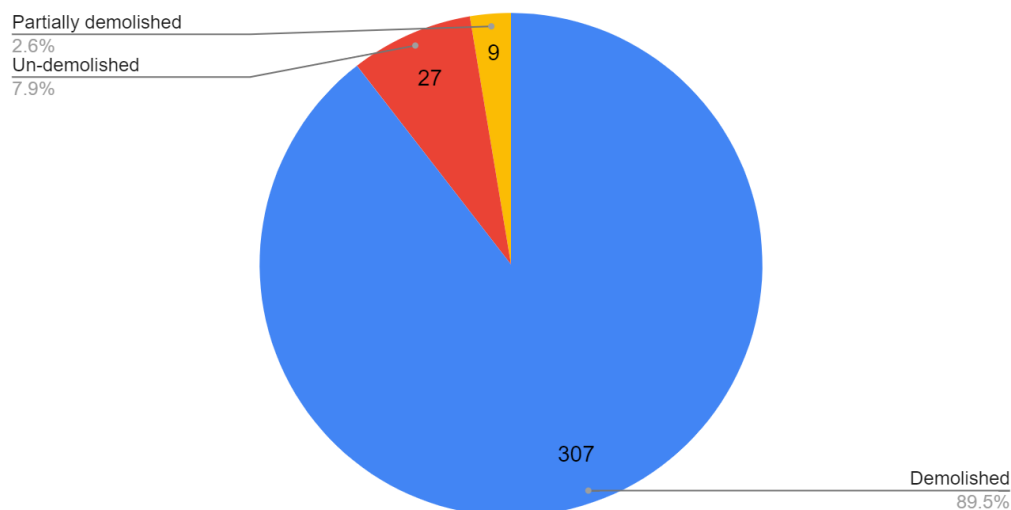
Our findings show the multitude of ways in which the 'anti-eviction drive' is a deeply flawed project. Both, in terms of the false premise that it was built upon, and the violence it has incurred to marginalized peoples in the city. As such, we can broadly organize our findings into the following five categories:

- (1) We were able to determine the full extent of the financial cost of these demolitions, borne by the affectees;
- (2) We were able to find that all residents have some sort of documentation to prove that they have been living on this land for a considerable period of time;
- (3) We were able to consolidate evidence of the police brutality against affectees and the human cost of the operation;
- (4) We were able to gather quantitative data that properly illustrates the extent of the people affected by the drive, a figure that the government has not sought to determine itself;
- (5) We were able to discover the multitude of ways in which the operation was procedurally flawed, according to the government's own rules.

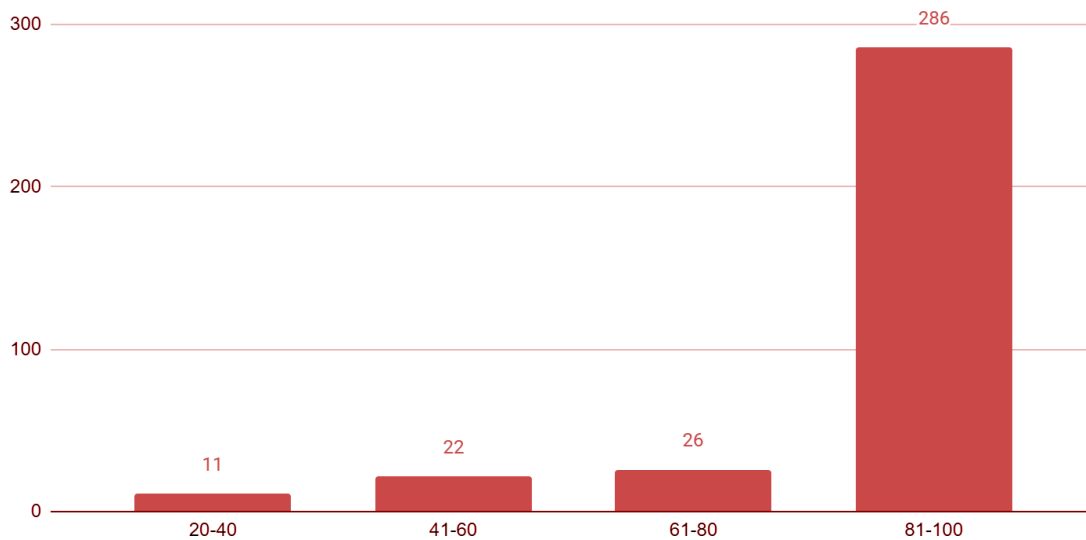
Similar to our previous survey activity, our findings this time have also shown that the allotment of house IDs and the subsequent demolition activity have all been extremely uneven. Some houses that were marked to have a certain percentage demolished have been completely demolished while others have an ID which is faulty, i.e. is shared with other households, bearing incorrect percentage to be demolished, or completely absent from the government survey.

Current Status of Houses as of survey date:

According to our survey findings, 89.5% of households have been completely demolished while 2.6% were partially demolished. Only 7.9% remain undemolished. While the demolition operations have been fast-paced, the process of compensation has been confusing and uneven. 35% of affectees have received the first installment of their 90k cheques meant for payment of rent, however only 72% of those have been able to convert their cheques into cash. It's important to note that this does not legally qualify as "compensation" and is accepted by affectees and activists as a temporary stop-gap rent payment until proper rehabilitation and compensation for loss is provided. According Section VI of the [United Nations' Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development based Evictions and Displacement](#), compensation in such cases should be proportional to the gravity of the losses incurred. This includes, "loss of life or limb; physical or mental harm; lost opportunities, including employment, education and social benefits; material damages and loss of earnings, including loss of earning potential; moral damage; and costs required for legal or expert assistance, medicine and medical services, and psychological and social services." The guidelines further state that cash compensation can not replace "real compensation in the form of land and common property resources." This means that if affectees have lost land as a result of a development project then they should be compensated with "land commensurate in quality, size and value, or better".



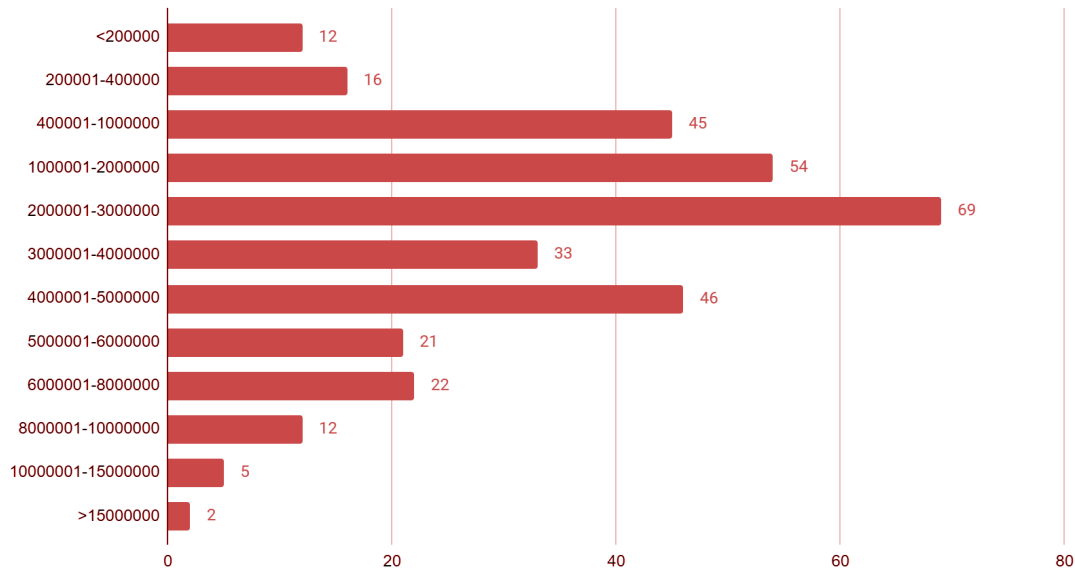
Amongst all of households surveyed, an average of 92% of the area of each household was under threat. The minimum area under threat was 20% in our survey sample. So an overwhelming number of households would not be livable after demolition, resulting in the displacement of a large number of residents.



Percentage of Households Under Threat According to Marking

Construction Cost:

The average construction cost of one housing structure was found to be 36,41,265 (36 lacs). This excludes the cost of land which requires a thorough estimation in consultation with the affectees, taking market value along with socio-economic factors into account. Our team was able to extract the type of structure of 268 houses from the survey, whereby we found that 93 were load bearing and 175 were RCC. This translates to 65% households being constructed with higher quality standards, which explains the high average construction costs. As such, we urge the government to provide alternate housing that is at least equally well built and sturdy, if not better.



Frequency table of cost of households

Household IDs & NED survey:

Of the 331 household ID numbers collected from on-ground surveys, only 228 (68.9%) were unique. The other 103 (31.1%) were repeated, likely due to the fact that multiple households were assigned a single ID. If the government continues using the understated value of 3925 households in Gujjar Nala from the NED aerial survey, we can estimate that 1221 houses will be denied any compensation because their compensation would have been claimed by someone else.

Counting only the Unique IDs, it was seen that 6 IDs were not present in the survey conducted by NED. This means that the IDs allotted by governing bodies and DC offices tasked with executing the demolition drive were inconsistent with the NED survey itself.

Their details are as follows:

Makaan ID Number	Colony	House Number	%age under threat	Status	Contact	Lease Status
3664	Kausar Niazi	459/A	60%	Demolished	03178404597	Stamp paper (KDA - SKAA)
1517	Kausar Niazi	R340 block F	100%	Unknown		Non-leased (Stamp Paper)
3152	Wahid Colony	A/367	100%	Demolished	03021202957	Non-leased (Stamp Paper)
3786	Benazir Colony	BN 206	100%	Demolished	30453057439	Leased/Regularized (KMC)
5983	Benazir Colony	BN 175 C	100%	Demolished	0300 7880589	Leased/Regularized (KMC)

Furthermore, a minimum of 6 households explicitly stated that they were not provided any ID number but their house was still demolished. In order to claim compensation, affectees have to present their house ID numbers allotted by the NED Survey. Adding these 6 unique undocumented house IDs to our previous number of 228 unique documented house IDs brings us to a total of 234 unique household ID cases tabulated below:

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Structures with unique IDs documented in NED survey	222	94.90%
Structures with unique IDs undocumented in NED survey	6	2.60%
Structures with no unique IDs	6	2.60%
Total	234	100%

This shows that the numbers quoted by the government and cited in the NED survey are not accurate. At least 5% or more houses have been demolished without providing them any ID number or counting them in the numbers provided by the government. Combining the 1221 households that have been clubbed together under duplicate IDs, and the 5% that are not documented in the NED survey or without IDs, the number of total affected households is estimated to be around **5342** instead of 3925 which is the total number of houses in the NED survey. It is worth noting that the houses that have been demolished but are not

covered under the NED survey are at risk of losing out any compensation from the government, as the IDs allotted during the survey has been used as the basis on which rent/compensation cheques are being provided.

The lack of consensus from Government officials on the number of households affected further strengthens the case that the NED survey is unreliable and understated. KMC cited the figure to be at 4056 in May 2021 when constitutional petitions were filed before the Sindh high Court to stop the demolitions, and the head of anti-encroachment drive Bashir Siddiqui claimed that “at least 5000 illegal structures set up over or near stormwater drains in old city areas have been demolished”

Number of people affected

Out of 354 responses, a total of 3312 people were found to be affected by the demolition drive. Bear in mind that many of these people were living under one household ID, but taking an average of 9.36 per household we can estimate that at least 50,000 people will be affected by the demolitions (at an estimate of 5342 households).

Number of people in a household	
Number of responses for this question	354
Total number of people	3312
Average number of people per household	9.36
Minimum	1
Maximum	30

Furthermore, according to our findings, each household housed three distinct families on average. This means that 5342 houses destroyed will not just affect 5342 families, but a significantly higher number of 16000 plus families. The NED Survey and government compensation mechanism, on the other hand, make no effort to define or record the number of families. In fact, there is no definition of a “family unit” in any of the mechanisms undertaken by the government to execute this anti-encroachment drive. This has grave social and economic consequences for the people who are being impacted. Households with multiple family units tend to involve generations of development, with new floors and facilities constructed to accommodate new families in the same house. Thus, adequate rehabilitation would have to be commensurate with the cost of reconstructing housing to the same extent as what was lost, and not based on a single factor. The government’s calculations are only based on the **area** of land being impacted, with complete disregard to the number of people being affected and their variegated social and economic needs.

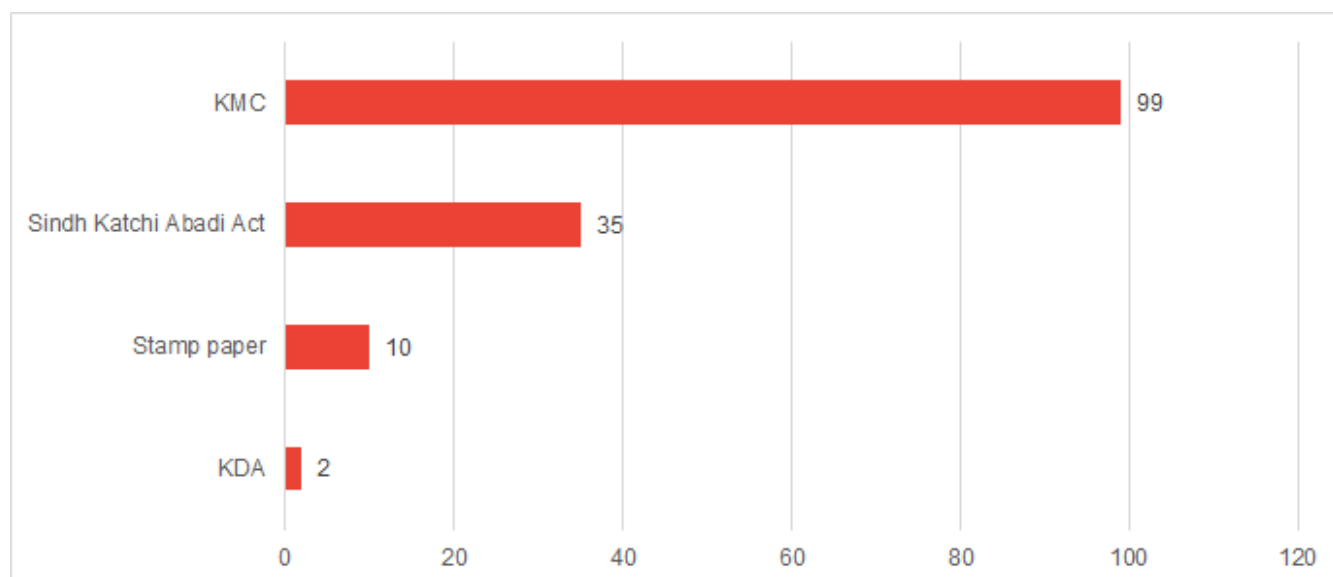
Number of families in a household	
Number of responses for this question	312
Total number of families	941
Average number of families per household	3.02
Minimum	1
Maximum	10

Legal Status of Land:

Furthermore, confirming the findings of our previous survey, the current survey also shows that the idea that the residents along Gujjar Nullah and Orangi Nullahs are encroachers is false propaganda engineered to justify their eviction.

Our research shows that of the 354 responses, 151 (42.7%) were leased/regularized, 58 (16.4%) had a stamp paper from a regularizing authority while the remaining 145 houses (40.9%) were non-leased/non-regularized.

Of the leased/regularized houses, 68% were leased by KMC, 24% by SKAA, 7% by stamp paper, and 1% by KDA.



Count of regularizing authority among leased/regularized houses (146 responses)

In addition to the numbers above, multiple other households selected KMC, SKAA, and KDA as their regularizing authorities but possessed stamp paper or other documentation. In most cases the length of tenure and indistinguishability from neighboring regularised properties means that these households too were eligible for regularisation, but had not managed to complete the process, in part probably due to educational, financial, or bureaucratic barriers..

Regardless, of the 145 households that were non-leased, 135 had an electricity connection, 126 had a gas connection and 120 had a water supply connection. The table below shows the percentage of Electricity, Gas, and Water connections with respect to the status of household land.

Amenity	Leased/Regularized	Non Leased/Non-Regularized	Stamp Paper
Electricity	94.7%	93.1%	91.4%
Gas	92.1%	86.9%	82.8%
Water	76.2%	82.8%	62.1%

The provision of these basic amenities is proof that the government authorities were not only aware of the supposed “encroachment” along the Gujjar Nullah, but they had actively facilitated the people to live and settle there until the recent anti-eviction drive. According to our survey findings, these people had been living there for over 34.3 years on average, with one respondent’s family living in Wahid Colony since pre-partition from 1925.

Lack of Nullah Cleaning

Our survey and research on the ground also disproved the false narrative that the houses located along the Nullahs are the cause of urban flooding. Documented visual evidence from various locations along the Nullahs show the accumulation of solid waste that is not regularly removed. In fact, due to Karachi's inadequate solid waste management infrastructure, garbage is regularly dumped into the Nullahs because the city's landfill sites (Jam Chakro and Gondpas) are located 35 kilometers away from the city center.



Figure 1 (left): Rubble lies strewn in the Nala as the house is being demolished.

Figure 2 (right): Gujjar Nala has not been cleared of any rubbish which made it narrower. The Nala is extremely wide at this spot, yet the presence of all the rubbish makes it appear very narrow and more liable to choke and overflow. This main issue was not addressed at all while houses were being demolished.

Moreover, we also found that as a result of the anti-encroachment drive, rubble was routinely dumped into the nullahs making them narrower and more liable to flooding than if they had been left alone.

If as it was claimed, the NED survey and start of demolition drive were to clear the Nalas for the rains, then no evidence of clean nalas ever appeared during all the months when the survey was carried out.



Figure 3(left): Another view of the rubble and rubbish filled Nala taken by the residents which has filled the Nalas completely. Instead of focusing on cleaning the Nalas, the government decided to carry out evictions and demolitions.

Figure 4 (right): A view of Gujjar Nala at night, which looks very narrow due to the rubble that has not been cleared.

Documentation of Police brutality during the Demolition drive

During our protests and mobilisation by residents against these evictions, there were many instances of police brutality, several of which we recorded and documented. Residents were harassed and arrested multiple times as well. Several activists and residents of Gujjar and Orangi Nalas were also arrested at the Bilawal House protest. This shows that the eviction drive, not only financially affected the residents of these areas, but also affected them in many intangible ways that also deserve to be acknowledged and compensated. Many people were traumatised by the constant harassment and police brutality over these evictions. There is a human cost that cannot be quantified, but is ever present whenever any large scale evictions of working class families occur. This human cost includes loss of livelihood and access to education and an increased vulnerability of women, children, people with disabilities, transgendered people, those living in extreme poverty, and the elderly to stress, suffering, harassment, and violence.

Conclusion

Our findings quantitatively confirm the reality of the situation on the ground, something that is painted as propaganda by opposition forces like state institutions and their supporters on mainstream and social media. Our surveys also confirmed the multiple allotment of IDs and some households not receiving any IDs, and IDs not allotted according to families.

From our survey and figures, it can be seen that the reasons for the demolitions such as cleaning up the city and cleaning the Nullahs for when it rains was never the agenda (see, Figures 1-4). Instead, what has emerged over the course of the past few months is that the government plans to build 30ft wide corridors for vehicular transportation on both sides of the Nullahs.

Unofficially, we know that these roads will be connected to the existing Lyari expressway to purportedly streamline the flow of traffic from Karachi's District Central to the rest of the city. The plan for road construction qualifies this as an infrastructure development project according to the guidelines of the Federal Planning Ministry. Any such project, which is carried out and approved by the planning ministry has to follow certain procedures of which the most important step is making PC-I and PC-II publicly available. This was not done and the affectees have had to rely on statements of officials and politicians and arbitrary announcements by district offices to understand the situation unfolding.

Furthermore, even if the road was not constructed, the government still failed to submit a separate [PC-1](#) form for social development projects. The government also tried to demolish houses in the past under “Gujjar Nullah Resettlement Project” in 2015, however [the PC-1 for that project was not approved](#). This survey report therefore shows that the Government of Sindh is not justified in the way they carried out and managed the anti-eviction drive, as well as the NED survey they commissioned.

Moreover, from our findings we have been able to show that many households possessed leases from KMC, SKAA or KDA, and that the label of ‘encroachers’ and calling houses as ‘encroachments along Gujjar and Orangi Nullahs’, were also false propaganda which is not supported by any ground realities. Even when the leases were absent due to the families not being able to afford the costs, people possessed utility bills, which supports the fact that the authorities did not think of the houses as encroachments until recently and only formulated this narrative to drive up support for their violent dispossession of the working class of this city. This narrative has also allowed relevant bodies to pay the first installment of Rs. 90,000 to some families, which does not constitute compensation.

From our surveys we also found that multiple families reported that their children’s schooling was affected, as well as their employment opportunities. Qualitative data from survey interviews also suggested that women were facing lack of privacy as a major issue when bathrooms and kitchens, etc were demolished.

Households consisting of multiple families were also struggling with sharing and making the meagre compensation last beyond a few weeks, which created rifts between families. Everyone who was surveyed reported feelings of unhappiness, dismay and shock at the sudden violent dispossession of their homes and added a demand to provide adequate affordable housing.

Moreover, these demolitions have forced many people to relocate, causing the strong communal bonds among neighbourhoods to break up. This has been exacerbated by demolition activities being carried out on places of worship such as St. Joseph’s Catholic Church. 22% of the structure of St Joseph’s Catholic Church was initially marked for demolitions, whereas 40% of the Church was demolished in actuality. Local churchgoers have also pointed out how the Church has seen diminished attendance in recent weeks because of the partial demolition; and lack of privacy has been clearly felt by the community. The Church was also a meeting and communal space and the last remaining one to be so, since the other two Churches belonging to the Philadelphia Pentecostal denomination had been completely demolished. In addition, a number of mosques and mazaarat have also been demolished, including the verandah/communal space of a seventy

year old Mazar, a site which should have rightly been protected by the Auqaf department and heritage laws. All these instances of loss have not been factored into any compensations, nor have any discussions been held with affectees to discuss these issues even after more than a year has passed since demolitions were started.

These demolitions have been violent in nature from the very start: multiple cases of harassment, intimidation and police brutality directed against both the residents of Gujjar and Orangi Nullahs, as well as activists were reported during their efforts to demand adequate compensations. Such physical violence and threats of violence, delays in any meaningful compensation, as well as an arduous yet limited recourse to the legal justice process have further increased the violence that the state is inflicting on the dispossessed working class poor, necessitating this research report and corresponding survey to highlight these issues.