



To the United Nations
General Secretary

September 9, 2022

Re: Climate Injustice and the Housing Crisis and Forced Evictions in Karachi

Dear Mr. António Guterres,

We welcome you on your visit to Pakistan.

Pakistan is in a catastrophic state after the monsoon rains of July through September 2022. Thousands of people in Sindh and Balochistan are still awaiting rescue and stranded in flood-stricken areas. Severe economic inequalities, poor governance, neglect to infrastructural collapse have contributed to the suffering of our people and diminished our capacity for community resilience. This is not a new state of affairs and over the last 20 years around 1.2 million people, victims of climate injustice, have migrated to Karachi from the Indus Delta alone. Farmers, fishers, and herders who are at the intersection of economic and social marginalities have lost their livelihoods and many of them move to mega city Karachi to search for a better livelihood, health services, safe drinking water, and often to escape bondage in farming or contract fishing – both exploitative systems that maintain economic subordination of landless. Loans from World Bank, IMF, and the Asian Development bank have been used to build some of this dilapidated and technically flawed infrastructure (for example the drainage systems on both sides of the Indus – the LBOD and the RBOD). Conditionalities imposed to pay back these loans add an additional burden borne by the people of Pakistan.

It is in this context that, Karachi Bachao Tehreek (KBT), would like you to focus on the housing crisis in Karachi. Most climate migrants settle at the peripheries of the city (Malir, Surjani Town, Rehri Goth) and are not provided any help from the state. Through informal means, they acquire housing and utility connections and settle into some of the hardest jobs as farmers in Malir, coastal fishing, or in the urban economy as informal, less paid workers. Housing provision and housing rights in Karachi, thus, are key aspects of climate injustice. Lack of adequate and affordable housing exacerbates their suffering and they continue to struggle because of a complete lack of response from the state towards provision of affordable subsidized housing, services, schools, health, and transport.

Instead of humanitarian response to housing, the Government of Sindh has embarked on an anti-poor demolition drive bolstered by a false narrative of 'encroachment'. The state and elite

media blamed these residents for monsoon floods in 2020 that devastated Karachi whereas it became clear that these settlements, that stand quite a distance from the drainage nullahs, were not responsible and it was state delay and negligence towards cleaning and maintenance of solid waste management in the whole city. Regardless, the GoS demolished over 7000 homes, partially or fully, around Gujjar and Orangi Nullahs. All of these homes had formal legal or equitable title and most residents have been settled here for fifty years. The state promised rehabilitation as per the Supreme Court's direction of August 2020, but it has been two years and no plan of rehabilitation has been shared by the government for almost 100,000 of these forcibly evicted. In the current rains that have wreaked havoc all over the country, homes near these Karachi nullahs are subject to land sliding and have fallen or at risk of falling. We have been working with the UN Housing Rapporteur and have shared three reports with them on this urban humanitarian crisis. Our reports have highlighted delay in rehabilitation, lack of systems in providing people with stop-gap rental payments, gendered aspects of evictions, and deaths and injuries caused by FWO and NLC's operations and negligence around the nullahs.

The International Convention on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) of 1976, that Pakistan ratified in 2010, requires states to recognize 'the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.' Forced evictions violate this right and are not the answer. Our state can not continue to evict those who have been settled and, despite being working class, were at least able to survive because they did not have to pay rent. Most of these settled communities are now in a state of shock and spending all their income on rent. They have seen their economic and social conditions deteriorate; children have had to drop out of school and women have lost their networks and economic activities. Many have given up while others desperately go to municipal offices to demand entitlements. If the state will unsettle settled communities and develop such an anti-humanitarian "encroachment eviction" stance, how are they supposed to cater to the millions of climate refugees in the coming years?

We urge you to focus on the housing crisis because it is an essential component of continuing climate injustice and social inequities induced migration. Real estate speculation, financialization of the real estate market, the advent of mega builders who pursue elite housing projects and international loans for ill planned infrastructure are all part of this phenomenon. We would be happy to meet with you and talk about the experiences of forced evictions in Karachi.

Sincerely,

Abira Ashfaq, Aadil Ayub, Maazah Ali, Fatima Zaidi, Khurram Ali Nayyar, Aimen Rizvi, Fey, Fizza Qureshi, Atiya Abbas, Ali Zaib, Zahid, Muneeba, Minelle Ali, Hafeez Baloch, Karachi Bachao Tehreek (karachibachaotehreek@gmail.com)

Arsalan Anjum and Naseem (Orangi Nullah Mutasireen Committee)

Eram Yasmeen, Nisar Ahmed, Muneer, Arif Shah, Sonia, Iqbal Rao (Gujjar Nullah Mutasirin Committee)